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# USING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY TO EXPLORE ADJUNCT FACULTY'S EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN NEW JERSEY

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**USING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY TO EXPLORE ADJUNCT FACULTY'S EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN NEW JERSEY**

by

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**Dedications**

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing, encouraging, and supportive family. The support of my family for the last 5 years, when I have been working full time and pursuing my doctorate, has been nothing short of phenomenal. I dedicate my work to my parents, Nadia and Ivan Gigov, who have taught me that there is no limit to what I could accomplish. Thank you for stepping in and taking care of my boys, so I could read and write, and pursue my dreams. Thank you, I love you! I dedicate my work to my sons, Alexander and Christopher, who have been my pride and joy as I have watched them for the last five years become extraordinary boys. Thank you for believing in me and never complaining. Thank you, I love you!

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# Abstract

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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how adjunct faculty experienced transformative learning as a result of their efforts to teach information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. Information literacy was defined as the ability to identify information needs and the skills to discover, evaluate, and use information effectively (Townsend et. al., 2016). The study resulted in descriptions of how adjunct faculty transformed their teaching practices when necessary to adapt to new information environments. A qualitative descriptive case study methodology was chosen to examine the occurrence of this phenomenon (Yin, 2014). For the purposes of this research, the units of analysis were adjunct faculty, who have taught at community colleges in New Jersey for at least two semesters. The setting for the study was the network of the 18 community colleges in New Jersey with more than 60 campuses, serving 21 counties (NJCCC, 2019).

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<center>**Chapter One**</center>

<center>**Introduction**</center>

The concept of information literacy has been profoundly affected by the constant development of new technologies and an explosive production and dissemination of information (Badke, 2014; Battista et al., 2015; Bombaro, 2014; Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Mackey & Jacobson, 2005; Miller, 2018; Monge & Frisicaro-Pawlowski, 2014; Pierce, 2009; Saunders, 2017; Wallis, 2003; Wang et al., 2011; Wittebols, 2016). Internet and social media have improved access to information but at the same time have made managing and evaluating the information overwhelming and complicated (Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Saunders, 2017). Technology makes it possible for opinions and perspectives to get easily published and social media assists in the rapid dissemination of information (Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Saunders, 2017; Wittebols, 2016). However, there are no uniform filters to check the authenticity and reliability of the readily available information (Bombaro, 2014; Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Dawes, 2019; Mackey & Jacobson, 2005; Monge & Frisicaro-Pawlowski, 2014; Wallis, 2003; Wittebols, 2016). Therefore, users depend solely on their information literacy skills to successfully navigate the new digital and information environments.

Reflecting on the importance of identifying fake, unreliable, and biased information in his Presidential Proclamation of National Information Literacy Awareness Month in October 2009, President Obama (2009) declared information literacy, together with the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, central to educational institutions (Obama, 2009). In his proclamation speech, President Obama (2009) highlighted the

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growing importance of information literate citizens for the functioning of a modern democratic society. The President asked the nation to recognize the need for a better understanding of the impact information literacy has on people's lives (Obama, 2009).

The changes in the digital and information environments have affected the way information is accessed, used, and taught in higher education institutions (Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Saunders, 2017; Wittebols, 2016). It is no longer enough for the students to know how to locate various print and electronic information sources (Dawes, 2019). Nowadays, they need to acquire the information literacy skills to evaluate the sources and question their authority (Saunders, 2017). There has been an increase of research on the benefits information literacy brings to the overall student success outcomes (Carales et al., 2016; Petermanec & Šebjan, 2018; Samson, 2010). Research shows that information literacy challenges students' information behaviors and encourages deeper critical thinking (Miller, 2018; Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009; Petermanec & Šebjan, 2018; Samson, 2010). The skills of identifying access to information and evaluating the credibility of the sources help college students become self-guided, confident learners in today's abundant information environment (Horton & Keiser, 2008). As a result, information literate students possess the skills of navigating the information landscape, which makes them confident to search, access, evaluate, and use sources that support their learning path and academic success (Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Foster, 2006; Klomsri & Tedre, 2016). However, students with poor information literacy skills may find it difficult to keep up with the research requirements for their classes and will often fail academically during their first year in college (Carales et al., 2016; Dawes, 2019; Fazal, 2016; Gruber, 2018).

Even though researchers and educators point out the significant role information literacy plays for improving the overall student persistence, the success of its implementation as part of the general education curriculum remains questionable (Carales et al., 2016; Fazal, 2016; Gruber, 2018; Petermanec & Šebjan, 2018; Samson, 2010). The complexity of the issue with information literacy for higher education requires understanding of the dynamics among the participants that play roles in its implementation. National library and research associations, accreditation agencies, academic librarians, and faculty have the most input and influence on directing the course of information literacy for postsecondary institutions (ALA, 1989; ACRL, 2000; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; MSCHE, 2006; Saunders, 2012; Stimpson, 2016). In general, it is the library departments in the higher education institutions that are charged with the execution of the information literacy (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). However, it is the faculty that are in direct contact with the students and have constant feedback when teaching it (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). Additionally, it is important to focused the attention on the adjunct faculty in particular since they are becoming the larger teaching cohort in higher education and their perspectives and experiences differ from those of the full-time faculty due to their part time employment status (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Datray et al., 2014; Dolan, 2011).

**The Concept of Information Literacy Over the Years**

The term information literacy was initially used in 1974 to describe how people apply information resources to their work (Badke, 2010). Over the years, the definition needed to expand to reflect on the ways, information was disseminated and produced (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). Milestones on reforming the educational policy

for higher education information literacy were the ALA initiative in 1989 and the field

documents on information literacy standards and thresholds, coined by the ACRL in 2000

and 2014 (ACRL, 2000; ACRL, 2014; ALA, 1989). Nowadays, the term includes the fact

that users have become dependent on their knowledge of how to search, retrieve, and

evaluate information efficiently (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). To achieve that, users need to

be both technologically and information literate (Bury, 2011; Cope & Sanabria, 2014;

Reynolds et al., 2017; Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018).

*Associations and Agencies, Guiding Information Literacy for Higher Education*

      The changing digital and information environments instigated the necessity of

updating the information literacy standards for higher education. National library and

educational associations, along with federal and state accreditation agencies offered

updated information literacy standards (ALA, 1989; ACRL, 2000), thresholds (ACRL,

2014), and frameworks (MSCHE, 2006) to address information literacy issues for

academic institutions in the new learning environment.

      The American Library Association (ALA) formed the ALA Presidential

Committee on Information Literacy with the task of reforming education policy,

teaching, and learning practices for higher education information literacy (ALA, 1989).

The term information literacy was formalized to a widely accepted definition of "a set of

abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the

ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (ALA, 1989). The

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) offered standards, performance

indicators, and outcomes to define the central goals of information literacy competency

and establish the basis for lifelong learning and academic success (ACRL, 2000). To

reflect on the changes in the learning environment and on the evolving concept of what information literacy meant, the Association of College and Research Libraries provided an updated *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (*Framework*) (ACRL, 2014). The *Framework* (ACRL, 2014) included six conceptual understandings that frame a series of interrelated ideas about information, research, and scholarship called threshold concepts.

Higher education institutions are required to implement and assess information literacy competency by federal and state accreditation agencies (MSCHE, 2006). Competency requirements for higher education students, recommended by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) describe information literacy as a skill that improves students' learning habits and assists them in achieving academic success (Fazal, 2016; Miller, 2018; Petermanec & Šebjan, 2018; Samson, 2010). In addition to the skills recommended by ALA and ACRL for determining, accessing, evaluating, and using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, the MSCH places extra value on the skills of understanding the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology and observing laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information (ACRL, 2000; ALA, 1987; MSCHE, 2006).

***Information Literacy for Higher Education Institutions***

Information literacy is generally placed under the supervision of the library department as part of the general education curriculum (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). Unfortunately, librarians have almost no input in developing the curricula or the assignments for the courses, which limits their control over how information literacy is

taught and reinforced (Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Saunders, 2012). Therefore, the need to address the new information environment and improve students' learning habits encourages a new approach to information literacy for higher education that requires faculty involvement (Carales et al., 2016; Dawes, 2019; Fazal, 2016; Gruber, 2018). Faculty members are in direct contact with the students and they can provide constant feedback during research projects which puts them in the best position to guide the information literacy implementation (Cope & Sanabria, 2014).

Academic librarians have long history of overcoming departmental challenges in creating opportunities for collaboration with full time faculty members on teaching information literacy and complying with institutional assessment requirements (Junisbai et al., 2016). However, with the increasing number of adjunct faculty who teach in higher education institutions nowadays, the practice of teaching information literacy could be hindered if adjunct faculty members are not involved in teaching it (Foster, 2006).

*Information Literacy for Community Colleges*

Community colleges serve as a gateway into post-secondary education and career readiness for many students (Carales et al., 2016; Levin, 2001). Federal data on the year-round student population show that 38% of undergraduates attended public two-year institutions in 2016-17 (CCRC, 2018). Additionally, among all students who completed a degree at four-year institutions, 49% have attended community colleges in the previous 10 years (CCRC, 2018). Many of these students were exposed to the requirements of higher education information literacy skills for the first time at a community college.

Due to the various socio-economic and academic backgrounds of the students, introducing information literacy to community college freshmen presents unique

challenges for librarians and faculty (Henry et al., 2015). Students come to community

colleges with different levels of exposure to information literacy and research which does

not necessarily meet the standards for higher education (Reed, 2015). Those that come

directly from high schools or transfer from other institutions may have different level of

comfort with information literacy and technologies than returning adult learners and

students completing certificate programs (Nelson, 2016; Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009).

Additionally, the information needs of the students vary depending on their goals for

enrollment and graduation, whether they plan to earn a degree, pursue a certificate, or just

seek a professional development (Nelson, 2016; Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009).

Information literacy instruction at community colleges is placed within the

general education curriculum under the supervision of the library (McGowanet al., 2016;

Stimpson, 2016). As a result of limited resources and lack of collaborative practices with

faculty, librarians in community colleges tend to focus on embedded information literacy

session when requested by the teaching faculty (Kim & Dolan, 2015). Unfortunately, this

type of instruction is tailored to specific assignments or courses and does not address the

overall issue with students' information literacy needs according to their level of

preparedness (Lloyd, 2005).

Research shows that faculty involvement is important for increasing student

success and persistence (Gruber, 2018). Traditionally, academic librarians have built

common practices on collaborating with full-time faculty on delivering one-time

information literacy sessions at community colleges. However, with the increasing

number of adjunct faculty members, collaborative practices with the librarians are yet to

be established, so the institution can meet the needs of community college students in becoming life-long learners (Carales et al., 2016; Dawes, 2019; Fazal, 2016).

**Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education**

Adjunct faculty are faculty members who teach more than 12 but less than 24 credits per school year and do not receive the same level of benefits and job security as full-time faculty (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). The other part-time teaching employee groups in higher education which is often discussed in research are contingent faculty and part-time faculty. However, these three groups reflect different populations and should not be used interchangeably (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). It is important to differentiate between full-time and adjunct faculty when examining attitudes and experiences regarding teaching information literacy by taking into consideration the effect their employment status has on the level of commitment to institutional goals (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Bauder & Rod, 2016; Guth et al., 2018; Kezar & Sam, 2011; McGowanet al., 2016; McGuinness, 2006; Rich, 2015; Saks, 2006).

Adjunct faculty employment in higher education institutions across America has been increasing for the last couple of decades (Eagan et al., 2015; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, the number of part time faculty in degree granting postsecondary institutions increased by 72% between 1999 and 2011 in comparison to full time faculty, which increased with 38% for the same period (NCES, 2019). Statistics show that in 2016, 47.3% of the teaching faculty in degree granting postsecondary institutions were employed part time (NCES, 2017).

*Adjunct Faculty and Information Literacy for Higher Education*

The interest in adjunct faculty has been on the rise over the last few years as a result of the increase in hires across the country (Tarr, 2010) and the trend is reflected in the growing numbers of publications discussing the impact adjuncts have on higher education (Datray et al., 2014; Tarr, 2010). Research shows controversial perspectives on adjunct faculty and the issues they encounter as a result of their part time employment (CCCE, 2014; Rhoades, 1996; Umbach, 2007). Adjunct faculty have different experiences with teaching information literacy as a result of the differences in the missions and the students' population of the 2-year and 4-year educational institutions (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015; Carales et al., 2016; Charles, 2017; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Datray et al., 2014; Levin, 2001).

Saunders (2012) believes that adjunct faculty encounter complex sets of issues in their efforts to teach information literacy because they have limited access to resources and support services due to their part time employment status. Examples of institutional and departmental barriers for adjunct faculty include the lack of offices and office hours to meet with students one-on-one, the fact that they need to adapt to different institutional cultures, learn various learning management systems (LMS), and often deal with the lack of an open communication or support from their departments (Backhaus, 2009; Eagan et al., 2015; Forbes et al., 2010). The lack of understanding of the adjunct faculty's needs and perspectives affects potential opportunities for information literacy initiatives and hinders adjunct faculty's teaching practices (Backhaus, 2009).

*Adjunct Faculty at Community Colleges*

Hiring adjunct faculty supports the market oriented economic model of higher education today because they are paid less than full time faculty and they receive minimum or no benefits (CCCSE, 2014). Community colleges were designed to provide access to higher education for all populations and became an important element in the movement for equity and social justice (Bailey & Morest, 2006). After the rise of neoliberal policies and free markets in higher education in the late 1980s, community colleges found it challenging to pursue their open access, low tuition missions (Levin, 2001). However, community colleges have adjusted to state and federal policies that require student learning outcomes, economic development programs, and decreased governmental funding by responding to neoliberal market demands (Levin, 2001). One way to subsidize the funding and explore marketization opportunities is by hiring adjunct faculty members to teach a large number of classes as a budget reducing measure for the institution (Green, 2007; Klausman, 2010; Pearch & Marutz, 2005).

Community colleges depend on adjunct faculty to teach more than half of the students, yet they do not have the same resources and support systems as full-time faculty, though they are hired to do the same job (Eagan et al., 2015). Adjunct faculty in community colleges teach approximately 58% of the courses (CCCSE, 2014; Eagan et al., 2015). According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014), adjunct faculty are more likely to be new to teaching with 37% having fewer than five years of experience and are usually assigned to teach developmental or remedial courses to students who need to build their knowledge base up to college level. However, as recorded in the literature, there is a lack of teaching support and professional

development opportunities for adjunct faculty at community colleges (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Burke, 2017; McGuinness, 2006; Schulte & Knapp, 2017). Further, the part time employment status of the adjunct teaching faculty affects not only their salaries and benefits but the level of their inclusion in institutional initiatives, their flexibility with the workload, and their access to resources and support services (Kezar et al., 2018). Therefore, to gain a more rounded understanding of the issue with information literacy at community colleges, it is necessary to explore the adjunct faculty experiences with it.

**Community Colleges in New Jersey**

There are 18 community colleges in New Jersey with more than 60 campuses, serving 21 counties (NJCCC, 2019).  Community colleges are the largest provider of higher education in New Jersey by enrolling over 325,000 students annually, according to the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (2019). New Jersey's community colleges provide over 2,000 transfer programs, occupational programs, continuing educational courses, business support services, and community service programs at a low cost in response to local and state needs (NJCCC, 2019). Consistent with the national trend, the number of adjunct faculty members, teaching at community colleges has been increasing over the years (Mazurek, 2011; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the State of New Jersey (2011) reported the employment of 2,281 full-time faculty and 7,805 part-time faculty members for the Fall semester of year 2011. Therefore, taking into consideration that over 77% of the teaching faculty in community colleges do not have full time employment (State of New Jersey,

2011), adjunct faculty's perspectives on information literacy should be regarded an important factor when discussing the issues with its implementation.

**Problem Statement**

In summary, changes in the way information is mass produced and digitally disseminated instigated changes in the information literacy skills undergraduate students need to succeed academically (Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Saunders, 2017; Wittebols, 2016).  Advanced technologies and the Internet have increased the accessibility and speed at which information is available and have made it overwhelming for students to navigate the digital environment (Horton & Keiser, 2008). Research shows that an especially vulnerable group is community college students. As a result of their socio-economic statuses, many community college students have not been exposed to the new digital environment and have not developed adequate information literacy skills appropriate for success at the higher education level (Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009).

To address the issue, national and regional organizations have developed thresholds, performance indicators, and frameworks to guide the information literacy implementation for higher education institutions in the new digital environment (ACRL, 2000; ALA, 1989; MSCHE, 2006). Higher education institutions in the U.S. have adopted the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1989) guidance for reforming the curricula and education policy for information literacy. Further, colleges and universities adhere to the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2014).  The Middle States Commission on Higher Education has identified the core competency skills that college students should achieve to ensure their

information literacy level and have included information literacy as one of the accreditation assessment components (MSCHE, 2006).

