

Students' perceptions of their connectedness in the community college basic Public Speaking course

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Abstract: This study explores what classroom behaviors and activities in the basic speech course contribute to student connectedness. The results indicate that student encouragement, humor, honesty, interactive exercises and individual speeches, can help student bonding and motivation, and impacts their overall college experience.

Keywords: communication, student relationships, classroom activities, student behavior, instructor behavior.

I. Introduction.

The purpose of this study is to understand what classroom behaviors, communication, exercises, and assignments in the basic public-speaking course at an urban community college increase student connectedness. It has been well-documented that students who feel a sense of community in the classroom report greater academic motivation, affinity for school, and enjoyment of class (Battistich, et al., 1995; Battistich et al., 1991; Schaps et al., 1997). Conversely, a lack of social support has been related to difficulty in adjusting to school, a propensity to drop out of college, and negative academic performance (Cutrona et al., 1994; McGrath et al., 2000). Rovai (2002) developed a "Classroom Community Scale," which researchers have subsequently used to parse this construct (Graff, 2003). A number of scholars have explored which classroom behaviors and pedagogical activities create a sense of community in the classroom (Allen (2000), Rovai and Whiting (2005), David and Capraro (2001), Summers and Svinicki (2007). Much of the research on classroom relationships has focused on K-12 (i.e. Doveston and Keenaghan, 2006; Wittse, 2006), internet classrooms (i.e. Rovai, 2002), and residential campuses (Zhao and Kuh, 2004).

Expanding this line of research into the urban community college speech class is important for a number of reasons. First, for the same reason it is useful to study student connectedness in internet courses, the students at community colleges are also often highly disconnected. Although they are in face-to-face classrooms, they live in big cities, come to campus only for class, and it is difficult to establish a campus community. The classroom, therefore, is often the only space where the students have an opportunity to experience a sense of community on campus. Second, because it is a basic course, there is a cross-section of students in the class, so techniques that work in this class have a great chance of working in other classes, those that are similarly heterogeneous and those that are more homogenous. Third, the course encourages active learning by presenting speeches, a pedagogical activity known to facilitate learning communities (Zhao and Kuh, 2004). Finally, because the basic speech course is required at colleges and universities across the country, the lessons from studying it may be applicable nationwide.

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This study is a collaborative project between the authors: Glaser, an associate professor of communication at an east coast community college, and Bingham, a professor of communication at a four-year metropolitan university in the Midwest. Glaser noticed that many of her public-speaking students seem to create very strong bonds during the semester. She perceived that they create stronger relationships than the ones she has seen students develop in her classes at other universities. There may be many reasons she has noticed this—her own biased perceptions, regional or cultural differences in the areas where she has taught, and differences in her teaching across time. The way the students relate to each other colors every moment of the class and Glaser has become increasingly interested in this aspect of the public-speaking course, becoming more conscious of making sure the tone of the class is respectful and the students come to know each other.

However, when trying to find scholarly work on student relationships, Glaser discovered that the great majority of research about classroom communication focuses on instructor-student interaction, i.e. instructor behaviors that influence student learning (Hays, 1970; Myers, 1995; Stuart and Rosenfeld, 1994). This void in the literature also has been noticed by Bingham, who is part of a research group of communication scholars who have studied specific classroom behaviors and student relationships in the basic public speaking course. While the Classroom Community Scale probes students' sense of community, it does not ask about specific student behaviors. The research group developed a self-report instrument, the Connected Classroom Climate Inventory (CCCI) (Dwyer et al., 2004) (Appendix I), to understand how student connectedness relates to student learning (Prisbell et al, 2009) and communication apprehension (Carlson et al., 2006). The CCCI was developed based on students' individual comments and group discussions in speech communication courses at a four-year university in the Midwest. The questionnaire items were based on commonalities in the students' responses. Studies using the CCCI have found a positive correlation between student connectedness and student learning, and a negative correlation between student connectedness and communication apprehension.

Glaser wanted to understand her community college students' experiences in the classroom and how they perceive their relationships. At the same time, Bingham wanted to know if community college students would find the CCCI to be valid and comprehensive. So we decided to build on the quantitative CCCI research in this current study in two ways: first, we used qualitative methods to more fully understand students' perceptions of their classroom experience and how student behavior and communication helps them develop relationships with one another. A qualitative approach to inquiry is appropriate when the researcher seeks a rich and detailed understanding of human experience from the perspective of the people being studied. The participants are asked to share their perceptions and experiences unencumbered by the researcher's imposition of frameworks or expectations from the literature (Creswell, 2007, p. 40; Polkinghorne, 2005). Second, we asked community college students to complete the CCCI and then to answer some questions about its validity.