Academic librarians are expected to shape the main discourse of information literacy across all disciplines taught in a higher education institution even though they have almost no input in developing the curricula or the assignments (Cope & Sanabria, 2014; McGowanet al., 2016). Research shows that faculty involvement in teaching information literacy is necessary to assist them in developing adequate information literacy skills (Junisbai et al., 2016). Faculty members are in the best position to teach information literacy due to their direct contact with students and constant feedback during research projects (Saunders, 2012). As the literature suggests, faculty-librarian collaboration on teaching information literacy is necessary to assure the development of adequate skills that support students' academic success (Junisbai et al., 2016).

Since there are more adjunct than full-time faculty members who teach at community colleges (CCCSE, 2014), collaborative initiatives should take into consideration institutional barriers that result from adjuncts' part-time employment status. Researchers point out that adjunct and full-time faculty different level of support and perceive different benefits from the organization. Therefore, adjunct faculty members' level of investment in organizational goals and objectives, like information literacy is expected to be lower (Backhaus, 2009; Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Brennan & Magness, 2018; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The general problem, as identified by educators and scholars was that community colleges needed an approach to teaching information literacy within the general education curriculum that actively engages faculty (Carales et al., 2016; Dawes, 2019; Fazal, 2016;

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Gruber, 2018). The specific problem was the need to better understand how faculty

viewed information literacy for community college and what resources and support

services were deemed appropriate (Backhaus, 2009). The problem for this study was to

explore adjunct faculty's understanding and lived experiences of teaching information

literacy since they accounted for the larger teaching cohort in community colleges

(CCCSE, 2014).

Though, faculty involvement in information literacy is beneficial for the

institutions, only a handful of studies have examined aspects of teaching it at community

colleges by taking into consideration their perspectives (Backhaus, 2009). Yet, research

on adjunct faculty's perspectives on teaching information literacy has not been

conducted. If community colleges rely on adjunct faculty to teach more than half of their

students, information literacy will highly depend on their commitment and professional

skills (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Burke, 2017; McGuinness, 2006;

Schulte & Knapp, 2017).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how adjunct faculty

experience transformative learning as a result of their efforts to teach information literacy

for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. At this stage of the research,

information literacy was defined as a set of abilities to locate, evaluate, and use

information effectively (ALA, 1989). Specifically, this study investigated how adjunct

faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their prior experience and

background affected the integration of new knowledge when they were confronted by

new meaning making in today's digital and information environments. A qualitative

descriptive case study methodology was chosen to examine the occurrence of this phenomenon (Yin, 2014). By using qualitative methods, including one-on-one interviews, this study focused on adjunct faculty's understanding of information literacy and how they changed their frames of references when they needed to adapt to the new learning environment.

A qualitative inquiry was chosen as the appropriate method for the study because it brought the focus on the participants' experiences and enabled sense-making of the phenomenon, based on the meanings people revealed (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative research is social or behavioral in nature, focusing on meaning rather than statistical measurements of quantity, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Case studies, focusing on contemporary events, such as information literacy in higher education are practical and have the potential to be immediately applicable to the problem (Marczyk, et. al., 2005; Merriam, 2009). Yin (2009) suggests that a case study asking "how" and "why" questions is viable when there are contributions to be made to the body of knowledge, it does not require control of behavioral events, and the focus is on contemporary events.

The study was viewed through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Since adjunct faculty's understanding of information literacy, pedagogical practices, and professional development needs have an overall impact on the institutional information literacy implementation, Mezirow's transformative learning theory offered a compelling lens that framed their experiences and grounded the study.

*Research Questions*

The following questions guided the study:

1.  How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment?

2.  How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs informs changes in their current teaching practices?

3.  How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes?

4.  How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices?

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms are defined for the purpose of the current study:

*Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL)***:** A division of the American Library Association, ACRL represents academic and research libraries. Its committees develop programs and services to help academic librarians in higher education lead their institutions in the development of programs that advance the ideas of information literacy and scholarship.

*Adjunct faculty:* Faculty member teaching less than 12 credits per semester, not

exceeding 22 credits in any calendar year, and not receiving the same level of benefits

and job security as full-time faculty.

*Contingent faculty:* Any non-tenure track faculty member.

*Information literacy:* "Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing

the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced

and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating

ethically in communities of learning" (ACRL, 2016).

*Information competency:* An alternate phrase for information literacy adopted by the

ACRL and Middle States Commission when assessing information literacy.

*Information literacy instruction***:** Using the library and library resources as an essential

part of a course's objectives as well as the course's student learning and being given

some form of assessment for understanding course concepts and library-related

assignments (ALA, 2001).

*Part-time faculty***:** Faculty member teaching less than 6 credits per semester and not

exceeding 12 credits in any calendar year.

*Transformative learning***:** A theory, developed by Jack Mezirow (1991) that describes

the thinking process and self-reflection that allows for the construction of new meaning

of past experiences and knowledge in order to guide future action.

**Theoretical Framework**

   The theoretical framework for this study is based on the theory of transformative

learning, presented by Jack Mezirow (1991). The research questions in the study seek to

explore how adjunct faculty's ongoing process of self-reflection about their experience

and background affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's digital and information environments. This type of behavior is the basis of Mezirow's theory of how revising old knowledge and self-reflection allows for the construction of new meaning of past experiences and beliefs.

*Transformative Learning*

Transformative learning theory is used as a framework to explore and learn how adjunct faculty use their previous teaching experiences to inform requirements for their current teaching practice and confront emerging challenges in the new digital and information environment (Christie et al., 2015; Cranton, 2006; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Kitchenham, 2008; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; McCarthy, 2009; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1996; Mezirow, 2000; Mezirow, 2003; Paprock, 1992). Developed by Jack Mezirow in the late 1980s, transformative learning theory describes "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow 1996, p. 162). Transformative learning theory offers a different perspective on adjunct faculty by viewing them as adult learners who continually transform their meaning structures related to adapting to new learning environments as an ongoing process of critical reflection (Hooper & Scharf, 2017). Mezirow's framework allows for a detailed exploration of how adjunct faculty, in the role of learners, construct and re-formulate the meaning of their previous teaching experiences into adapting to the new requirements in higher education standards (Dochy et al., 2012).

According to Mezirow (1996) learners have two types of meaning structures: meaning schemes (specific knowledge, belief, feeling that form the notion of an

experience) and meaning perspectives (personal criteria for judgement of wrong and right, beautiful and ugly, true and false). These two structures define the frames through which the learners will understand their experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Therefore, changing learners' meaning structures will change their reactions and behaviors. Mezirow's (1996) original model of perspective transformation has ten stages. Mezirow's (2000) final expanded and revised theory includes four essential stages in the transformative learning process: (1) experiencing a disorienting dilemma, (2) engaging in critical reflection, (3) participating in rational discourse, and (4) achieving greater autonomy.

1. *Disorienting Dilemma:* when the learner experiences a discrepancy between previous assumptions and a new experience, they question the assumption or belief, which leads to doubts about the structural meaning (Kitchenham, 2008).

2. *Critical Reflection*: since their previous assumption is challenged, the learners critically reflect on their beliefs, revise their meaning schemes, and expand their perspectives to accommodate the new ideas (Kitchenham, 2008).

3. *Rational Discourse*: learners need to engage in an open, reflective, and constructive dialog so they can reflect, question and revise their old ideas. The process allows new knowledge and beliefs to change the meaning perspectives (Kitchenham, 2008).

4. *Autonomy*: the transformative learning process produces more autonomous thinkers (Kitchenham, 2008). The learners become more critical in assessing their assumptions and it becomes easier to find alternative perspectives. The process makes them better learners.

Transformative theory describes how learners' personal paradigms evolve as they encounter new experiences in life (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; McCarthy, 2009). Mezirow's theory is useful in this study to better understand how adjunct faculty encounter and approach the new information literacy skills that they have to learn and teach to the students as part of the fast changing technological and information environments, how they reflect on their previous teaching experiences, and how their transformed perspectives impact their current teaching practice (Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; VanderPol & Swanson, 2013).

***Factors Contributing to Transformative Learning Experiences for Adjunct Faculty***

Adjunct faculty, viewed as adult learners (Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Hurley & Potter, 2017), experience the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1996) as a result of their encounter and approach to the changes in the information and digital environments (Carales et al., 2016; Gruber, 2018) and the reforms of the educational policies (McGowanet al., 2016; Stimpson, 2016). The changing educational environment, fueled by the constant advancement of the technological and information platforms (Badke, 2014; Battista, Ellenwood, Gregory, & Higgins, 2015; Bombaro, 2014; Carlson & Johnston, 2014), introduce disorienting dilemmas for adjunct faculty, who teach information literacy but have never had formal professional training on best practices (Dolan, 2011; McGuinness, 2006).

For example, educators point out that faculty, both full-time and adjuncts, tend to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper than reinforcing the concepts of information literacy that produce good research (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). They are used to viewing the task of teaching information literacy through the prism of

their perspective disciplines rather than introducing it as part of the general education (Bury, 2011; Cope & Sanabria, 2014). Information literacy in today's digital environment should be taught in a way that users acquire the critical thinking abilities of understanding plagiarism, finding resources by constructing searches, evaluating results, citing, and synthesizing materials (Head & Eisenberg, 2010; VanScoy & Oakleaf, 2008).

Therefore, according to Hooper & Scharf (2017), adjunct faculty encounter and react to the new learning environments by continually transforming their meaning structures in order to adapt. The process requires critical self-reflection and examination of prior knowledge and beliefs. This model resonates with Mezirow's (1996) description of transformative learning as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow 1996, p. 162).  Through the process of critical self-reflection, as adult learners, adjunct faculty expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge so they can change their current teaching practices and confront challenges in the new digital and information environments. To assist the process, they seek professional training opportunities and institutional support to advance and maintain their information literacy understanding in the context of the new learning landscape. Mezirow's theory is useful in this study to better understand how adjunct faculty adapt to the new information literacy requirements, how they enhance their skills, and how they teach those skills to the students (Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; VanderPol & Swanson, 2013).

**Delimitations**

As with all research studies there were delimitations to be expected and addressed. As an academic librarian with over two decades experience in the field of information sciences, my feelings and understanding of the information literacy issue could bring researcher's bias and influence the study. According to Maxwell (2015) researchers bring bias from their background and experience and should be open to seeing the study from different perspectives. To avoid bias from my identity as an academic librarian, I stayed cautious of my bias during the process of collecting data, conducting interviews, and analyzing the data by listening to opinions of people who had alternative ideas about information literacy as an issue in the new digital environment.

According to Merriam (2009) validity in qualitative studies is relative to the participants' reality, experiences, and construction of the phenomenon being examined. Therefore, there was a potential for incomplete findings due to the nature of qualitative research. Additionally, the researcher might misinterpret the participants' meanings and words. For example, participants might use language and terminology to describe their understanding of information literacy that was specific exclusively to their disciplines. To address this issue, I used triangulation and member checking/participant validation.

For the purpose of this study, multiple data collection methods were used to address validity, credibility, and trustworthiness (Yin, 2003) along with triangulation of the data. To address the challenge with the validity, first, there were multiple sources of evidence and second, the participants were employed at more than one community college (Yin, 2003). To address the challenge with the reliability, procedures for the interviews were documented and the same procedure were followed at each college.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study could be used for future research, policy, and practice. By examining adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences with teaching information literacy, this study informs future attempts to engage the adjunct faculty cohort in the efforts to address information literacy teaching practices for community colleges in New Jersey. This study also provides insights on what professional development opportunities, resources, and support services, related to information literacy are perceived necessary by the adjunct faculty.

*Policy*

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges (2018) mandated that information literacy is integrated as part of the general education and is documented in the syllabi. Since adjunct faculty are the larger teaching cohort at community colleges (Green, 2007), the findings from this study provide valuable input on how to improve their commitment to the institutional goals about information literacy by encouraging the integration of new knowledge when confronted by new meaning making in today's digital and information environments.

The study holds significance for community colleges in New Jersey because it may be viewed as a model that provides a different perspective on what role adjunct faculty play in teaching information literacy across the general education curriculum. Its findings and conclusions could help guide decision-making on providing necessary professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty to acquire and maintain their information literacy skills and teaching practices.

*Practice*

This study's findings were shared with the members of the VALENJ Community College Caucus in the hopes of helping Information Literacy Initiative projects on revising the colleges' syllabi to meet the state requirement for integrating information literacy in the general education curriculum. The findings from this study expand the understanding of the importance of collaboration, support, and inclusion of adjunct faculty members in the information literacy initiatives since they teach more than half of the classes in community colleges.

Understanding the transformative learning process for adjunct faculty, based on Mazirow's (2000) theory of using previous teaching experiences to inform requirements for the current teaching practice and confront emerging challenges in the new digital and information environment enables the academic departments to develop a better approach when addressing the information literacy requirements for higher education institutions.

*Research*

This case study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base of the transformative learning experiences of adjunct faculty at community colleges in New Jersey by filling a gap in the research regarding their perspectives and experiences on teaching information literacy in the new learning environment (Christie et al., 2015; Cranton, 2006; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Kitchenham, 2008; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; McCarthy, 2009; Paprock, 1992). Further, this study also serves as a stepping stone for future research on college facilitated professional development programs to support adjunct faculty in their transformative learning processes, including collaborations with full-time faculty and academic librarians.

**Leadership for Information Literacy**

Higher education institutions are not structured to facilitate collaboration where departmental, union, and hierarchical administrative units act as cross-divisional barriers (Kezar, 2005). However, teaching information literacy across all disciplines, offered in a higher education institution requires collaborative efforts from librarians, faculty, and administrators (MSCHE, 2003). Therefore, teaching information literacy at community colleges requires transformational leadership efforts that create success models and foster collaboration among departments and between faculty and administration (Haycock, 1999; Stonebraker, 2016; Swanson, 2011; Todd, 1999; Virkus & Mandre, 2015). Further, teaching information literacy at community colleges requires transformational leadership because it reaches beyond managerial and instructional leadership, when needed to support change across the different structures in an institution (Todd, 1999).

The concept of leadership in the context of information literacy reflects the general idea of leadership for higher education which focuses on a shared vision, commitment to short and long-term goals, and dealing with the process of change (Gardner, 1990; Goleman, 2004; Kezar, 2001).  When addressing information literacy collaboration, educational leaders need to improve the culture of inclusion for adjunct faculty at community colleges.  By offering the same access to resources and professional developmental opportunities to full-time and adjunct faculty, the educational leaders ensure the same level of internal and external motivation and commitment to the institutional goals (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011).

According to Kezar (2005) leadership is a process by which a person or a group of people influence others to accomplish a vision and bring people together to make the

organization more effective. It is a common practice in higher education that faculty

oversee the curriculum and have autonomy within the classroom (Kezar, 2001; Saunders,

2012). Librarians cannot integrate information literacy throughout the curriculum without

the support of faculty and administration. Therefore, the role of a leader for information

literacy starts with the need to initiate collaboration among faculty and staff about a

shared vision of information literacy for community colleges, which stresses the

connections among information literacy, critical thinking, communication skills, and

lifelong learning (Kezar, 2005; Kotter, 1996; Saunders, 2012).

**Overview**

The study was divided in a six-chapter document. Chapter 1 introduced the

problem within the larger context of higher education, outlined the research questions,

and presented an overview of the theoretical frameworks that grounded the research.

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature, examined for the study. Chapter 3, the

methods section, offered a detailed discussion of the methodological framework. Chapter

4 presented the findings of the research. Chapters 5 and 6 comprised of two journal

articles that further elaborated on the significant findings with the intent for future

publication.

## Chapter Two

## Literature Review and Setting of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how adjunct faculty experienced transformative learning as a result of their efforts to teach information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. Specifically, this study investigated how adjunct faculty's prior experience and background affected the integration of new knowledge when they were confronted by new meaning making in today's digital and information environments. Additionally, this study focused on descriptions of adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs, which informed changes in their current teaching practices.

In order to examine how adjunct faculty changed their frames of references when they needed to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes, their experiences were viewed through the lenses of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. The transformative learning theory provided the necessary framework to ground this study. The research questions in the study sought to explore adjunct faculty's understanding of information literacy for community colleges and the pedagogical practices of adjunct instructors. Mezirow's (1991) theory of how the thinking process and self-reflection allowed for the construction of new meaning of past experiences and knowledge provided a framework to explore and learn how adjunct faculty used their previous teaching experiences to inform requirements for their current teaching practice and confront emerging challenges in the new digital and information environments (Christie et al., 2015; Cranton, 2006; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Kitchenham, 2008; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; McCarthy, 2009; Paprock, 1992).

Due to the use of a manuscript option for the dissertation, two articles replaced the traditional chapters five and six and entailed two individual literature reviews. Therefore, this chapter gave an overview of the concepts that were included in the literature reviews for the articles. The following topics, based on the research questions for this study, explained the categories of literature included in this chapter:

1. The Evolving Concept of Information Literacy

   - Approaches to Teaching Information Literacy for Higher Education

2. Guidelines and Field Documents for Teaching Information Literacy

   - Applying the Guidelines for Teaching Information Literacy to Community Colleges

3. Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education

   - Adjunct Faculty and Information Literacy

   - Adjunct Faculty at Community Colleges and Information Literacy

4. Theoretical Framework

   - Transformative Learning and Information Literacy

     o Transformative Learning, Applied to Adjunct Faculty as Adult Learners

     o Rationale for Applying Transformative Learning to Adjunct Faculty, Who Teach Information Literacy

Finally, the chapter provided a description of the context of the study. As a qualitative case study, the focus of the research was to examine the experiences of adjunct faculty members who taught at community colleges in New Jersey. Adjunct faculty often teach at more than one college. Therefore, the description of the context of

the study focused on the culture, mission, and governing bodies of community colleges in New Jersey in general.

**The Evolving Concept of Information Literacy**

The term information literacy was initially used by Zurkowski in 1974 to describe how people apply information resources to their work (as cited in Badke, 2010). The vast development of new technologies and easy accessibility of sources in Internet have challenged the traditional definition of information literacy (Breivik, 2005). With the advance of the Internet, users have become dependent on their knowledge of how to search, retrieve, and evaluate information efficiently by using the new technologies and social media (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). However, as research indicates, it is not enough for users just to have the technical knowledge of using devices to become information literate (Neumann, 2016). It is essential that students differentiate between technological and information literacy and acquire the critical thinking abilities of making educated decisions when engaged in academic research (Neumann, 2016).

To reflect on the changes in the learning environment and on the evolving concept of what information literacy means, the Association of College and Research Libraries provided an updated *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (*Framework*) (ACRL, 2014). The *Framework* (ACRL, 2014) includes six conceptual understandings that frame a series of interrelated ideas about information, research, and scholarship called threshold concepts: (1) Authority is constructed and contextual; (2) Information creation is a process; (3) Information has value; (4) Research has its basis in inquiry; (5) Scholarship has value as conversation; and (6) Searching can be strategic exploration. The current definition of Information Literacy is based on the *Framework*

and Townsend's et al. (2016) Delphi study that engaged the opinions of expert practitioners. Scholars in the field defined information literacy as,

> competence in working with systems of information to discover, evaluate, manage, and use information effectively in context, informed by an understanding of the social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions that affect the creation and dissemination of information within those systems (Townsend et. al., 2016, p. 33).

Educators and librarians highlight the connection between the evolving concept of information literacy and the importance of new approaches to teaching it for higher education institution (Bury, 2011; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2017; Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018).

### *Approaches to Teaching Information Literacy for Higher Education*

The phenomenon of how to successfully teach information literacy for higher education have been investigated via the perspectives of each of the three populations involved: librarians, students, and faculty (Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Klomsri & Tedre, 2016; Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). Researchers point out that the difficulties with teaching information literacy stem from the fact that faculty and librarians approach the task from the point of view of their respective disciplines (Gullikson, 2006).

Though the *Framework* provides basis for applying information literacy as part of the general education, faculty tend to view the thresholds as a product of the library science (Nelson, 2017). Smith (2016) identifies as a drawback of the *Framework* the fact that no teaching faculty were recruited for the project or asked for feedback, despite the frequently discussed topic in the academic literature about the benefits of collaboration

with faculty (Raynolds et. al., 2016).  Conversely, Swanson (2017) states that faculty

"felt that the novice-expert trajectory outlined by threshold concepts presented a useful

way to define the relation between faculty member, student, and learning outcomes" (p.

12-13). In a detailed study on successful methods to integrate the *Framework* into the

curriculum, Charles (2017) identifies the task of finding new opportunities to form

productive partnership with faculty as one of the most promising steps.  Therefore, by

collaborating, faculty and librarians may not only improve common practices of teaching,

but provide a sound approach to information literacy assessment at institutional levels.

**Guidelines and Field Documents for Teaching Information Literacy**

To ensure students' success, one of the accreditation requirements for higher

education institutions is information literacy (MSCHE, 2006). Successful accreditation

guarantees that the institution provides quality education and adheres to academic

standards (Fazal, 2015; Gaskin & Marcy, 2003). In addition, accredited institutions

become eligible to receive federal funding benefits (Gaskin & Marcy, 2003). Therefore,

institutions strive to find successful approaches to implement and assess information

literacy by adopting guidelines from field documents and frameworks. The most recent

document, addressing the concept of information literacy in the new learning

environment for post-secondary institutions is the *Framework* (ACRL, 2014).

The *Framework* (ACRL, 2014) replaced the *Information Literacy Competency*

*Standards for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2000) and sparked a big controversy and debate

among academic librarians (Reed, 2015). Many felt that the *Standards* (ACRL, 2000)

needed to be updated to reflect the new ways of thinking about information literacy

(Reed, 2015). However, the proposed *Framework* (ACRL, 2004) is a different type of

document, consisting of 'threshold concepts', which failed to provide measurable baseline (Reed, 2015). The published literature shows that many librarians embrace the value the *Framework's* thresholds bring to the concept of information literacy by connecting the intellectual turf among disciplines (Swanson, 2017). However, there are many questions raised by educators who find it problematic that the *Framework* does not meet the demands for measurable learning outcomes and assessment in higher education (Craven, 2016).

The larger body of publications on information literacy focuses on the discussion of connecting the field's guiding documents practical use, mainly the *Framework* (ACRL, 2014), with the MSCHE (2016) requirements for measurable assessment methods for information literacy (Oakleaf et al., 2011; Samson, 2010; Saunders, 2012). The general agreement among scholars and researchers is that the *Framework* is an insightful tool that encourages librarians to think about how to teach information literacy in the new technological age (Bauder & Rod, 2016), explore the evolution of information habits (Foasberg, 2015), and investigate the changing information needs of the students (Burgess, 2015). However, Oakleaf (2014) presents the assessment challenges of aligning the information literacy thresholds with institutional goals since the *Framework* does not provide learning outcomes. Leslin Charles (2017) investigated the level of readiness of academic libraries in New Jersey to transition to the *Framework* two months before the *Standards* were rescinded. The study reveals that "more time was needed for librarians to digest it [*the Framework*] and to start to work locally to integrate the concepts, and to have more examples of implementation" (Charles, 2017, p. 235).

Though, at academic level, *the Framework's* threshold concept of information literacy addresses the changes in students' information habits in the new digital environment, educators need to agree on universal assessment approach to appease the institution's administrative requirements for accreditation (Charles, 2017). Assessment and implementation of information literacy present unique challenges for community colleges (Craven, 2016; Reed, 2015), taken into consideration the open-door admission policy and the information needs of the student population.

### *Applying the Guidelines for Teaching Information Literacy to Community Colleges*

The conceptual change of defining information literacy from a set of measurable *Standards* (ALA, 2000) to the ACRL's *Framework* (2014)   has been the subject of much debate among academic librarians at community colleges (Kim & Dolan, 2015, Lloyd, 2005). As Burgess (2015), a member of the Task Force for revision of the new thresholds, explains, educators who work with students on advanced research projects find the *Framework* a natural fit with its highly theoretical approach to the concept of information literacy. Whereas, as Craven (2016) argues that librarians in community colleges, who teach most of the time introductory concepts and basic research skills during one class sessions, prefer the *Standards* because they provide concrete, measurable steps to implementation (Reed, 2015).

Therefore, many find the *Framework* inapplicable for community colleges and support the claim with the fact that it was developed mostly by academic librarians from 4-year universities and did not reflect on the needs of the student population of 2-year institutions (Craven, 2016; Reed, 2015; Smith, 2016). Further, librarians in community

colleges tend to focus on embedded information literacy sessions, which unfortunately do not engage the faculty (Kim & Dolan, 2015, Lloyd, 2005).

**Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education**

The interest in adjunct faculty has been on the rise over the last few years as a result of the increase in hires of adjuncts across the country (Tarr, 2010). The trend is reflected in the growing numbers of publications discussing the impact adjuncts have on higher education (Datray et al., 2014; Tarr, 2010). Research shows controversial perspectives on adjunct faculty and the issues they encounter as a result of their part time employment (CCCE, 2014; Rhoades, 1996; Umbach, 2007). Though the published literature yielded a wide variety of topics regarding adjunct faculty, to align with the research questions, this review will only focus on the topic of job satisfaction and factors that affect their commitment to teaching information literacy (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Rhoades, 1996; Rich, 2015; Saks, 2006).

Statistics shows that adjunct faculty are more likely to be new to teaching with 37% having fewer than five years of experience and are usually assigned to teach developmental courses (ACCCS, 2014). Lack of professional development opportunities (Diegel, 2013) and mentorship programs for adjunct faculty (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018) are often described as part of the issue of not feeling valued and not receiving equal treatment with the full-time faculty. Bakley and Brodersen (2018) suggest that even minimal incentives toward recognizing adjunct faculty's value may increase their job satisfaction. The authors recommend including adjuncts in departmental discussions, offering recognition for service, and providing access to resources and professional

development opportunities as inclusive activities that might increase job satisfaction (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018).

Further, the feelings of isolation (Dolan, 2011) and lack of administrative support (McGuinness, 2006) have been discussed in national studies about adjuncts as some of the factors that influence their job satisfaction and level of commitment to institutional goals. Rich (2015) reports in his detailed study on job satisfaction that adjunct faculty score remarkably lower than full time faculty in specific areas such as salary, autonomy, students, and work relationships. The author concludes that the intrinsic factors, which influence workplace satisfaction, are recognition, faculty engagement, and academic freedom (Rich, 2015). Further, Forbes, Hickey and White (2010) point out that isolation due to their part time employment status is the main complaint of the participants in their study on adjunct faculty development. The results from their survey, designed to identify the overall needs of the adjuncts at their institution, reveal that integrating adjunct faculty into the school's overall faculty cohort remains a challenge (Forbes et al., 2010).

*Adjunct Faculty and Information Literacy*

There are numerous studies that address the issues with teaching and assessing information literacy; however, there are few studies that differentiate between full and part time faculty members when placing teaching faculty as a focus of the research. Therefore, the literature that discusses faculty perspectives on information literacy covers studies on faculty in general and assumes the inclusion of adjuncts. Another gap in the research is revealed by the fact that the majority of the published studies are written by librarians and answer questions from their point of view (Allen, 2007; Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009; Reed, 2015; Swanson, 2004). There has been minimal exploration into the

learning, understanding, and use of the concept *information literacy* by the faculty who spend the most time in classrooms (Grizzle & Calvo, 2013). Klomsri and Tedre (2016) highlight, in their detailed study on information literacy practices, that most of the existing research, guided by the ACRL (2014) *Framework,* focus on the issue from the librarians' perspective and does not capture the teaching faculty's role.  Therefore, the authors conclude, the improvement of current information literacy practices requires further exploration of faculty's involvement opportunities.

Existing research reveals that faculty, whether full or part time, and librarians do not agree on how and where students should gain information literacy skills (Bombaro, 2014; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Head & Eisenberg, 2010; McGuinness, 2006; Samson, 2010; Saunders, 2012).  Some research indicates that faculty, both full-time and adjuncts, tend to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper than reinforcing the concepts of information literacy that produce good research (Bury, 2011; Cope & Sanabria, 2014). Whereas, information literacy from the perspective of the academic librarians focuses on understanding plagiarism, finding resources by constructing searches, evaluating results, citing, and synthesizing materials (Head & Eisenberg, 2010; VanScoy & Oakleaf, 2008). Faculty and librarians have different approaches to addressing students' information literacy needs, which results in issues in its implementation and assessment at higher education institutions. Therefore, Cope and Sanabria (2014) recommend finding better teaching strategies, which incorporate both librarians' and faculty's perspectives, so that they can support the information needs of the student population.

Conversely, Nelson (2017) asserts that since many professors have individual conceptions of what research skills are, they see information literacy as part of the main academic discourse, therefore a responsibility of the academic librarians.  As a result, often teaching faculty do not allocate time for information literacy in their classrooms and less than half incorporate assignments that include specific information literacy concepts (Bury, 2011; Dubicki, 2013; Sanders, 2012).  Faculty, both full time and adjuncts, lack the time in the curriculum, do not have sufficient skills to teach information literacy, or they expect students to become information literate on their own by doing research without explicit instruction (Gullikson, 2006; McGuinness, 2006; Oakleaf et al., 2011).

*Adjunct Faculty at Community Colleges and Information Literacy*

Even though, community colleges rely on adjunct faculty to teach more than half of their students (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; McGuinness, 2006), detailed research on their perspectives on information literacy has not been conducted. Research shows that faculty-librarian collaboration on information literacy implementation is beneficial for the institution (Backhaus, 2009). Yet, the literature discussing opportunities for adjunct faculty to participate in collaborative projects on information literacy is limited and conflicting since collaborative practices between adjuncts and librarians are yet to be established (Datray et al., 2014; Forbes et al., 2010; Saunders, 2012). Very little attention has been given to professional developmental programs, which can advance and maintain the information literacy skills among adjunct faculty (Datray et al., 2014; Gullikson, 2006; Iannuzzi, 1998; Tarr, 2010).

Further, information literacy implementation and assessment at community colleges depend in a high degree on adjunct faculty's commitment to the institutional goals (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Burke, 2017; McGuinness, 2006; Schulte & Knapp, 2017). Yet, there is almost no research published on successful adjunct faculty training and support in teaching information literacy skills or description of best practices of adjunct faculty, implementing information literacy into their classes (Klomsri & Tedre, 2016; Tarr, 2010). Traditionally, academic librarians have built common practices on collaborating with full-time faculty on delivering one-time information literacy sessions at community colleges (Henry et al., 2015; Kim & Dolan, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Swanson, 2017). However, with the increasing number of adjunct faculty members (Diegel, 2013), collaborative practices with the librarians are yet to be established, so the institution can meet the needs of community college students in becoming life-long learners (Carales et al., 2016; Dawes, 2019; Fazal, 2016).

**Theoretical Framework**

The research questions in this study sought to explore adjunct faculty's understanding of information literacy for community colleges by investigating the issues with the development and maintenance of their information literacy skills and teaching practices (Datray et al., 2014). Further, the study attempted to understand how adjunct faculty changed their frames of references when they needed to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes. Therefore, Mezirow's transformative learning (1996) was used as a theoretical frame to ground the study.

*Transformative Learning*

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) is a theoretical framework in adult education, applied successfully to information literacy as an essential method to acknowledge learners' prior knowledge, experience, and background as elements that affect the integration of new knowledge (Hooper & Scharf, 2017). In fact, Taylor (2007) called transformative learning 'the most researched and discussed theory in the field of adult education' (p. 1). Developed by Jack Mezirow in the late 1980s, transformative learning theory describes "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Like all theories, transformative learning is built on preceding theories of learning and is situated in constructivism with its problem-based approach to education (Mezirow, 1990). Transformative learning is also situated in andrology and shares the focus on self-direction and life experiences of adult learners (Cooke, 2010).

According to Mezirow (1996) adult learners have two types of meaning structures: meaning schemes, which come from specific knowledge, belief, or feeling and meaning perspectives, which come from personal criteria for judgement of wrong and right, beautiful and ugly, true and false. These two structures, meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, define the frames through which the learners understand their experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Therefore, the transformative learning process, which changes reactions and behaviors, happens by evolving learners' meaning structures. Mezirow's (1996) own model of transformative learning evolved over time. Initially the model of perspective transformation of critical self-reflection and reformulation of a meaning perspective comprised of ten stages (Mezirow, 1996). Over a decade later,

Mezirow (2003) revised his theory to include four essential stages in the transformative learning process: (1) experiencing a disorienting dilemma or questioning previous knowledge, belief, experience; (2) engaging in critical reflection or expanding their perspectives to accommodate new knowledge, experience; (3) participating in rational discourse or revising old knowledge and allowing new ideas; and (4) achieving greater autonomy or the process makes them critical, autonomous thinkers.

**Transformative Learning, Applied to Faculty as Adult Learners.**

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) as a theoretical framework in adult education has been applied successfully to faculty as adult learners who continue to work on their professional development (Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Hurley & Potter, 2017). When applied to faculty (whether they are full time, adjunct, or academic librarians), transformative learning is used as a framework to explore and learn  how their prior experience and background affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning structures in today's digital and information environments (Christie et al., 2015; Cranton, 2006; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Kitchenham, 2008; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; McCarthy, 2009; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1996; Mezirow, 2000; Mezirow, 2003; Paprock, 1992).

Transformative learning theory offers a different perspective on faculty (both adjunct and full-time) by viewing them as adult learners. Faculty continually transform their meaning structures, related to adapting to new learning environments, as part of an ongoing process of critical reflection (Hooper & Scharf, 2017). The model resonates with Mezirow's (1996) description of transformative learning as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's

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experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow 1996, p. 162). Mezirow's theory is useful in this study to better understand how faculty adapt to the new information literacy requirements, how they enhance their skills, and how they teach those skills to students.