Two primary research questions guided this study: "How do urban community college students perceive their relationships in the basic public speaking course?" "Do community college students think the items on the CCCI do an adequate job of capturing their own sense of connectedness in the public-speaking class?" Secondary questions were: "What classroom behaviors do the students believe influence these relationships?" "What classroom activities do they believe influence these relationships?"

II. Methodology.

In order to answer these questions, we gave 62 students in three of Glaser's public-speaking classes two questionnaires, one quantitative, the Communication Classroom Connectedness Index (CCCI) and one qualitative (see Appendix II). The quantitative questionnaire asks the students to rate the degree to which they feel connected to one another, on a scale from 1-5, 5 being the strongest. The qualitative questionnaire asks eleven open-ended questions about how connected students feel to one another and what behaviors and activities encouraged their relationships. The qualitative portion was administered first so that the students would not be influenced by the activities and behaviors mentioned in the quantitative portion.

Purposive sampling (Polkinghorne, 2005) was used to select three sections of the public speaking course to participate in this study. Glaser teaches five sections of the public speaking course during the academic year, and she chose three sections in particular because the students in them seemed to have a high degree of camaraderie; it appeared to Glaser that they had a good time in class and were creating friendships. One section was enrolled in a special program where they took four block classes together in the fall of 2007, so that the public-speaking class was one of those four classes. Most of these students were traditional first year students, immediately out of high school. The other two sections were evening classes in which the students were a little older and had no other classes together. One section met during the fall semester of 2007 and the other during the spring semester of 2008.

The community college where the data were collected enrolled 18,000 students (63 percent women, 37 percent men) with a median age of 23.8. Its students come from over 100 countries and according to their self-descriptions, 38% are Black, 30 % are Hispanic, 12% Asian, 10% White, and 10% are Other. The basic public-speaking course is required of almost all of the majors in the college and is one of the few courses open to students enrolled in the developmental skills (or remedial) classes. Therefore, the students in the public-speaking class represent a cross-section of the entire student population of the college.

Glaser gave the students the questionnaires the last day of the semester after the final presentations. She explained that the students did not have to complete the questionnaires and stepped out of the room so she would not know who chose not to participate. While not everyone answered every open-ended question, 54 out of 62 students completed the quantitative portion and answered at least some of the qualitative questions. It took the students about 15 minutes to complete. After Glaser calculated and turned in their final semester grades, she labeled the questionnaires according to the students' class section, typed all the answers under each question, then read individual answers to the questions. She then engaged in what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) refer to as "coding and categorization" analysis; she looked for patterns regarding common perceptions of relationships and consensus on the activities and classroom behaviors that influenced those relationships. She read the answers numerous times, labeled each answer according to a more general category, listed the categories, then looked for similarities among them. She synthesized the categories into a few over-arching concepts that included all of the answers. Finally, she interviewed two students during the following semester where she explained the results and asked for their reactions. The students confirmed her findings.

Bingham entered the numerical data from students' responses to the CCCI into an SPSS file and analyzed the data statistically. She calculated frequencies and group means for each class, and used one-way analysis of variance to compare the means among the three classes. She

also read the students' responses to the qualitative portion of the questionnaire and offered thoughts and feedback to Glaser on the interpretation of the data and identification of themes.

III. Results.

A. Students Feel Connected.

The students' responses to the questions 1, 3, and 10 of the qualitative portion clearly indicated that the students felt connected to each other. When they were asked how many of the students in class they felt connected to, 26 out of 54 responded "all," and the others ranged from "3" to "almost everyone." All of the students answered, "yes" in response to "Do you feel you are friendlier with students in this class than with students in other classes?" And in response to "Have you made friends in this class?" 14 of 15 students in the block section, 15 out of 17 students in the fall evening section, and all of the students in the spring evening section said they had.