Transformative learning has been applied successfully to adjunct faculty in online teaching (Palmer & Bowman, 2014) by viewing them as adult learners who seem to realize personal and professional growth when confronted with dilemmas that challenge their existing views of the world like teaching online versus teaching face-in-face (Mezirow, 1994). Similarly, transformative learning was useful in this study to better understand how adjunct faculty informed their current teaching practices as a result of their personal and professional growth when confronted with the need to adapt to the new learning environment. However, since there is no practice of observing information literacy sessions, taught by adjunct faculty and there are no professional development opportunities or best teaching practices for adjuncts, there is little to no empirical evidence of the transformative learning process for adjunct faculty. Therefore, the only account of their transformative experiences about teaching information literacy could be the records of their stories in a case study.

**Rationale for Applying Transformative Learning to Adjunct Faculty Who Teach Information Literacy.** Adjunct faculty are viewed as adult learners (Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Hurley & Potter, 2017) who experience the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1996) as a result of the changing information and digital environments (Carales et al., 2016; Gruber, 2018) and reforms in the educational landscape (McGowanet al., 2016; Stimpson, 2016).

A disorienting dilemma (stage 1 of the transformative learning process) about teaching information literacy for higher education emerges from experiences adjunct faculty have in the classroom and/or on campus. The need to deal with new institutional requirements, new technological and information platforms combined with the lack of departmental support and professional training opportunities are some examples of disorienting dilemmas adjunct faculty encounter nowadays. Through the process of critical self-reflection (stage 2 of the transformative learning process) and ambition, as adult learners, in order to expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge, adjunct faculty use previous academic experiences to inform requirements for their current teaching practices and confront challenges in the new digital, information, and educational environments. To assist the process, they seek professional training opportunities and institutional support to advance and maintain their information literacy understanding in the context of the new learning landscape (stage 3 of the transformative learning process). The result of the process is that adjunct faculty, viewed as adult learners, become critical, autonomous thinkers (stage 4 of the transformative learning process) and are able to inform changes into their current teaching practices for information literacy.

**Conclusion**

In summary, information literacy for higher education, and community colleges in particular, is highly dependent on adjunct faculty involvement and faculty-librarian collaboration (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Jennifer L. C. Burke, 2017; McGuinness, 2006; Schulte & Knapp, 2017). The concept of information literacy for higher education has undergone changes and adaptations due to the constant development

of new technologies and an explosive dissemination of information (Badke, 2014; Battista, Ellenwood, Gregory, & Higgins, 2015; Bombaro, 2014; Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Dawes, 2019; Gregory & Higgins, 2017; Mackey & Jacobson, 2005; Miller, 2018; Monge & Frisicaro-Pawlowski, 2014; Pierce, 2009; Saunders, 2017; Wallis, 2003; Wang et al., 2011; Wittebols, 2016). These changes need to be reflected in the way information literacy skills are taught to college students (Jeffrey et al., 2011; Neumann, 2016) and in the way the new concept of information literacy is perceived by librarians, students, and faculty (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018).

Most of the published research on information literacy focuses on the importance of faculty-librarian collaboration in fostering approaches to implementing and assessing students' information literacy competency (Bury, 2011; Mackey & Jacobson, 2005; Oakleaf et al., 2011; Samson, 2010; Saunders, 2012; Smith, 2001) by addressing the adaptation of the *Framework* (ACRL, 2014), a field document, produced by the library community. The literature review reveals that there are studies, discussing the issues with information literacy implementation and assessment, which examine experiences of librarians, students, and faculty as representatives of the three major stakeholders (Bombaro, 2014; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Head & Eisenberg, 2010; McGuinness, 2006; Samson, 2010; Saunders, 2012; Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018).

These studies reveal that faculty (both adjunct and full-time) and librarians differ in their understanding of information literacy and they disagree on approaches to implementing it in the curricula (Bombaro, 2014; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Head & Eisenberg, 2010; McGuinness, 2006; Samson, 2010; Saunders, 2012). Faculty tend to perceive academic research exclusively as it applies to their disciplines and they see

information literacy implementation as part of the main academic discourse and responsibility of the academic librarians (Burry, 2011). Further, research indicates that faculty, regardless of their full or part time employment, tend to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper rather than reinforcing the concepts of information literacy that produces good research (Bury, 2011; Cope & Sanabria, 2014).

However, as Sanders (2012) suggests, faculty members are in the best position to enforce the implementation of information literacy because they are in direct contact with the students through the semester. Therefore, as the literature suggests, faculty-librarian collaboration on the matter of a unified perception of information literacy thresholds is necessary to assure the development of adequate skills for college students (Junisbai et al., 2016). Therefore, transformative learning (Mezirow, 1996) provides a framework to explore how faculty and librarians, as adult learners, use their previous teaching experiences to inform requirements for their current teaching practice by allowing for the construction of new experiences and knowledge (Christie et al., 2015; Cranton, 2006; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; Kitchenham, 2008; McCarthy, 2009; Paprock, 1992).

The increase in hires of adjunct faculty across the country has been reflected in the growing publications discussing their impact on higher education (Datray et al., 2014; Tarr, 2010). Statistics shows that in 2016, 47.3% of the teaching faculty in degree granting postsecondary institutions were employed part time (NCES, 2017). It becomes evident that information literacy at higher education institutions depend highly on adjunct faculty's commitment to the effort of fostering adequate information literacy skills

(Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Jennifer L. C. Burke, 2017; McGuinness, 2006; Schulte & Knapp, 2017).

The research community has produced numerous publications discussing the issues adjunct faculty encounter as a result of their part time employment status (Rhoades, 1996; Umbach, 2007). Yet, what is missing in this discussion is research, discussing opportunities for adjunct faculty to enhance their skills and participate in collaborative projects on information literacy (Datray et al., 2014; Saunders, 2012). There is almost no research published on successful training for adjunct faculty on teaching information literacy. There are no studies describing best practices for adjuncts on how to overcome their part time employment status limitations and successfully engage in teaching information literacy for their classes (Klomsri & Tedre, 2016; Tarr, 2010).

Clearly, the research that examines adjunct faculty perspectives on teaching information literacy is yet to be developed. Further, research is needed to examine how adjunct faculty maintain and advance their perception of information literacy and teaching methodologies.  Research is necessary to identify how limiting factors, like perception of the concept *information literacy* and lack of professional development support, may be addressed to empower adjunct faculty in their efforts of teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey.

**Setting for the Study**

The primary setting for the study was the community colleges in New Jersey in general since adjunct faculty, as part-time employees, often work for more than one institution. There are 18 community colleges in New Jersey with more than 60 campuses, serving 21 counties (NJCCC, 2019).  Many of the community colleges in New Jersey

were established 50 years ago and currently enroll over 325,000 students annually

(NJCCC, 2019). By reaching a significant portion of the state's population, community

colleges have become the largest provider of higher education in New Jersey (NJCCC,

2019). They provide over 2,000 transfer programs, occupational programs, continuing

educational courses, business support services, and community service programs at an

affordable cost (NJCCC, 2019b). Community colleges are well positioned to help the

local economy grow and people succeed in the age of rapid economic, social, and

technological change.

The central governing body for all community colleges in the state is the New

Jersey Council of County Colleges (the *Council*), established by state statue (18A:64A-

26) in 1989 (NJCCC, 2019). The purpose of the *Council* is "to engage in activities for the

advancement of the community colleges of New Jersey and to perform certain sector

coordinating responsibilities as required by New Jersey statutes" (NJCCC, 2019a). The

*Council* joins the leadership of trustees and presidents of all respective institutions with

the goal and responsibility to strengthen and support the network of community colleges

in the state. According to the NJCCC website, the mission of the New Jersey Council of

County Colleges is:

> to provide statewide leadership for the advancement of the eighteen community
>
> colleges of New Jersey, perform sector coordinating responsibilities as required
>
> by state law, and coordinate statewide efforts to improve student success.
>
> (NJCCC, 2019a)

In their executive report, *Vision 2028: Framework for the future of New Jersey's*

*community colleges*, the *Council* launches four initiatives to help the state reach its goal

of 65% of working-age New Jerseyans with a high-quality credential or degree by 2025 NJCCC, 2019c). The four initiatives are: 1) Expanding Pathways that Lead to Credentials and Careers; 2) Strengthening the Delivery of Innovative Learning of Essential Skills and Abilities; 3) Connecting Adults to Opportunity; and 4) Connecting Students to Social Service Supports. As part of the first initiative, Pathways to Success, the Council (NJCCC, 2018) mandates that information literacy is integrated as part of the general education and is documented in the syllabi.

Consistent with the national trend, the number of adjunct faculty members, teaching at community colleges has been increasing over the years (Mazurek, 2011; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for the State of New Jersey (2011) reported the employment of 2,281 full-time faculty and 7,805 part-time faculty members for the Fall semester of year 2011. Therefore, taking into consideration that over 77% of the teaching faculty in community colleges does not have full time employment, adjunct faculty's perspectives on information literacy should be regarded an important factor when discussing the issues with its implementation.

The setting of this study, community colleges in New Jersey, provided context for the methodology, described in Chapter Three.

**Chapter Three**

**Methodology**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how adjunct

faculty experienced transformative learning as a result of their efforts to teach

information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. Information

literacy was defined as the ability to identify information needs and the skills to discover,

evaluate, and use information effectively (Townsend et. al., 2016).  The study resulted in

descriptions of how adjunct faculty transformed their teaching practices when necessary

to adapt to new information environments. A qualitative descriptive case study

methodology was chosen to examine the occurrence of this phenomenon (Yin, 2014). For

the purposes of this research, the units of analysis were adjunct faculty, who have taught

at community colleges in New Jersey for at least two semesters. The setting for the study

was the network of the 18 community colleges in New Jersey with more than 60

campuses, serving 21 counties (NJCCC, 2019).

Participants were selected through intensity and snowball sampling approaches

(Patton, 2002) in an effort to ensure that the responses satisfactorily represented adjunct

faculty at New Jersey community colleges. As adjunct faculty, some participants were

employed at more than one institution. Their experiences from multiple institutions

enriched the study and provided depth in the research of adjunct faculty's transformative

learning experiences when teaching information literacy. Data collection methods,

chosen for this study, included semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and

documentary evidence to achieve triangulation of the data and support the reliability of

the study (Yin, 2014).  The study was viewed through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's

(1997) transformative learning theory. Mezirow's theory offered a compelling lens that framed adjunct faculty's experiences with the process of transforming their knowledge about information literacy as part of the fast changing technological and information environments by reflecting on their previous and current teaching practices.

**Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment?

2. How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs informs changes in their current teaching practices?

3. How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes?

4. How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices?

**Rationale and Assumptions of a Qualitative Strategy of Inquiry**

Qualitative research is social or behavioral in nature, focusing on meaning rather than statistical measurements of quantity, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). The current study sought to understand how adjunct faculty developed subjective meanings of their experiences in regards to information literacy implementation at community colleges in New Jersey (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative inquiries focus on the participants' experiences and enable sense-making of the phenomenon, based on the meanings people reveal (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis,

2017). This study assisted in investigating a phenomenon based on the perspectives and lived experiences of adjunct faculty, who taught at community colleges in New Jersey. Therefore, the reality, as constructed by the adjunct faculty members, served as an interpretation of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) describes qualitative research as holistic, multidimensional, and inductive because it investigates the phenomenon in its natural settings. The holistic and multidimensional natures of this study were developed by investigating multiple frames of references of adjunct faculty members on teaching information literacy for community colleges (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The study was inductive in nature since the data was gathered using open-ended interview questions, so the adjunct faculty could freely share their experiences without the constrains of a predetermined scale (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Strategy of Inquiry**

The primary qualitative strategy of inquiry was a descriptive case study. A qualitative descriptive case study was an appropriate design because the intention of the study was to acquire rich, detailed, contextual data from within a bounded social system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2014). The goal of this qualitative single case study was to explore the transformative learning experiences of adjunct faculty in the process of teaching information literacy for their classes at community colleges and to identify the transformation of their meaning structures. Case studies are commonly used as a form of social science research (Yin, 2014). Case studies, focusing on contemporary events, such as information literacy at community colleges, are practical and have the potential to be immediately applicable to the problem (Marczyk, et. al., 2005; Merriam, 2009). This

study, focused on a current event, such as the growing adjunct faculty cohort and their role in teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey, was practical and had the potential to be immediately applicable to the problem.

According to Yin (2014), case studies focus on contemporary events and do not require control of behavior. Therefore, this qualitative descriptive case study (Yin, 2014) brought the focus on the adjunct faculty's experiences and enabled sense-making of the phenomenon, based on the meanings the participants reveal (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Yin (2014) suggests that a case study asking "how" and "why" questions is viable when there are contributions to be made to the body of knowledge. By examining adjunct faculty's meaning making and frames of references on how to teach information literacy for community colleges in New Jersey, this study informed future attempts to engage the adjunct faculty cohort in the institutional efforts to address information literacy implementation for community colleges in New Jersey.

A descriptive single case study with literal replication design, as introduced by Robert K. Yin (2014) in *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* was chosen to examine the experiences of adjunct faculty members, who taught at community colleges in New Jersey. In this instance, the network of the 18 community colleges in New Jersey was the context for the study. The community colleges in New Jersey are bound by common policies and procedures of employing adjunct faculty and implementing information literacy. Therefore, the rationale for the use of a single case as a strategy of inquiry was that adjunct faculty might be employed by multiple community colleges at the same time.

Additionally, descriptive case studies, according to Yin (2014), "describe a phenomenon (the "case") in its real-world context" (p.238). Golafshani (2003) and Merriam (2009) support the idea that a qualitative case study methodology is a naturalistic approach to understanding phenomena in a context specific setting. A single case descriptive design was employed for this study because this case examined the nature of the phenomenon within the bounded context (Yin, 2014). Figure 1 depicts the relationship.

**Figure 1**

*Single Case Study Design*
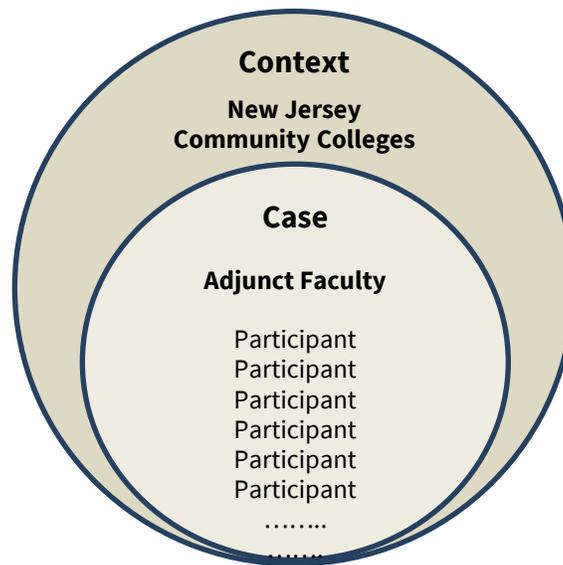


The qualitative descriptive case study approach helped with the design of the study by establishing its boundaries. Conducting a case study was an effective way to obtain data and identify gaps in the knowledge base, concerning adjunct faculty and their role in teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey.

**Context of the Study**

      The setting for the study was community colleges in New Jersey. The reason, the study investigated community colleges in New Jersey as a whole was that they were bound by common procedures on information literacy implementation and common policies on adjunct faculty employment.  Regulations about information literacy for community colleges in New Jersey are coordinated by the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (the *Council*) (NJCCC, 2019a). Information literacy is one of the accreditation requirements for higher education institutions (MSCHE, 2006).  Community colleges strive for successful accreditation because it guarantees the quality of the education they offer (Fazal, 2015; Gaskin & Marcy, 2003) and provides access to federal funding benefits (Gaskin & Marcy, 2003).  As part of the *Council's* vision to provide credentials or degrees to 65% of the working-age citizens of New Jersey (NJCCC, 2019c), community colleges in New Jersey have committed to initiatives to help the state reach its goal. As part of the first initiative, Pathways to Success, the *Council* (NJCCC, 2018) mandates that information literacy is integrated as part of the general education and is documented in the syllabi of the courses.

      For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis were adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty were defined as faculty members, teaching less than 12 credits per semester, not exceeding 22 credits in any calendar year, and not receiving the same level of benefits and job security as full-time faculty (NCES, 2019). Adjunct faculty, as part-time employees, often worked for more than one institution and their employment varied among different colleges from semester to semester.  This study focused on the

experiences of adjunct faculty who taught at community colleges in New Jersey for at least two semesters.

*Participant Selection*

This research was designed as a single case study (Yin, 2014). In this case (Figure 1), the New Jersey community colleges provided the context and adjunct faculty, who worked for one or more community colleges, were the units of the case (Yin, 2014). The study employed intensity and snowball purposeful sampling approaches (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is a strategy for qualitative studies, where the phenomenon occurs naturally as it was the case of investigating adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences with teaching information literacy at community colleges (Patton, 2002; Rossman and Rallis, 2017). According to Patton (2002), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding" (p. 46). The exploration of adjunct faculty's critical self-reflection and meaning making in the process of adapting to the new information environments provided an information-rich case, which brought further insights into the issue of this study (Patton, 2002). Since the purpose of this study was to explore the transformative learning experiences of adjunct faculty with teaching information literacy, purposeful sampling of information-rich cases of adjunct faculty members illuminated the research questions of this study (Patton, 2002).

Participants were selected through intensity and snowball sampling approaches (Patton, 2002) in an effort to acquire rich and detailed data about adjunct faculty's experiences about teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey. The rationale for this methodological choice was to identify and include those

participants, who would be able to contribute a wealth of diverse information, and therefore be the worthiest to study. The fact that the participants volunteered to be interviewed for 45-60 minutes showed their commitment to the issues of information literacy for their students. Therefore, intensity sampling, as described by Patton (2002), connected the researcher to those participants who had the greatest potential to provide rich and detailed data by applying a participant selection protocol. The use of information rich cases increased the authenticity and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling is "an approach for locating information-rich key informants" by asking "well-situated people" to recommend potential participants (Patton, 2002, p. 237).

To build a sample of 25 – 30 potential interviewees, I used two pathways – professional networks and social media platforms. As a member of a professional network of academic librarians from community colleges in New Jersey, I sent a request to my colleagues for recommendations of adjunct faculty members that they have worked with and could identify as potential participants for this study. In an effort to extend the outreach to larger number of adjunct faculty, interested to participate, I advertised the study on social media platforms, like LinkedIn and Facebook (Appendix A).

The selection of the participants for this study was intentionally focused on adjunct rather than full-time faculty to reflect the differences in their experiences as a result of their employment status.  A participant selection protocol assisted in limiting the participants to only those who have taught classes for at least two semesters at a community college in New Jersey. Further, the study was limited to adjunct faculty, who taught courses that required at least one research paper per semester. The syllabi for these

courses should indicate that the instructors were expected to incorporate at least one class during the semester for information literacy instructions.

Here is the list of criteria, used to identify participants for this case study. The respondents should:

- be currently employed at a community college in New Jersey;

- have at least one year (two semesters) of experience, teaching at a community college in New Jersey;

- teach courses that require at least one research paper per semester;

- indicate in the syllabi that the instructors were expected to incorporate at least one class during the semester for information literacy implementation instructions.

The participants were contacted by phone, email, or personal messages to schedule an interview at their convenience.

**Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected, following Yin's (2014) protocol for conducting case studies. Different sources of data are recommended in qualitative research to achieve triangulation and support the reliability of the study (Patton, 2002; Rossman and Rallis, 2017; Yin, 2014)). Therefore, two qualitative data collection techniques (Yin, 2014) were used to examine the research problem and provide credibility and trustworthiness of the study – semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and documentary evidence.

*Interviews*

The rationale for using interviews for collecting data for this study was that adjunct faculty's understanding and ongoing experiences with information literacy could

not be directly observed. Yin (2014) describes interviews as "one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (p. 110) because they provide rich descriptions of the issue, being studied (Merriam, 2009). For these reasons, the interviews for this study were conducted by following an interview protocol (Appendix C) with ten open-ended questions that addressed aspects of the research questions (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Standardized open-ended interviews (Patten, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) made data analysis easier by making it possible to locate answers to the same questions by each participant. Therefore, I followed the same interview protocol for each interview. Additionally, as detailed by Patton (2002), probes and additional questions, not listed in the protocol, "reduce the need for interviewer judgement during the interview" (p. 344), and elicit more detailed responses by seeking clarifications and examples of lived experiences on the topic. Therefore, I asked additional questions when needed to elicit descriptions and clarifications.

Participants were given options to participate in the interviews in-person or virtually and the interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes. The in-person interviews were held at locations, convenient for the participants. Virtual interviews for qualitative research, though not popular, have been successfully used over the years (Jowett et al., 2011). Synchronous online interviews are distinct from face-to-face interviews and present their own advantages and limitations (Jowett et al., 2011). Jowett, Peel, & Shaw (2011) point out the main advantage of online interviews as the ability of the two parties to be at different locations, which was the main reason for participants in this study to select that option.

Informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews (appendix E). The interviews were recorded digitally and later transcribed with the permission of the participants. Regarding research ethics, the participants were informed that their names would be removed from the transcripts and they were informed of the option to not answer questions if they felt uncomfortable.

### *Documents*

According to Patton (2002) "documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed" (p. 293). Some documents reveal essential understanding about events that have happened before the research began, others provide insights into situations that were out of reach for the researcher (Patton, 2002). For these reasons, documentary artifacts were gathered for analysis. Some documents were offered by the participants during the interviews, others were accessed on the institutions' websites.  Document analysis provided insights into peoples' actions and their meaning in a setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Therefore, the gathered documents, like syllabi, research assignment instructions, and institutional e-mails enriched this study by providing an understanding of what people did in a comparison to what they said they did (Hodder, 2012).  Rapley (2007) states that document analysis extends the understanding of the research problem. Documents, offered by participants during the interviews, like syllabi, assignment instructions, and institutional emails on library resources and procedures for adjunct faculty, supported the description of their experiences with information literacy and provided in-depth understanding to their stories.

**Instrumentation**

*Interview Protocol*

The interviews began with a brief, informative description of the researcher's professional background and the study's goals and expectations. It moved to quick, descriptive request for information regarding the participant's background as adjunct faculty at a New Jersey community college. The interview protocol followed ten open-ended questions that addressed aspects of the research questions (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The first few open-ended questions gave the opportunity to the participants to describe their unique experiences (Merriam, 2007) with information literacy and their understanding of it, which addressed the first research question about how their meaning making has transformed. The next three open-ended questions, addressing the second research question about how adjuncts changed their frames of references, explored the participants' experiences with institutional support and resources they used or would like to use, when teaching information literacy for their classes. The last couple of open-ended questions gave an opportunity to the participants to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs about information literacy and how those changed their teaching practices.

Follow-up questions and probes were added in the process of interviewing to elicit more detailed responses or to seek clarifications and examples of lived experiences about implementing information literacy for their classes at community colleges. The interviews were conducted in person or online and lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded digitally and later transcribed with the permission of the participants.

*Document Protocol*

       According to Rapley (2007), document analysis extends the understanding of the research problem. Therefore, a document selection protocol was used to identify documents, relevant to the research questions.  Document analysis provides insights into actions and their meaning in a setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The gathered documents about information literacy and adjunct faculty involvement, available on the institutions' websites and documents offered by the participants during the interviews enriched the study by providing an understanding of intentions and actions (Hodder, 2012). The document protocol followed criteria for choice, context, and content that addressed aspects of the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The relationship between the research questions/transformative learning stages and the interview questions/document questions are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Relationship Between Research Questions/Transformative Learning Stages and Interview Questions/Document Questions*

| Relationship between RQs/TL Stages and IQs/DQs | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Stages in the Transformative Learning Process** | **Interview Questions** | **Document Questions** |
| Research Question 1. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment? | | |
| TL Stage 1. Experiencing a Disorienting Dilemma. Learners experience a discrepancy between previous assumptions and a new experience, they question the assumption or belief, which leads to doubts about the structural meaning | IQ1. How long have you been teaching as an adjunct at a community college in New Jersey? IQ2. With regard to your own experience and background, how do you think information literacy for higher education changed in today's digital environment? IQ3. What is it like teaching a course at a community college when affected by these changes in today's digital and information environments? | DQ1. Choice. Who created the document? DQ2. Context. Was addressing adjunct faculty the main purpose for creating the document? DQ3. Content. Does the document provide information about adjunct faculty's teaching practices on information literacy? |
| Research Question 2. How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs informs changes in their current teaching practices? | | |
| TL Stage 2. Engaging in Critical Reflection. Learners critically reflect on their beliefs, revise their meaning schemes, and expand their perspectives to accommodate the new ideas as a result of their previous assumption being challenged | IQ4. In what ways did the need to teach information literacy for your classes change your understanding of information literacy in the new learning environment (if at all)? Please provide specific examples. IQ5. How did teaching information literacy for your classes in today's digital and information environments affect your own professional development needs (if at all)? Please provide specific examples. | DQ1. Choice. Who created the document? DQ2. Context. Was addressing adjunct faculty the main purpose for creating the document? DQ3. Content. Does the document provide information about adjunct faculty's teaching practices on information literacy? |

| Stages in the Transformative Learning Process | Interview Questions | Document Questions |
|---|---|---|
| Research Question 3. How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes? | | |
| TL Stage 3. Participating in a Rational Discourse. Learners engage in an open, reflective, and constructive dialog so they can reflect, question and revise their old ideas. The process allows new knowledge and beliefs to change the meaning perspectives | IQ6. In your opinion, in today's changing learning environment, what is the role of the adjunct faculty within the context of teaching information literacy? IQ7. How would you describe your access to resources and support services related to information literacy on campus (if any) when you teach information literacy in class? Please provide specific examples. IQ8. In what ways do you feel supported by the institution/department in your efforts to teach information literacy (if at all)? Please provide specific examples. | DQ1. Choice. Who created the document? DQ2. Context. Was addressing adjunct faculty the main purpose for creating the document? DQ3. Content. Does the document provide information about adjunct faculty's teaching practices on information literacy? |
| Research Question 4. How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices? | | |
| TL Stage 4. Achieving Greater Autonomy. Learners become more critical in assessing their assumptions and it becomes easier to find alternative perspectives. The transformative learning process makes them autonomous thinkers and better learners. | IQ9. To what extent, did the changes in the digital and information environments have an effect on your experience of teaching information literacy over the years? IQ10. How (if at all) have you changed your teaching practices as a result of the need to teach information literacy for your classes? Please provide specific examples. | DQ1. Choice. Who created the document? DQ2. Context. Was addressing adjunct faculty the main purpose for creating the document? DQ3. Content. Does the document provide information about adjunct faculty's teaching practices on information literacy? |

**Data Analysis**

The general strategy used for the analysis of this study was guided by Yin's

(2014) strategy of "working your data from the ground up" (p.136). As a result of deeper

engagement with the data, the researchers uncover patterns or useful concepts, which

become the start of an analytical path, suggesting additional relationships (Yin, 2014).

According to Yin (2014), this inductive approach to data analysis "assigns various kinds

of codes to the data, each code representing a concept or abstraction of potential interest"

(p. 138).  For this study, this inductive strategy offered additional promise because the

data covered the behavior and events of adjunct faculty, engaged in teaching information

literacy at community colleges in New Jersey, which the case study was trying to explain

(Yin, 2014).

During the data preparation phase, I collected and organized the data for analysis.

I created a case study database that included transcribed interviews, scanned documents,

analytical memos, and personal notes. Each participant was assigned a code name to

maintain confidentiality. Transcribed interviews were coded as soon as the transcripts

were available (Merriam, 2007). The documents collected during the interviews – such as

syllabi, assignment instructions, and institutional emails – were used as a secondary

source that assisted with triangulating the data. They were analyzed for data, supporting

or contradicting the main themes that emerged from the interviews (Patton, 2002). A

spread sheet was created to assist with data recall by dividing the data into meaningful

segments and reflecting on its overall sense.

I used analytical memo writing for each document and interview transcript as a

research technique to achieve deeper engagement with the data. Analytical memos are

quick summaries about how the researcher connects with the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). The nature of qualitative research requires reflexivity, so the researcher can understand the impact of his/her own subjective influences on the data collection and interpretation (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Therefore, writing memos provided a mechanism of tracking my personal assumptions and perspectives about the data and provided the basis for the final analysis (Birks et al., 2008).

### *Coding*

Detailed data analysis, focused on the content by using coding, was conducted to discover categories, patterns and themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is the process of symbolically assigning a word or a short phrase to a portion of language-based data that captures the essence of its meaning (Saldaña, 2016). According to Saldaña (2016), coding is an exploratory problem-solving technique, which not only requires labeling but linking the data to an idea or theoretical propositions. The analytical process for this study was guided by the theoretical propositions of transformative learning, which informed the research questions and were grounded in the collected data. Meaning categorization was used as a strategy to provide organizational structure by coding long interview passages into categories (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Saldaña, 2016).

Coding is a cyclical act of focusing on "salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). First cycle code, Hypothesis Coding, (Saldaña, 2016) was assigned to the data to assess a researcher - generated hypothesis by applying predetermined list of codes that capture the meaning of the words the adjunct faculty used when they discussed their experiences with information literacy at community colleges.

The codes were developed based from the transformative learning theory, based on prediction about what would be found in the data before they have been collected or analyzed. The filter of Hypothesis Coding provided an overall sense of the phenomenon of adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences with teaching information literacy. This was important for this study since the literature review revealed that there was a gap in understanding adjunct faculty's experiences with information literacy issues for community colleges.

Before moving to the second cycle, I spent time engaged in a revision of the code reduction process, by using the research questions to structure the codes that emerge during the first cycle coding (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Additionally, I reviewed the preliminary codebook and the required several revisions of the Hypothesis Coding, by going through a detailed examination of the data and asking questions about the data that provided details on the research issue (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011).

Pattern coding was the second cycle coding used as a method to further group the data from the first cycle coding into fewer categories or themes (Saldaña, 2016). The pattern codes developed as a result of the multiple examinations of the data were used to identify emerging themes, which showed how adjunct faculty understood information literacy and what their transformative learning process was in adapting to the new information environment. The guiding objective for developing the themes was looking for patterns and explanations in the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Saldaña, 2016). The results of data analysis were used for the study description and reporting the findings (Miles et al., 2013).

**Data Quality and Rigor**

Validity and reliability in qualitative research make the study authentic, accurate, and consistent (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher must be attentive to the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, so the study produces trustworthy findings (Merriam, 2009). One way of addressing trustworthiness of the study is triangulation of the data (Yin, 2014). Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources of data collection to cross reference the data (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Yin (2014) explains that "multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (p. 116). Therefore, the use of two or more qualitative data collection techniques to examine the research problem can provide credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The two data collection techniques, used for this study, were semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and documentary evidence.

According to Merriam (2009) validity in qualitative studies is relative to the participants' reality, experiences, and construction of the phenomenon being examined. However, researchers may misinterpret participants' meanings and words. For example, participants may use language and terminology to describe their understanding of information literacy that is specific exclusively to their disciplines. To address this issue, I used triangulation and member checking/participant validation.

Further, validity was ensured by having the participants check the transcription notes for accuracy and logic (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). To increase the reliability of the case study, a chain of evidence was constructed to link the research questions to the study protocols, which was linked to the interview data and the documentary evidence (Yin,

2014). Three approaches were used for this study to establish credibility of the data analysis:

1. Data Triangulation – using multiple sources of data to corroborate the qualitative findings and to draw conclusions based on more than one single source of evidence. Convergence of findings between the interview data and documentary artifacts from the interviewees strengthened the validity of the case study (Yin, 2014);

2. Rich description – using detailed narratives to thoroughly explain the case and address the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014);

3. Member checking – having the participants review the transcription notes and the research procedures (Creswell, 2013).

Finally, to improve data trustworthiness and validity, in addition to the three techniques described above, the participants were invited to provide clarity and make revisions of the transcripts. It was the researcher's responsibility to implement transparent and consistent communication throughout the course of the study among all parties.

### The Role of the Researcher

According to Creswell (2012), researchers are active participants in their studies. For example, the researcher develops criteria for the selection of the participants, plays the role of the interviewer, and analyzes the gathered data, based on personal knowledge of the context of the study and the research topic. Therefore, as mentioned in the study limitations, there is a possibility of researcher bias in this study. I am an academic librarian at a community college in New Jersey with many years of professional

experience. The participants in the study, adjunct faculty members, often have to collaborate with librarians when they teach information literacy in their classes. Adjunct faculty members often rely on academic librarians for access to institutional resources and support when addressing information literacy for their classes. Interactions and collaborations might affect the transformational learning experience for adjunct faculty when they reflect on their meaning making and adjust their structure references about information literacy. Therefore, there was a potential for bias for the way this qualitative inquiry was performed, based on my academic assumptions, worldviews, and professional experiences (Creswell, 2014) as an academic librarian.

Creswell (2012) and Stake (1995) recommend caution in conducting qualitative research at sites where the researcher is seen as an insider. Since the beginning of this study, I was aware that I was seen by the participants not only as the researcher but as a faculty member and an academic librarian from a community college in New Jersey. Therefore, it was important to address my role as a researcher and the goals of this study with the participants, in order to maintain objectivity. Since the beginning, I established rapport with the interviewed adjunct faculty by sharing information about my educational background and work experience. I have taught information literacy at community college settings for over a decade and I have collaborated with full-time and adjunct faculty members on its implementation for higher education. By working with both faculty groups, full-time and adjuncts, I was not only able to witness the roles they played in the institutional efforts to teach information literacy, but I was able to reflect on the differences they face due to their employment status.