When asked if the CCCI did a good job measuring how connected they felt to their classmates, the students all said "yes." It is therefore not surprising that the students' scores on the CCCI reinforced the qualitative portion of the questionnaire, indicating that the students, on average, perceived a high level of connectedness with one another ($M = 85.98$, $sd = 7.90$). The scores were slightly higher for students in the block section ($M = 86.19$, $sd = 5.38$) and the first night section ($M = 87.29$, $sd = 5.01$) than in the second night section ($M = 84.85$, $sd = 11.09$), but a one way analysis of variance showed that the scores for the three sections did not significantly differ from each other [$F = 0.377$ (2, 50), $p = 0.69$]. By contrast, previous research using the CCCI reports lower CCCI scores. The average scores per section for students enrolled in 30 sections of a basic public speaking course at a four-year university ranged from 66.40 to 80.41 (overall $M = 70.97$, $sd = 9.91$) (Dwyer et al., 2004). These results suggest that the level of connectedness among students in the three sections of public speaking at the community college was unusually high.

B. Certain Classroom Activities Increase the Sense of Connectedness.

The activity that the students most often mentioned as one that increased their sense of connectedness was the speeches they presented in class. The students had to present three major speeches (two informative, one persuasive) and three mini-speeches (two about personal past experiences, and one about their futures). Most simply, the speeches were a way that the students got to know each other. One typical response was: "You get to hear everybody's stories and you get to know everybody better." However, those of us who teach public speaking know that to speak alone in front of others is a powerful, complex, and risky endeavor. One student captured the complexity and depth of this assignment and how it influences the relationships among the students: "People have to get up in front of their peers and recite a speech that can make them very uncomfortable emotionally and physically. Other students respect this and can bond on a deeper level to other individuals based on their emotional and physical needs."

Besides the speeches, any activity that required the students to interact helped them get to know each other and seemed to have deepened their sense of connectedness. Every interactive exercise Glaser assigned was mentioned multiple times as one that helped the students bond. The peer groups, which were formed for every speech round so the students could help each other

with preparation and feedback, were frequently mentioned, as were more general activities such as “working together” and “talking.” The block section had the opportunity to go to a museum and a few of the students claimed this was a major bonding activity. The evening section had time for a spontaneous debate one day where four teams argued about the legalization of marijuana. Glaser was a bit surprised that this came up as an activity that students believed increased their sense of connectedness because it was a fairly contentious and lively event. However, a number of students found it to be a very powerful bonding experience.

It is also noteworthy that a handful of students mentioned “feedback” as one of the activities that made them feel closer. All of the students were required to offer written and verbal responses to the presentations, which included both positive and negative comments. Critical feedback can be a very sensitive communication act that can easily alienate the receiver. However, a number of students found that it helped them create stronger relationships. As one student wrote in response to “Do you feel you are friendlier in this class than in other classes? “: “Yes. We can joke and be [ourselves] without being judged, and when you are criticized, it is constructive.”

In sum, all of the activities that required the students to interact—the speeches, the working groups, peer feedback, the class discussions and debates—were mentioned as activities that helped them feel a sense of connection with one another. When asked to explain why these activities worked in such a way, the students indicated that the power of these activities was in the opportunities they provided for exhibiting the behaviors the students valued in one another, behaviors that made them feel connected.

C. Certain Student Behaviors Increase the Sense of Connectedness.

One kind of behavior that the students frequently mentioned can be labeled “*friendliness*”. This includes a variety of actions that are commonly considered to be friendly: being out-going and talkative, smiling, laughing, saying hello. A number of students in response to question #6 (“What behaviors from the students in this class make you feel connected to them?”) answered with some form of “friendly behavior”. As one student most directly stated, “Everyone is just friendly.” A number of the students from the spring evening section appreciated that people come in early to class in order to talk to one another. It is significant that one of the friendly behaviors often mentioned was some type of humor. Many of the students mentioned laughter, joking, and people being funny. One student wrote (in response to #6), “They laugh at my comments.” Another wrote, “Many of them have great senses of humor. I love to laugh and make others laugh.” And a third wrote, “”Their personality, how they can just be themselves, funny and lovable.” Clearly, common acts of friendliness were recognized and valued by the students as those that increased their sense of connectedness.