Therefore, in an effort to maintain objectivity, I considered it important to explain to the participants that the goal of the study was to understand information literacy as experienced exclusively by adjunct faculty. I was not interested in understanding how academic librarians or full-time faculty interpreted the needs of the adjunct faculty in regards to teaching information literacy. Therefore, addressing adjunct faculty's perspectives on information literacy for community colleges in New Jersey required further discussion of the ethical considerations of this study prior to conducting the interviews.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were of the upmost importance to protect the individuals involved in this case study. According to Merriam (2009), the validity and reliability of a study depends on the trust that the researcher adheres to the rules of integrity.  It was important to note that before conducting the interviews, I disclosed my professional background as an academic librarian to address the possibility of influencing the participants' answers (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). For the same reason, it was important to consider threats to the study due to power dynamics between the participants and me, considering the possibility that we might work for the same institution. I was clear in communicating that the study had no connection or impact on the participant's past or future efforts to address information literacy at any of the community colleges in New Jersey.

Creswell (2007) states that the "anonymity of individuals, roles, and incident" (p. 91) must be protected by the researchers. In this study, all necessary steps were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The rights of the people involved in this research

were protected by rights legislation for working with human subjects and an IRB approval from the involved institution. A formal approval from the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University was obtained to guarantee ethical treatment of the human subjects. Additionally, informed consents were obtained from the participants prior to beginning data collection (Appendix E). Participation in the interviews was completely voluntary with the options for the participants to decline to answer any of the questions or to withdraw participation at any point. Further, all recordings and transcriptions were kept in a secure, locked location and were destroyed upon the successful publication of the dissertation work. All hard copies were kept locked and the soft copies were protected by a password. To ensure confidentiality of the responses, each participant was assigned a code name. During the transcription and coding processes, only code names were used to refer to the participants.

In summary, the design described in this chapter assisted in the collection of data as it pertains to the research questions on adjunct faculty's perspectives on information literacy for community colleges in New Jersey and their lived experiences. The next chapter provides an overview of the findings, elicit from the data analysis.

## Chapter Four

## Findings

This chapter presents an overview of the findings determined from this qualitative case study analysis on adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences of teaching information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. The case study used the lens of Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory to frame adjunct faculty's reflections on their previous and current teaching practices of information literacy in the context of the fast changing technological and information environments. The research questions are:

1. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment?

2. How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs inform changes in their current teaching practices?

3. How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes?

4. How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices?

A code map was constructed as a result of the themes identified during the data analysis phase. The purpose of this chapter is to act as a bridge to the manuscripts in chapters five and six by describing the overall findings, by research question, and identifying specific findings to be presented in two articles that will be submitted for publication.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the transformative learning experiences of adjunct faculty in the process of incorporating information literacy into their instruction at community colleges in New Jersey. Interview transcripts, documents, and personal notes served as the primary dataset. The interviews were conducted by following an interview protocol (Appendix C) with ten open-ended questions that addressed aspects of the research questions (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Follow-up questions and probes were added in the process of interviewing to elicit more detailed responses or to seek clarifications and examples of lived experiences about teaching information literacy at community colleges.

The documentary evidence collected during the interviews – such as syllabi, assignment instructions, and institutional emails – were used as a secondary source that assisted with triangulating the data. They were analyzed for data, supporting or contradicting the main themes that emerged from the interviews (Patton, 2002). Analytical memo writing for each document and interview transcript was used to achieve deeper engagement with the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016).

Participants were selected through intensity and snowball sampling approaches (Patton, 2002) in an effort to ensure that the responses satisfactorily represented adjunct faculty at New Jersey community colleges. As a result of an email request to my colleagues from community college libraries for recommendations of adjunct faculty members that they could identify as potential participants for this study, 11 potential participants were identified. Two of the recommended participants served as President, Vice President, or Treasurer of more than one Adjunct Faculty Unions for the Community Colleges in New Jersey. As gatekeepers to the whole Adjunct Faculty Union

of a community college, they were able to assist this study by recommending it to potential participants. As a result, additional 21 participants were identified for the tola of 32. The participants were contacted via email and 25 of them agreed to be interviewed, 7 did not respond. Out of the 25 participants that initially agreed to be interviewed, 5 did not follow up with the interviews. Participants were given options to participate in the interviews in-person or virtually. All of them opted for virtual interviews as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews were held via Zoom and the interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes.  A summary of the participants' characteristics is shown in the table below.

**Table 2**

*Participant Characteristics*

| Code Name | Years of Service | Digital Native | Subject | Race/ Ethni- city | Gender Identity | Number of CCs of Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oliver | 35+ | No | English | White | Male | 1 |
| Naomi | 6-10 | Yes | Art History | White | Female | 4 |
| Skylar | 6-10 | Yes | Art History | White | Female | 3 |
| Alice | 15-20 | No | Psychology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| Logan | 35+ | No | History | White | Male | 3 |
| Lucas | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 3 |
| Jacob | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 2 |
| Henry | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 1 |
| Mason | 2-5 | Yes | College Success Seminar | African-American | Male | 1 |

| Code Name | Years of Service | Digital Native | Subject | Race/Ethnicity | Gender Identity | Number of CCs of Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liam | 35+ | No | History | White | Male | 1 |
| Victoria | 6-10 | No | English | White | Female | 1 |
| Madison | 2-5 | Yes | Psychology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| Brooklyn | 2-5 | Yes | English | White | Female | 1 |
| Scarlet | 6-10 | No | English | White | Female | 2 |
| Aiden | 6-10 | No | English | White | Male | 2 |
| Emma | 15-20 | No | Sociology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| David | 6-10 | No | English | White | Male | 2 |
| Dylan | 2-5 | Yes | Political Sciences | African-American | Male | 2 |
| Mia | 2-5 | Yes | English as a Second Language | Asian | Female | 1 |
| James | 6-10 | No | Psychology | White | Male | 1 |

Participant characteristics data, collected before the interviews, included participants' race/ethnicity, gender identity, subjects they taught, number of community colleges they were employed at the time of the interview, and years of employment as adjuncts. All of the 20 interviewed adjunct faculty disclosed their race/ethnicity and gender identity, 11 (55%) were male and nine (45%) were female, 13 (65%) identified as white, five (25%) identified as African-American, and one (5%) as Asian. Half of the participants (50%) identified themselves as digital natives or born and raised under the

influence of the Internet and the new technologies (Neumann, 2016). As adjunct faculty, nine (45%) of the participants were employed at more than one institution. Their experiences from multiple institutions enriched the study and provided depth in the research of adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences when teaching information literacy. In addition, three (15%) of the participants have been employed as adjunct faculty for over 35 years, two (10%) of them have been employed between 15 and 20 years, seven (35%) of them have been employed between six and 10 years, and eight (40%) were relatively new to working as adjunct, with years of experience between two and five. The interviewed adjunct faculty taught different subjects, six of them taught English, one taught English as a Second Language, two taught Art History, three taught Psychology, one taught Sociology, one taught College Success Seminar, one taught Political Sciences, and five taught History.

**Overview of Findings**

The adjunct faculty, interviewed for this study, revealed experiences that aligned with aspects of the four stages of Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning process. The integration of documentary evidence, collected during the interviews, helped to triangulate these experiences and answer the research questions.

Findings from the analysis of the first three questions, supported by documents provided by the participants, helped answer the first research question: how adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affected the integration of new knowledge when they were confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment. The main reasons to transform their meaning structures, pointed by the adjunct faculty in this study, were the rapid changes in the

technological and information environments and the need to adapt to the new learning

landscape. Participants pointed out that new technologies and new ways to access and use

information has changed the education landscape from the time they were in college.

They connected their personal experiences with information literacy and current teaching

practices with the need of personal and professional growth when confronted with the

necessity to adapt to the new learning environment. Most of the interviewed adjuncts

revealed the need to integrate new knowledge into their meaning structures in order to be

able to keep up with innovations and changes in the information environment.  These

findings were consistent with the works of Palmer & Bowman (2014), who successfully

applied transformative learning to adjunct faculty in online teaching and viewed them as

adult learners, who go through personal and professional growth when confronted with

dilemmas that challenged their existing views of teaching online versus teaching in-

person (Mezirow, 1994).

The next two questions and select documents helped answer the second research

question: how adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their

assumptions and beliefs informed changes in their current teaching practices.  Adjunct

faculty described how their prior experience and background assisted them with the

integration of new knowledge when they were confronted by new meaning structures

(Mezirow, 1994) due to today's rapid changes in the information and digital

environments. Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty explained how their concepts of

information literacy, from the time that libraries were the main access point for credible

information, were confronted by the need to adapt to the rapid introduction of new

technologies. They acknowledged the need of professional growth opportunities and

revealed their experiences with enhancing their research skills. Further, the interviewed adjunct faculty explained how they adapted their teaching methodology to ensure their students acquired the new skills, necessary for academic success (McCarthy, 2009; Paprock, 1992). Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty referred to the changes in the educational environment and the constant advancement of technology as reasons for experiencing disorienting dilemmas when they had to teach information literacy. Similary to Hooper and Scharf's (2017) observations in their study on parallels between transformative learning and existing library and information research, adjunct faculty in this study encountered and reacted to the new learning environment by continually transforming their meaning structures in order to adapt.

The next three questions, supported with documentary evidence, helped answer the third research question: how adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes. The majority of the interviewed adjunct faculty reacted to the disorienting dilemmas about information literacy fast advancement by examining their options to expand their knowledge. The interviewed adjunct faculty revealed that the process required critical self-reflection and examination of their prior knowledge and beliefs. These experiences aligned with the model presented by Mezirow (1996) on how adult learners construct new understanding of the issue, based on revised interpretation of their prior experiences.  Many of the adjunct faculty explained how through the process of critical self-reflection as adult learners, they expanded their understandings of information literacy, so they could accommodate new knowledge. That process assisted them with informing changes in their current teaching practices of information literacy. To assist the process, they sought

professional training opportunities and institutional support to maintain and advance their understanding of information literacy in the context of the new academic landscape. This phase was exuberated for many members of the adjunct faculty cohort after the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 when they had no other option but to move to virtual learning. The discrepancy between knowledge acquired in the past for in-person interactions and skills adjuncts needed in the new academic environment became obvious when they were confronted by the need to deal with new technological and information platforms during the pandemic of 2020.

The final two questions and additional documentary evidence helped answer the last research question: how adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices. Most of the interviewed adjunct faculty revealed that engaging in the process of critical self-reflection motivated them to expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge. They described their experiences when they needed to confront the challenges in the new digital, information, and educational environments. They explained how the process of expanding their knowledge led to them seeking professional training opportunities and institutional support to advance and maintain their information literacy skills in the context of the new learning landscape. As a result, many adjunct faculty members became critical, autonomous thinkers and were able to inform changes into their current teaching practices for information literacy.

In conclusion, many of the interviewed adjunct faculty had experienced transformational learning and had become autonomous thinkers. Adjuncts, interviewed for this study, were at different phases of the transformative learning process, depending

on their personal journeys as adult learners. This chapter provided an abridged discussion of these findings as well as introduced the two manuscripts that follow in chapters five and six. These findings were shown in the code map below (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011), displaying the emergent concepts, themes, data application, and interpretation.

*Old Assumptions and New Experiences with Information Literacy*

The concept of information literacy has been constantly changing by the development of new technologies and the explosive production and dissemination of information (Badke, 2014). These changes presented new challenges for adjunct faculty when they taught information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey. Adjunct faculty in this study explained how they navigated between their old assumptions about information literacy and their new experiences within the context of the changing academic environment (Mezirow, 1996). The interviewed adjunct faculty reported disorienting dilemmas about what information literacy skills were necessary in today's academic environment. For some of them the source of the disorientation was based on knowledge and experiences about information literacy, acquired during the time users were not that dependent on technology. Others, especially those born in the digital era, did not have issues with the new technological and information platforms, but reported disorienting dilemmas due to variances in the institutions' management systems, lack of departmental support, and lack of professional training opportunities.

**New Meaning Making.** The changes in higher education, fueled by the constant advancement in technology and information dissemination (Carlson & Johnston, 2014), has challenged adjunct faculty to revise their concepts of information literacy. However, not all of the interviewed adjunct faculty felt the responsibility and the need to teach the

new information literacy skills to their students. Some of them reported that even if they recognized the need to address issues with their students' information literacy skills, they felt that it was not part of their jobs. Further, they felt that teaching information literacy should be done by the library or the students should acquire the skills on their own. The majority of the adjuncts interviewed elaborated on how different the concept of information literacy has become in the last decade and confirmed that they welcomed opportunities to update their skills.

**Today's IL Skills.** The vast development of new technologies and easy accessibility of sources in Internet for the last decade have challenged the traditional definition of information literacy (Breivik, 2005). Adjunct faculty, interviewed for this study, agreed that users have become dependent on their knowledge of how to search, retrieve, and evaluate information efficiently by using the new technologies and social media (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). Some adjuncts reported that they needed to revisit their past knowledge and acquire new information literacy skills in order to be able to teach their students. Others reported that they were comfortable with the new technologies but they required deeper integration in the institutional culture to be successful at teaching the new skills to the students. These experiences were consistent with the first phase of Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning when adjuncts, viewed as adult learners, were confronted by new meaning making. Further, they revealed experiences, consistent with the second phase (Mezirow, 1996) when they had to embark on a critical self-reflection to identify ways to adapt.

*Critical Reflection on Teaching Practices*

Adjunct faculty explained how they used their previous academic experiences to inform changes in their current teaching practices and to confront challenges in the new digital, information, and educational environments (Mezirow, 1996). The majority of the interviewed adjuncts had acquired their information literacy skills during their postgraduate work. For many of them that was decades ago when the evaluation and access of sources was solely dependent on libraries and the assistance of librarians. However, consistent with the work of Breivik (2005), they acknowledged that the Internet and new technologies have improved access but at the same time have transferred the responsibility of evaluating the sources to the users. Therefore, they identified the need to expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge by engaging in the process of critical self-reflection and advancing their skills as adult learners. The changes in the information and digital environment not only affected adjunct faculty's understanding of the new information literacy concept. During the interviews, the adjuncts pointed out the need to keep current so they could teach the new skills to their students.

**Teaching IL.** Due to limited resources, information literacy instructions at community colleges were often designed as embedded sessions, taught by librarians when requested by the teaching faculty (Kim & Dolan, 2015). Unfortunately, this type of instruction was not always available to adjunct faculty and was often insufficient to address the overall issue with students' information literacy needs (Lloyd, 2005).  Some of the interviewed adjunct faculty had individual concepts of requirements for their subjects and they saw information literacy as a responsibility of the academic librarians.

As a result, they tended not to allocate time for information literacy in their classrooms (Dubicki, 2013; Sanders, 2012). Further, many adjunct faculty lacked the time in the curriculum or did not have sufficient skills to teach information literacy. Many expected students to become information literate on their own by doing research without explicit instructions (Oakleaf et al., 2011). Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty agreed that with the changes in the information environment, they needed to allocate time for discussions in class about information literacy and relied less on the librarians.

**The Need to Teach IL.** The interviewed adjunct faculty reported differences in the experiences with teaching information literacy based on the diversity among their students. The various socio-economic and academic backgrounds of the students presented unique challenges for adjunct faculty when teaching information literacy (Henry et al., 2015). Students came to community colleges with different levels of exposure to information literacy which often did not meet the standards for higher education (Reed, 2015). Adjunct faculty needed to adjust their teaching approaches in the classroom based on whether students came from high schools, transferred from other institutions, or were returning to school after a long academic gap (Nelson, 2016; Oakleaf & Kaske, 2009).

Many of the adjunct faculty pointed out that in the past they used to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper and relied on the academic librarians to reinforce the concepts of information literacy. However, they have been shifting their perspective from viewing information literacy through the prism of their perspective disciplines to seeing it as part of the general education. Adjunct faculty in this study experienced the need to teach information literacy in a way that helped their students

acquire the critical thinking abilities of understanding plagiarism, finding resources by constructing proper searches, evaluating results, citing, and synthesizing materials.

**Professional Development Needs.** Most of the interviewed adjunct faculty revealed that they did not have support when they had to teach information literacy and many expressed their disappointment for the lack of professional development opportunities. They believed that their part time employment status affected not only their salaries and benefits but the levels of their inclusion in institutional initiatives, professional development opportunities, and access to resources. Lack of professional development opportunities (Diegel, 2013) and mentorship programs for adjunct faculty (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018) were often described by the adjuncts in this study as part of the issue of not feeling valued and not receiving equal treatment with the full-time faculty. The adjunct faculty suggested that any incentives toward recognizing their efforts in teaching information literacy might increase their job satisfaction. Some discussed ideas to increase their level of commitment to the institutional goals, such as being included in departmental discussions, being offered recognition for service, and being able to acquire equal access to resources and professional development opportunities.

*Informing Changes to Teaching Information Literacy*

Adjuncts, interviewed in this study, described their experiences on how they revised their approaches to teaching information literacy and adjusted to the new digital and academic requirements.  They agreed that the majority of their students needed an introduction to information literacy and support with writing research papers. However, in some cases the adjuncts explained how the lack of professional development for them, to maintain their information literacy skills, presented barriers to teaching the new skills

to their students. Adjunct faculty in this study, especially the ones that were not from the digital native generation, reported that they welcomed professional training opportunities and institutional support. They identified the feeling of being excluded from workshops and trainings and the lack of departmental support as some of the factors that influenced their level of commitment to teaching information literacy. Others reported that they were confident in their knowledge about teaching information literacy. However, they pointed out the lack of recognition and faculty engagement (Rich, 2015) as intrinsic factors that influenced their job satisfaction and level of commitment.

**Adjunct Faculty's New Role.** Adjunct faculty reflected on their role in teaching the new information literacy skills to students and referred to the complexity of the dynamics between librarians and faculty. Some adjunct faculty felt that the library departments should remain in charge of information literacy. They believed that their role was teaching their subject and information literacy should be taught by specialists in the field. However, many adjuncts agreed that they felt obligated to teach information literacy, so the students could produce good papers in the subject they taught. Most of the interviewed adjuncts agreed that their role in higher education has changed dramatically since they had to take on more responsibilities in the classroom within the evolving academic and digital landscapes.

**Access to Resources and Support Services**.  Adjunct faculty referred to complex sets of issues in their efforts to teach information literacy. All of them pointed out the limited access to resources and support services, which was a direct result from their part time employment status, as a barrier to teaching information literacy. For example, the lack of offices and office hours to meet with students, one-on-one, was reported by most

of the interviewed adjuncts. However, they explained that working virtually during the 2020 pandemic shutdown has equipped them with new virtual options to spend time with students who requested help. Reduced access to the library and the librarians, especially in the evenings and on the weekends, was discussed as a major setback to their efforts. Additionally, many referred to the lack of an open communication or support from their departments as part of the issues that hindered their efforts to teach information literacy. Besides occasional emails from the department chairs, many adjuncts did not have any other contact with the administration or the full-time faculty on campus. They often had to find on their own what resources were available to them and the students. However, with the start of the 2020 pandemic shutdown and the transition to virtual classes, many adjuncts were happy to report that they started receiving regular updates on departmental changes and requirements for the virtual teaching environment. The adjuncts, interviewed in this study, explained that they had to adapt to the new requirements and grow professionally to meet the demands of the new normal.

### *Becoming Autonomous Thinkers*

Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty were able to inform changes into their current teaching practices for information literacy and become critical, autonomous thinkers as a result of the transformative learning process. They experienced it (Mezirow, 1996) as a result of the changing information and digital environments and constant reforms in the educational landscape (McGowanet al., 2016; Stimpson, 2016). Adjunct faculty agreed that information literacy in today's digital environment should be taught in a way that the students acquire the critical thinking abilities, necessary to succeed academically. Understanding plagiarism, finding resources by constructing searches, and

synthesizing materials were the main skills, pointed out as important by the interviewed adjuncts. As adult learners, adjunct faculty in this study, identified the need to advance their information and digital skills, sought professional development opportunities, and requested departmental support. They were confident that by enhancing their knowledge about information literacy, they would be able to serve the students better.

**New Teaching Practices for IL.** Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty believed that they should concentrate equally on the mechanics of writing a research paper and the concepts of information literacy that produced good research. Therefore, many of them allocated at least one session per semester on showing students how to access the school's databases, how to find resources by constructing searches, and how to evaluate the results. The changes in their teaching practices were highly influenced by the demands to incorporate new technologies into the methodology, especially after the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

The findings are shown in the code map (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002) by displaying the emergent concepts, themes, data application, and interpretation of the data for the study (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Code Map of Research Data*

| Research Questions | |
| --- | --- |
| RQ 1. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment? | RQ 3. How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes? |
| RQ 2. How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs informs changes in their current teaching practices? | RQ 4. How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices? |

| Third Iteration: Interpretation |
| --- |
| Adjunct faculty at community colleges in New Jersey were faced with the task of teaching information literacy for their courses in the context of rapid changes in the technological, information, and learning environments. Adjunct faculty, viewed as adult learners, experienced the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1996) as a result of their encounter with and approach to the changes in the information and digital environments and the reforms in the educational landscape. Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning theory framed adjunct faculty's experiences of encounter and reactions to the new learning environments. It assisted in understanding how adjunct faculty transformed their meaning structures in order to adapt, how they expanded their perspectives and accommodated new knowledge, so they could change their current teaching practices and confront challenges in the new digital and information environments. Adjunct faculty have been recorded on being at different phases of the transformative learning process, depending on their personal journeys as adult learners. |

| Second Iteration: Data Application | |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Old assumptions and new experiences of IL<br>• New meaning making about IL<br>• Influence of digital and information environments<br>2. Critical reflection on IL and teaching practices<br>• Changes in teaching practices of IL<br>• The need to teach IL<br>• Professional development | 3. Reflections, questioning, and revisions of approaches to IL<br>• Adjunct faculty's new role for IL<br>• Access to resources and support services<br>4. Becoming autonomous thinkers<br>• New teaching practices for IL |

| First Iteration: Initial Codes | |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Reflection on previous and current teaching experiences | 3. Resources and support for new information needs |
| 2. The learning curve for adjunct faculty | 4. New teaching methodologies |

**Conclusion**

The final two chapters of this dissertation are written in a manuscript format for publication and provide a more thorough examination of this study's findings. Chapter Five, entitled "Adjunct Faculty's Transformative Learning Experiences When Teaching Information Literacy at Community Colleges in New Jersey" is an empirical article connecting the experiences of adjunct faculty who teach at community colleges in New Jersey to the theoretical framework of transformative learning theory. This article adheres to the publication requirements of *Community College Journal of Practice & Research*, which is a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal, focused on advancing the understanding, practice, and experience of community colleges.

Chapter Six, entitled "Adjunct Faculty Teaching Information Literacy at Community Colleges in New Jersey" is a practice-based article, highlighting the ways in which adjunct faculty teach information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey in the new digital and information environment. This article was written specifically for higher education practitioners and meets the criteria set forth by *College & Research Libraries News*, which is the official publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries, and seeks to foster communication among higher education professionals.

Both manuscripts are co-authored by Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, who also serves as my dissertation chair. The dissertation concludes with a comprehensive reference list, including all citations, used for the first four chapters, as well as those included within the manuscript articles.

**Chapter Five**

**Manuscript One - Adjunct Faculty's Transformative Learning Experiences
When Teaching Information Literacy at Community Colleges in New Jersey**

**Abstract**

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to explore how adjunct faculty, who teach at

community colleges in New Jersey, experienced transformative learning in the context of

the fast changing digital and information environments, when teaching information

literacy. Further, this study examined adjunct faculty's individual perspective

transformations and reflections on their previous and current teaching practices of

information literacy, based on the four stages of transformative learning, set forth by

Mezirow (1996).  **Method:** A qualitative case study was used to explore the lived

experiences of 20 adjunct faculty who have taught a class that required a research

assignment, at a community college in New Jersey for at least 2 full semesters. Through

their participation in interviews and gathered documentary evidence, adjunct faculty

offered valuable insights concerning transformative learning experiences of adjunct

faculty, who teach information literacy. **Results:** Findings suggest that many of the

interviewed adjunct faculty had experienced transformational learning and had become

autonomous thinkers in the process of teaching information literacy for their classes at

community colleges in New Jersey. Adjuncts, interviewed for this study, were at different

phases of the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1996), depending on their

personal journeys as adult learners. **Contributions:** This study assists in filling the gap in

research regarding adjunct faculty's perspectives and experiences on teaching

information literacy in the new digital learning environment. This study also provides

insights on what professional development opportunities, resources, and support services,

related to information literacy are perceived necessary by the adjunct faculty.

**Key Words**

transformative learning, information literacy, adjunct faculty, community college

The constant development of new technologies and an explosive dissemination of information has completely altered the educational landscape (Badke, 2014; Battista, Ellenwood, Gregory, & Higgins, 2015; Bombaro, 2014; Carlson & Johnston, 2014). The purpose of this manuscript is to explore the experiences of adjunct faculty who teach information literacy as part of their courses at community colleges in New Jersey. The complexity of the issue with information literacy for higher education requires understanding of the dynamics among the participants that play roles in its implementation. Even though the library departments are usually charged with the execution of the information literacy (Cope & Sanabria, 2014), it is the faculty that are in direct contact with the students and have constant feedback when teaching it (Cope & Sanabria, 2014). It is adjunct faculty in particular, who have the most influence on helping students become information literate since they are becoming the larger teaching cohort in higher education (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Datray et al., 2014).

The purpose of this article is to present the findings from the qualitative case study on adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences as a result of their efforts to teach information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. The study resulted in descriptions of adjunct faculty's experiences of the need to transform their teaching practices when necessary to adapt to new information environments. A qualitative descriptive case study methodology was chosen to examine the occurrence of this phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The findings of this study revealed that adjunct faculty experience transformative learning when confronted by the changing information and digital environments and by the constant reforms in the educational landscape.

**Conceptual Framework**

Although much research on adjunct faculty has emerged, published work on their transformative learning experiences and teaching practices of information literacy for community colleges is limited. Thus, the literature broadly examines transformative learning experiences of faculty in general before reviewing research related specifically on adjunct faculty at community colleges, in relation to teaching information literacy for their classes.

*The Evolving Concept of Information Literacy*

The term information literacy was initially used by Zurkowski in 1974 to describe how people apply information resources to their work (as cited in Badke, 2010). The vast development of new technologies and easy accessibility of sources in Internet have challenged the traditional definition of information literacy (Breivik, 2005). With the advance of the Internet, users have become dependent on their knowledge of how to search, retrieve, and evaluate information efficiently by using the new technologies and social media (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). However, as research indicates, it is not enough for users just to have the technical knowledge of using devices to become information literate (Neumann, 2016). It is essential that users differentiate between technological and information literacy and acquire the critical thinking abilities of making educated decisions when engaged in academic research (Neumann, 2016).

*Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education*

The interest in adjunct faculty has been on the rise over the last few years as a result of the increase in hires of adjuncts across the country (Tarr, 2010). The trend is reflected in the growing numbers of publications discussing the impact adjuncts have on

higher education (Datray et al., 2014; Tarr, 2010). Statistics shows that adjunct faculty are more likely to be new to teaching with 37% having fewer than five years of experience and are usually assigned to teach developmental courses (ACCCS, 2014). Lack of professional development opportunities (Diegel, 2013) and mentorship programs for adjunct faculty (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018) are often described as part of the issue of not feeling valued and not receiving equal treatment with the full-time faculty.

*Adjunct Faculty at Community Colleges and Information Literacy*

There are numerous studies that address the issues with teaching and assessing information literacy; however, there are few studies that differentiate between full and part time faculty members when placing teaching faculty as a focus of the research. Even though, community colleges rely on adjunct faculty to teach more than half of their students (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; McGuinness, 2006), detailed research on their perspectives on information literacy has not been conducted. Additionally, the literature discussing opportunities for adjunct faculty to participate in collaborative projects on information literacy is limited and conflicting since collaborative practices between adjuncts and librarians are yet to be established (Forbes et al., 2010; Saunders, 2012). Finally, very little attention has been given to professional developmental programs, which can advance and maintain the information literacy skills among adjunct faculty (Datray et al., 2014; Tarr, 2010).

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was viewed through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning theory. Developed by Jack Mezirow in the late 1980s, transformative learning theory describes "the process of using a prior interpretation to

construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). According to Mezirow (1996) adult learners have two types of meaning structures: meaning schemes, which come from specific knowledge, belief, or feeling and meaning perspectives, which come from personal criteria for judgement of wrong and right, beautiful and ugly, true and false. These two structures, meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, define the frames through which the learners understand their experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Therefore, the transformative learning process, which changes reactions and behaviors, happens by evolving learners' meaning structures.

### *Adjunct Faculty as Adult Learners*

Adjunct faculty, interviewed in this study, were viewed as adult learners who experienced the transformative learning process as a result of the changing information and digital environments (Carales et al., 2016) and reforms in the educational landscape (McGowanet al., 2016). Mezirow's (2003) revised theory includes four essential stages in the transformative learning process of critical self-reflection, reformulation of a meaning perspective, and perspective transformation. Here, described are the four stages when applied to adjunct faculty who teach information literacy.

Stage one is characterized by experiencing a disorienting dilemma or questioning previous knowledge, belief, experience. A disorienting dilemma about teaching information literacy for higher education emerged from experiences adjunct faculty had in the classroom and/or on campus. The need to deal with new institutional requirements, new technological and information platforms combined with the lack of departmental support and professional training opportunities were some examples of disorienting

dilemmas adjunct faculty encountered nowadays. Stage two is characterized by engaging in critical reflection or expanding their perspectives to accommodate new knowledge, experience. Through the process of critical self-reflection and ambition to expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge, adjunct faculty used previous academic experiences to inform requirements for their current teaching practices and confronted challenges in the new digital, information, and educational environments.

Stage three is characterized by participating in rational discourse or revising old knowledge and allowing new ideas. To assist the process, they sought professional training opportunities and institutional support to advance and maintain their information literacy understanding in the context of the new learning landscape. Stage four is characterized by achieving greater autonomy or the process makes them critical, autonomous thinkers.

Adjunct faculty encounter and react to the new learning environments by continually transforming their meaning structures in order to adapt (Hooper & Scharf, 2017). The process requires critical self-reflection and examination of prior knowledge and beliefs. This model resonates with Mezirow's (1996) description of transformative learning as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow 1996, p. 162). Through the process of critical self-reflection, as adult learners, adjunct faculty expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge so they can change their current teaching practices and confront challenges in the new digital and information environments (Carlson & Johnston, 2014; Hooper & Scharf, 2017; VanderPol & Swanson, 2013).

**Methods**

   The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how adjunct faculty experienced transformative learning because of their efforts to teach information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. Information literacy was defined as a set of abilities to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively (ALA, 1989). Specifically, this study investigated how adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their prior experience and background affected the integration of new knowledge when they were confronted by new meaning making in today's digital and information environments. A qualitative descriptive case study design (Yin, 2014) was chosen to examine the occurrence of this phenomenon. The following questions guided the study:

1. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment?

2. How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices?

   For the purposes of this research, the units of analysis were adjunct faculty, who have taught at community colleges in New Jersey for at least two semesters. The term adjunct faculty was defined as faculty members, teaching less than 12 credits per semester, not exceeding 22 credits in any calendar year, and not receiving the same level of benefits and job security as full-time faculty (NCES, 2019). The setting for the study was the network of the 18 community colleges in New Jersey with more than 60 campuses, serving 21 counties (NJCCC, 2019c); six of the 18 community colleges are

represented in this study. Data collection methods, chosen for this study, included semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and documentary evidence to achieve triangulation of the data and support the reliability of the study (Yin, 2014).

*Participants*

      Participants were selected through intensity and snowball sampling approaches (Patton, 2002) to ensure that the responses satisfactorily represented adjunct faculty at New Jersey community colleges. Two pathways, professional networks and social media platforms, were used to identify participants for this study. A participant selection protocol was created to assist in limiting the participants to only those who have taught classes for at least two semesters at a community college in New Jersey. Further, the study was limited to adjunct faculty, who taught courses that required at least one research paper per semester.

      While 32 individuals were initially identified as potential participants, 20, in total, comprised the final sample. A summary of the participants' characteristics is shown in the table below (Table 4). The participants were given options to participate in the interviews in-person or virtually. All of them opted for virtual interviews and they were held via Zoom for the periods of 45 to 60 minutes.

**Table 4**

*Participant Characteristics*

| Code Name | Years of Service | Digital Native | Subject | Race/ Ethni- city | Gender Identity | Number of CCs of Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oliver | 35+ | No | English | White | Male | 1 |
| Naomi | 6-10 | Yes | Art History | White | Female | 4 |
| Skylar | 6-10 | Yes | Art History | White | Female | 3 |
| Alice | 15-20 | No | Psychology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| Logan | 35+ | No | History | White | Male | 3 |
| Lucas | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 3 |
| Jacob | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 2 |
| Henry | 2-5 | Yes | History | White | Male | 1 |
| Mason | 2-5 | Yes | College Success Seminar | African-American | Male | 1 |
| Liam | 35+ | No | History | White | Male | 1 |
| Victoria | 6-10 | No | English | White | Female | 1 |
| Madison | 2-5 | Yes | Psychology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| Brooklyn | 2-5 | Yes | English | White | Female | 1 |
| Scarlet | 6-10 | No | English | White | Female | 2 |
| Aiden | 6-10 | No | English | White | Male | 2 |
| Emma | 15-20 | No | Sociology | African-American | Female | 1 |
| David | 6-10 | No | English | White | Male | 2 |

| Code Name | Years of Service | Digital Native | Subject | Race/ Ethni- city | Gender Identity | Number of CCs of Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dylan | 2-5 | Yes | Political Sciences | African-American | Male | 2 |
| Mia | 2-5 | Yes | English as a Second Language | Asian | Female | 1 |
| James | 6-10 | No | Psychology | White | Male | 1 |

Participant characteristics data, collected before the interviews, included participants' race/ethnicity, sex identity, subjects they taught, number of community colleges they were employed at the time of the interview, and years of employment as adjuncts. All of the 20 interviewed adjunct faculty disclosed their race/ethnicity and sex identity, 11 (55%) were male and nine (45%) were female, 13 (65%) identified as white, five (25%) identified as African-American, and one (5%) as Asian. Half of the participants (50%) identified themselves as digital natives or born and raised under the influence of the Internet and the new technologies (Neumann, 2016). As adjunct faculty, nine (45%) of the participants were employed at more than one institution. Their experiences from multiple institutions enriched the study and provided depth in the research of adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences when teaching information literacy. In addition, three (15%) of the participants have been employed as adjunct faculty for over 35 years, two (10%) of them have been employed between 15 and 20 years, seven (35%) of them have been employed between six and 10 years, and eight (40%) were relatively new to working as adjunct, with years of experience between two and five. The interviewed adjunct faculty taught different subjects: six of them taught

English, one taught English as a Second Language, two taught Art History, three taught Psychology, one taught Sociology, one taught College Success Seminar, one taught Political Sciences, and five taught History. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality

*Data Collection*

The data for this study was collected, following Yin's (2014) protocol for conducting case studies. Two qualitative data collection techniques (Yin, 2014) were used to examine the research problem and provide credibility and trustworthiness of the study – semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and documentary evidence.