A second behavior that the students highly valued in one another was what they perceived to be as “*honesty*”. In response to question #2 (“What happens in this class that helps people feel connected?”), #5 (“What was it about those activities that helped people feel connected?”), and #6 (“What behaviors from the students in this class make you feel connected to them?”), the students repeatedly wrote about “openness,” “honesty,” people “being real,” “emotional,” and sharing personal experiences. One student wrote, “The speech shows a lot what people think and believe. And each one spoke what they had in their heart, and it [made us] appreciate each one.” In response to #5 one student wrote, “The mini-speech allows you the freedom to talk about personal experiences that others can connect with....” In response to #6

one student wrote, “Everyone seems incredibly open and accessible.” Another wrote, “I like the feeling of sincerity and honesty that I got when everybody gave their speeches.” As in other relationships, the opportunity and ability to be honest is a fundamental way to strengthen the connection.

The third kind of behavior that students perceived strengthened their bonds was “*supportive*” behavior. In response to questions #2, #5 and #6, students wrote that others listen, encourage, respect, and help each other. Perhaps significantly, when writing about this kind of behavior, supportiveness was the behavior that elicited the most complete sentences from students. Many of the responses were quite touching and it is worth quoting a number of them to give a deeper sense of the students’ experience.

In response to Question 2 (What happens in this class that helps people feel connected?):

- “People learn to help and appreciate each other.”
- “Everybody listens and makes you feel comfortable. Respect, sympathy, friendly people.”
- “We are all peers and we all help each other to feel important and worthy of listening to.”

In response to Question #3 (Do you feel you are friendlier with students in this class than with students in other classes? Why or why not?):

- “You break down social barriers when a group of people all individually have to do the same trying task in front of their group. People typically respect this and can open to console their fellow classmates which typically turns into a strong friendship bond.”
- “I think people are closer in this class because we are all vulnerable, and because of that we treat each other with warmth and respect.”

In response to Question 5 (What was it about those activities that helped people feel connected?):

- “The camaraderie you receive when you feel other people good willingly are trying to help you and their group get positive goals accomplished.”

In response to Question 6 (What behaviors from the students in this class make you feel connected to them?):

- “Everyone was here for a purpose and that was to learn and we all did it together.”

In sum, students perceived that friendly, honest, and supportive interactions help them connect with one another. Specific supportive behavior--listening, encouraging, helping, and being respectful--seems to have been profoundly important for the students’ sense of connectedness. Many of them appear to recognize their common feelings of vulnerability in the public-speaking course and respond compassionately and gently toward one another.

D. Certain Instructor Behaviors Increase the Sense of Connectedness.

The instructor activities that helped students feel connected to each other broke down into three kinds: structuring activities, the manner of her speech, and the content of her speech. First, the students recognized the import of structuring activities so that they had the chance to interact with each other. Indeed, the vast majority of the responses to Question 7 (Does your instructor engage in behaviors that make you feel connected to the students? If yes, briefly describe those behaviors.) discussed getting into groups, assigning speech topics that let students get to know each other, or structured “activities where we have to share our feelings.” As already discussed, interactive student activities gave students opportunities to engage in the behaviors they valued in one another—friendly, honest, and supportive talk—and the students clearly saw the way that Glaser structured the class as her most important contribution.

A second instructor behavior the students attributed to their own sense of connectedness was the relaxed manner in which she spoke to them. One student wrote that class was “laid back and easy-going.” Another wrote “She speaks to us on our level.” And a third student wrote, “She joined in when appropriate with our collective insane humor.”

The least-mentioned instructor behavior was what she said to them. Three students pointed out something about the content of her speech. One student wrote that pointing out similarities among the students was important for their relationships, and two felt that Glaser’s sample speeches for each of the assignments helped them connect to each other. (Glaser’s sample speeches talked about her trip to China, her dog, a life lesson she learned from a friend, her hopes for the future, and areas of knowledge, such as information about the genographic project, and an analysis of the University’s budget.) One important note is that early in the semester, Glaser gave a few lectures about the importance of supportive behavior in the classroom, how listening effects relationships, and some basics of interpersonal communication. Evidently, these lectures were pretty well forgotten by the end of the semester.

In sum, when thinking about what instructor behaviors promoted a sense of connectedness, it appears that the students most valued when their instructor gave them a chance to talk to each other. Secondarily, they valued that she talked to them to in a relaxed manner, pointed out similarities among them, and shared her experiences with them.

E. Student Connectedness Impacts the College Experience.

Finally, we wanted to know if students’ relationships in the class impacted their wider college experience. As discussed above, a number of studies have claimed that students who feel a sense of community in the classroom are more motivated and enjoy school more (Battistich et al., 1995; Battistich et al., 1991; Schaps et al., 1997). Those who do not have social support have a harder time academically and are more likely to drop out of college (Cutrona et al., 1994; McGrath et al., 2000). We asked two related questions: Question 9 “Has this class made you feel more comfortable at [this community college]? Why or why not? And Question 11: “How does feeling connected to other students in a class affect your learning in the class?”

In response to question 9, 51 of the 54 students answered “yes.” The reason most often stated for their increased comfort at the college was that they know more people, made friends, feel there are people they can relate to at the school, and feel like they belong. A number of students from the block section even grew close enough to their classmates to claim that they felt like family.

While the students clearly felt that their friendships made them feel more comfortable at the college, the class also helped some students feel more confident about speaking to strangers. One student said, “This class has made me see that you do not have to be silent.” Another wrote, “I don’t feel as shy or embarrassed to speak in public and I also feel more relaxed at meeting new friends.” “It’s public speaking so you learn to open up more,” wrote a third student. It seems that some students felt that the process of making friends in the basic speech course helped them make friends in other courses also. Wrote one student, “I feel there are people who I can relate to, just like people in this class.” So there may be a certain ripple effect where strong student connections in one class increase the connections throughout the college.

Finally, two students felt that the basic speech course was a generally motivating experience. One wrote the class “makes me confident in my learning ability,” and another that, “it gives us the motivation to get on with life.” It is unclear whether these attributions are related

directly to the unique aspects of the basic speech course or if they are related to a successful experience in any course, so that feeling motivated might also occur in other courses in which the students did well.

The responses to question 11, however, relate specifically to the students' sense of connectedness in the public speaking course. Fifty-one out of 54 students answered positively to the question, "How does feeling connected to other students in a class affect your learning in the class?" The students perceived that their relationships helped their learning in a number of ways: *socially, motivationally, and cognitively*. In terms of the *social* aspects of the course, quite a few students said the class was easier, more comfortable, and more fun because of their friendships. One answer was typical: "It makes it easier and fun." Having friends also added a supportive element to the class so that they could call on each other for help. According to one student, "I know if I have trouble with anything I didn't understand, I can consult with my classmates." This dimension of comfort and support in the classroom wasn't simply task-oriented so that students had help with the material, but according to one student, also stretched into the emotional dimension: "I feel more comfortable like if I make an effort, no one is going to judge me."

Many students also found their classroom friendships to be *motivating*. Some felt that their friendships made them want to come to class and to do well in it. Wrote one, "It's a drive to want to do the work and attend class. It's that extra push." Other students said it made them want to learn, work harder, and "give that information to them clearly." It seems, then, that classroom friendships helped some students push themselves to get to class and work harder on their assignments.

Interestingly, two students felt that they benefited *cognitively* from their classroom friendships. One student wrote, "Connecting with others makes me think better." Another wrote, that it "improves my ability." While only two students mentioned an effect on their cognitive processes, it is certainly one directly relevant to our responsibilities as educators and deserves some serious exploration in the future.

In sum, students seemed to form strong connections in the basic speech course and highly valued those connections. They attributed interactive class activities (including the speeches) to helping them form those connections, as well as very specific student behavior, including joking, listening, talking honestly, and encouragement. In addition, having strong student connections in the classroom appears to have had some profound and wide effects for the students. They enjoyed the classroom experience more, found others to help them with assignments, were more motivated to attend class and complete their assignments, and consistent with previous research (Prisbell et al., in press), may even have learned better.

IV. Conclusion.

This research suggests a number of important findings. First, it supports the validity of the CCCI, suggesting that it captures students' sense of connectedness. However, our qualitative findings also suggest ways the CCCI may need to be expanded to make it more comprehensive, for east coast community college students if not for college students in other regions and at other kinds of institutions. The CCCI appears to omit or underemphasize some key kinds of communication behaviors that help students develop friendly relationships and a sense of connection with each other. These include shared humor, openness, honesty, genuineness, vulnerability, helping each other, and compassion.

The CCCI may also be an important complement to Rovai's (2001) Classroom Community Scale (CCS). While the CCS explores a more general sense of community in the classroom, the CCCI focuses on specific behaviors and interpersonal connectedness within the classroom. In other words, the CCCI allows researchers to study student communication patterns that, as a whole, build a larger sense of community. By using both instruments, future research could explore this relationship more directly.

Second, student behavior and communication needs to be studied as much as instructor behavior is. As stated previously, the vast majority of the communication education literature focuses on teacher-student relationships and perceptions, and rarely on student-student relationships. Yet, this study clearly shows that the connections students make with one another have a profound impact on their college experience. Currently, education scholars (Rovai, 2001, Dawson, 2006; Gould et al., 2000) are focusing on this important aspect of classroom interaction; we hope our research encourages more scholars in the communication field and other disciplines to do the same.

Third, this research has clear implications for teachers of all disciplines who are using collaborative and interactive learning techniques in the classroom (Bean, 2001; Barley et al., 2005). As instructors are creating more opportunities for students to work and think critically together, this study focuses instructors on ensuring that the students behave in a supportive, non-judgmental, honest, and friendly manner while in those groups. Inversely, instructors may want to structure their classes in ways that discourage students from behaviors that undermine their sense of being connected. Inconsiderate and harassing "misbehaviors" by students, for example, are associated with diminished student connectedness, as measured by the CCCI (Bingham, Carlson, Dwyer, and Prisbell, 2009).

Fourth, on a more practical and administrative note: students found the course to be an important bonding experience. In support of previous studies (Battistich, et al., 1995; Battistich et al., 1991; Schaps et al., 1997), students reported that the relationships they built in the basic course helped them stay motivated, enjoy the class, and maintain their attendance. Many found the speech presentations to be very powerful experiences that helped them connect to one another. The presentations allowed students to get to know each other, gave them opportunities to support and encourage one another, and the ability to be vulnerable in front of each other. Certainly, the data indicates that any interactive task or exercise helped the students bond. Yet, the presentations, the singular task of each student speaking alone in front of the group, goes a long way in encouraging student connections. Many students reported that the class helped them talk to students in other classes and situations. The course introduced them to fellow students who they related to. This sense of familiarity then gave them a feeling of belonging in the wider college. It may be that the basic speech course is one way to help students build the community they need in order to succeed in college. To the extent that colleges are concerned about student persistence, perhaps this research supports current efforts in encouraging students to take the basic speech course their first semester, in order to make important connections with other students.

Finally, this study suggests the need for more research. We looked at three sections of one course in one institution. Because it is so important for students to have strong relationships with one another, it is also important for us to have a deeper and wider understanding of how students form these relationships in our classrooms. Future research could expand into other kinds of classes, educational institutions, go deeper into the student experience through focus groups and interviews, and probe instructors' attempts to influence student connectedness. This study

contributes to the exploration of student relationships, their significance for learning in the classroom, and the import of those relationships for the students' wider college experience.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Connected Classroom Climate Inventory

Students respond to the following statements with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

1. I feel a sense of security in my class.
2. I have common ground with my classmates.
3. I feel a strong bond with my classmates.
4. The students in my class share stories and experiences with one another.
5. The students in my class are friendly with one another.
6. The students in my class respect one another.
7. I feel included in class discussions in my class.
8. The students in my class are courteous with one another.
9. The students in my class praise one another.
10. The students in my class are concerned about one another.
11. The students in my class smile at one another.
12. The students in my class engage in small talk with one another.
13. The students in my class are non-judgmental with one another.
14. The students in my class laugh with one another.
15. The students in my class are supportive of one another.
16. The students in my class show interest in what one another is saying.
17. The students in my class cooperate with one another.
18. The students in my class feel comfortable with one another.

Appendix 2. Interview Protocol—Student Connectedness

I am studying student relationships and what helps build friendships in the classroom. I am especially interested in the basic public-speaking course. Please answer the following questions as thoroughly as you can.

1. How many of the students in this class do you feel connected to?
2. What happens in this class that helps people feel connected?
3. Do you feel you are friendlier with students in this class than with students in other classes? Why or why not?
4. What classroom activities do you think make people feel connected to each other?
5. What was it about those activities that helped people feel connected?
6. What behaviors from the students in this class make you feel connected to them?
7. Does your instructor engage in behaviors that make you feel connected to the students? (Yes/No/Not sure) If yes, briefly describe those behaviors.
8. Was there a particular incident or incidents that made you feel more connected to the class? If so, please describe it.
9. Has this class made you feel more comfortable at BMCC? Why or why not?
10. Have you made friends in this class?
11. How does feeling connected to other students in a class affect your learning in the class?

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