**Interviews.** The interviews were recorded digitally and later transcribed with the permission of the participants. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews. The participants were informed that their names would be removed from the transcripts and that they had the option of not answering questions if they felt uncomfortable. The interviews for this study were conducted by following an interview protocol with ten open-ended questions that addressed aspects of the research questions (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The first few open-ended questions gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs about teaching information literacy, which addressed the first research question about the transformation of their meaning making. The last few open-ended questions, addressing the second research question about how adjuncts achieved greater autonomy and informed changes in their current teaching practices, allowed the participant to describe how, as adult learners, they changed their frames of references. Follow-up questions and probes were added in the process of interviewing to elicit more detailed responses or to

seek clarifications and examples of lived experiences about implementing information literacy for their classes at community colleges.

**Documents.** Documents, offered by participants during the interviews, like syllabi, assignment instructions, and institutional emails on library resources and procedures for adjunct faculty were collected during the interviews. The documents revealed essential understanding about events that have happened before the research began and provided insights into situations that were out of reach for the researcher (Patton, 2002).

*Data Analysis*

The general strategy used for the analysis of this study was guided by Yin's (2014) strategy of "working your data from the ground up" (p. 136). As a result of deeper engagement with the data, patterns and useful concepts were uncovered, which became the start of an analytical path, suggesting additional relationships (Yin, 2014). The documents collected during the interviews – such as syllabi, assignment instructions, and institutional emails – were used as a secondary source that assisted with triangulating the data.

Detailed data analysis, focused on the content by using coding, was conducted to discover categories, patterns and themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is the process of symbolically assigning a word or a short phrase to a portion of language-based data that captures the essence of its meaning (Saldaña, 2016). First cycle code, Hypothesis Coding, (Saldaña, 2016) was assigned to the data to assess a researcher-generated hypothesis by applying predetermined list of codes that capture the meaning of the words the adjunct faculty used when they discussed their experiences with

information literacy at community colleges. The codes were developed based on the transformative learning theory and predictions about what would be found in the data. Pattern coding was the second cycle coding used as a method to further group the data from the first cycle coding into fewer categories or themes (Saldaña, 2016). The pattern codes developed as a result of the multiple examinations of the data were used to identify emerging themes, which showed how adjunct faculty experienced teaching information literacy and what their transformative learning process was in adapting to the new information environment.

**Findings**

Most of the interviewed adjunct faculty had experienced alternations in how they taught information literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. They revealed experiences that aligned with aspects of the four stages of Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning process. However, adjuncts, interviewed for this study, were at different phases of the transformative learning process, depending on their personal journeys as adult learners. All of them revealed experiences that aligned with stage one and two of the transformative learning, experiencing disorienting dilemma and self-reflection on how to teach information literacy in the new technological era. The majority, 80 % of the interviewed adjuncts, revealed experiences that aligned with the last two stages of the transformative learning, informing changes in their teaching methodologies and becoming autonomous learners, who embrace change and know how to adapt to the new educational requirements. The lock down during COVID-19 epidemic and the necessity to convert all classes to online learning, served as catalyst for all of the interviewed adjunct faculty for transformative learning.

*Old Assumptions and New Experiences*

Adjunct faculty, interviewed for this study, described their old assumptions about teaching information literacy and explained how the new experiences in the classroom facilitated changes in their approaches. Adjunct faculty's meaning structures, their previous knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and personal criteria for judgement of right and wrong (Mezirow, 1996), evolved in the process of adapting to the new learning environment. The main reasons to transform their meaning structures, according to the participants in this study, were the rapid changes in the technological and information environments and the need to adapt to the new learning landscape. One of the participants said, "I feel like I am still learning. I think that because technology is not static and information isn't static... you need to keep learning" (Scarlet). Another participant pointed out that new technologies and new ways to access and use information have changed since they were in college.

> When I started my graduate program… I had to go to the library twice a week and
> I would sit in the library and pull out a book, the reader's guide to periodical
> literature and cross-reference articles, and look them up… I graduated in 2006
> and most things were pretty heavily populated electronically at that point. (James)

Most of the adjunct faculty in this study agreed that they had to navigate between their old assumptions about information literacy and their new experiences within the context of the changing digital environment in order to remain relevant to the learning process. Documentary evidence in the form of presented by a participant syllabus for the same class from different years, illustrated the changes in research assignment requirements to reflect the changes in the digital and information environments. For example, the syllabus

for an English 101 class from 10 years ago, instructed the students to use print resources, located at the college library. The syllabus for the same class from a year ago stated that students should use 'one print and two electronic sources" for their research assignment. One participant explained, "I'm old school, okay! And again, you know, I am computer literate" (Logan). Part of the transformative learning process was changing the meaning structures of what adjuncts knew about teaching information literacy, in order to accommodate new knowledge and adapt to the new requirements.

### *Adapting to the New Digital and Information Environments*

Adjuncts, interviewed in this study, described their experiences on how they revised their need to adapt to teaching information literacy in the new learning environment. Some adjuncts agreed that technology and information have changed and as a result, their students need more attention on the topic in class.  They revealed that engaging in the process of critical self-reflection and determining how to adapt to the changes, as part of the transformative learning process, motivated them to expand their perspectives and accommodate new knowledge, so they could better address the need for new teaching approaches. One of the interviewed adjunct faculty shared, "Yes… adapting, if there's change, right? Go with the change we have from technology" (Victoria). Many of the interviewed adjuncts explained how, when confronted by the new requirements for higher education, they needed to expand their knowledge about information literacy and seek opportunities that helped them enhance and maintain their skills.  One of the participants shared:

> I had to increase my skills of literacy. I thought I knew what I was doing, what I
> had [knew] from when I was at a graduate level… I'm very adaptable because

I've always been into keeping up on, on what's going on with technology. So, for

me, basically, my learning curve [on IL] was really very easy. (Dylan)

Another participant explained, "So, it's a completely different method of instruction

pedagogy in regard to that [IL]" (Oliver). As a result of the changes in the information

and digital environments, many adjunct faculty found it necessary to adapt to teaching in

the new learning environment.

Most of the interviewed adjunct faculty agreed that, as a result of the changes in

the learning environment, they needed to re-evaluate their teaching approaches because

many of their students needed an introduction to information and digital literacies. One

participant explained, "My experience was that my non-traditional students, my older

students had tremendous difficulty navigating some of the electronic components"

(James). Another clarified, "Well, I think we have to accommodate the students. So that

everything is crystal clear" (Oliver). Adjunct faculty experienced the need to teach

information literacy in a way that helped their students acquire the critical thinking

abilities of understanding plagiarism, finding resources, and writing.

Adjunct faculty, interviewed for this study, revealed that since the expectations of

research writing skills had changed as a result of the new digital and information

environments, they not only needed to increase their literacies but they had to revise their

approaches to teaching information literacy. One of the interviewed adjunct faculty

shared, "… the main thing is to make sure that they know how to write an essay and how

to improve upon that. And then secondary, after that would be the research" (David).

Other participants explained, "[We] should focus on essay structure, organization, thesis

statement, as you mentioned, and later on citations which is probably the most important

part of it all" (David). Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty concluded, after reflecting on their students' needs in the new digital and information environments, that they should concentrate equally on the mechanics of writing a research paper and the concepts of information literacy that produced good research.

Additionally, a rubric provided by one of the participants details the depth of information literacy required by the students, "The paper is exceptionally researched, extremely detailed, and historically accurate. Information clearly relates to the thesis". As a result of similar research assignment expectations, many of the adjunct faculty found it necessary to revise their approaches to teaching information literacy and allocate at least one session per semester on showing students how to access the school's databases, how to find resources by constructing searches, and how to evaluate the results. Adjunct faculty also explained how the process of expanding their knowledge led to them seeking professional training opportunities and institutional support in their effort to advance and maintain their information literacy skills.

### Being an Adult Learner

Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty expressed their understanding that as adult learners, access to professional opportunities is a major part of the transformative learning process. Some adjunct faculty in this study, especially the ones that identified themselves as not from the digital native generation, born before the influence of the Internet (Neumann, 2016), reported that they welcomed professional training opportunities and institutional support. One of the participants shared, "How to use the new [technological] systems… I mean, going into that, I didn't know how to work, I never used it before" (Skylar). Another participant shared, "So I don't think it's too much

to ask for paid professional development. You end up with a stronger, more engaged adjunct community" (Brooklyn). Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty shared that by embracing the opportunity to expand their knowledge base on new technologies and research, they were able to accommodate new ideas of how to teach information literacy.

Though, adjunct faculty revealed that they welcomed professional development opportunities as part of the transformative learning experience as adult learners, some of them shared that their participation highly depended on their schedules and a potential for a monetary compensation. One participant shared, "If I am not paid to do it, I have no time to spend on it" (Brooklyn). Another one explained, "I don't have the time for professional development. That's the problem because of my schedule" (Oliver). A few other participants expressed similar thoughts:

> It's been offered to me, I've never taken off on it. That's not because of my
> opinion of information literacy. Just maybe because of time or like I say, urgency.
> (Lucas)
>
> Paid ones? Not paid ones. And as a result, if they do come my way, I don't pay
> much attention to them to be honest, because, you know, we don't make a ton of
> money. (Brooklyn)

Adjunct faculty, interviewed in this study, reflected on the fact that depending on their personal journeys as adult learners, they might not take advantage of professional development opportunities due to lack of time and monetary compensation.

**Discussion**

This study highlights how adjunct faculty experienced transformational learning in the process of teaching information literacy for their classes at community colleges in

New Jersey. In practical terms, some recommendations for effective support of the transformative learning process for adjunct faculty include creating new policies about their role in teaching information literacy, creating practices of inclusion, and offering professional development opportunities.  The findings provided answers to the two research questions.

*Research Question 1: Integration of New Knowledge*

The findings about adjunct faculty's old assumptions and new experiences when teaching information literacy align with research that points to the need of both students and faculty to adapt to changes in the technological and information environments. Badke (2014) indicated that the concept of information literacy has constantly changed in light of the development of new technologies and the explosive production and dissemination of information. This study documented that adjunct faculty, who teach at community colleges in New Jersey, had similar experiences of facing changes in the learning landscape due to the rapid changes in new technology and access to information.

However, some adjuncts, interviewed for this study, reported that first, they needed to revisit their past knowledge of information literacy in order to understand the changes. The participants pointed out that the new technologies and the new ways to access and use information has changed the education landscape from the time they were in college. Many of the adjunct faculty reflected on their experiences with acquiring information literacy skills at times when users were not dependent on technologies and compared them with experiences in today's digital environment. They acknowledged that they needed to acquire new information literacy skills in order to be able to teach their students. These experiences were consistent with the first phase of Mezirow's (1996)

transformative learning when adjuncts, viewed as adult learners, were confronted by new

meaning making and needed to re-evaluate old assumptions.

**Transformative Learning Opportunities and Institutional Support.** The

findings in this study about the necessity of learning opportunities for adjuncts further the

argument in the available literature that many of them, especially the ones that are not

from the digital native generation, welcome professional training and institutional

support. However, this study revealed that adjunct faculty's part time employment status

affected not only their salaries and benefits but the levels of their commitment to

institutional goals like teaching information literacy. As Baron-Nixon and Hecht (2011)

state, "All professional development opportunities generally available to full-time

faculty, should be accessible to part-time faculty. The quality of teaching across the

institution needs to be of uniform high quality" (p. 39). Future research on adjunct

faculty's transformative learning should recognize the challenges adjunct experience

because they do not have the same access to professional development opportunities as

full-time faculty and explore possibilities for professional growth. Institutional support

and paid professional development opportunities were examples of an extrinsic

motivation, discussed by many of the interviewed adjunct faculty.

According to Saunders (2012), adjunct faculty encounter complex sets of issues in

their efforts to teach information literacy because they have limited access to resources

and support services due to their part time employment status. This study revealed that

the lack of resources and open communication with their departments were considered

the main barriers to teaching information literacy. Reduced access to the library and the

librarians, especially in the evenings and on the weekends, was discussed during the

interviews by most of the participants as a major setback to their efforts. The findings of this study about barriers to teaching information literacy supported the premise that resource and service-based teaching approach (Matusiak, 1999), one of the most effective ways of teaching information literacy, could not be achieved without adjunct faculty having an access to the institutional resources and support services. Therefore, community colleges in New Jersey could increase the success of adjunct faculty, teaching information literacy by keeping an open communication and support from the respective departments.

***Research Question 2: Critical Reflections on Information Literacy Teaching Practices***

Participants discussed the differences in the experiences with teaching information literacy based on their professional backgrounds and teaching practices. The findings about how adjunct faculty revised their teaching approaches largely confirmed that they often had to choose whether to allocate time to teach information literacy in class or to expect that students would acquire the information literacy skills on their own (Oakleaf et al., 2011). Similar to Cope and Sanabria's (2014) findings, many of the adjunct faculty, interviewed for this study, pointed out that in the past they used to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper. However, the findings of this study about the need, adjunct faculty experienced, to teach information literacy in a way that helped their students acquire the critical thinking abilities of writing their research papers, reinforced the necessity of introducing changes in their teaching approaches (Mezirow, 1996). Aligning with previous research, this study also found that many adjuncts believed they were qualified to teach information literacy but would rather have someone, like a librarian, who specialized in it, to teach a general class on research

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(Cope & Sanabria, 2014). However, findings about the necessity of learning opportunities for adjuncts highlighted the shift in their perspective from viewing information literacy through the prism of their disciplines to seeing it as a part of the general education.

While many of the interviewed adjuncts explained how they needed to learn how to teach information literacy in the new digital environment, it is important to highlight that they did that in addition to teaching basic writing strategies. As Cope and Sanabria (2014) indicated in their study, "Faculty, particularly at community-college level, revealed that they must concentrate on approaching research assignments as opportunities to address basic writing and research skills…" (p. 488). Adjunct faculty revealed experiences, which align with Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning process, that with all the changes they witnessed with technology and information, they found it more pressing to start teaching information literacy in their classes, so they could keep up with the new education requirements.

**Research on Adjunct Faculty's Perspectives on Teaching IL.** The findings of this study about adjunct faculty's transformative learning experiences with teaching information literacy in the new academic environment (Mezirow, 1996) extend prior research and theory by shedding light on the nuanced ways, adjuncts perceive their role in teaching it. Future research on adjunct faculty's transformative learning should recognize the challenges adjuncts experience when adapting to the fast-changing learning environment. Therefore, this case study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base of the transformative learning experiences of adjunct faculty at community colleges in New Jersey by filling a gap in the research regarding their perspectives and experiences on teaching information literacy in the new learning environment. Further, this study also

serves as a stepping stone for future research on college facilitated professional development programs to support adjunct faculty in their transformative learning processes, including collaborations with full-time faculty and academic librarians.

**Conclusions**

This study's findings corroborate those in the literature review. This includes a widely held research view that adjunct faculty experience transformative learning and become autonomous thinkers. Adjunct faculty were viewed as adult learners, who experienced the transformative learning process as a result of the changing information and digital environments (Carales et al., 2016) and reforms in the educational landscape (McGowanet al., 2016). Findings in this study indicate that adjunct faculty are at different phases of the transformative learning process, depending on their personal and professional journeys. The findings above expand upon existing research and theory, highlight the important role adjunct faculty play in teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey, and point to the need of institutional support, access to resources, and professional development opportunities.

Many of the interviewed adjunct faculty were able to inform changes into their current teaching practices for information literacy and become critical, autonomous thinkers as a result of the transformative learning process. Adjunct faculty agreed that information literacy in today's digital environment should be taught in a way that the students acquire the critical thinking abilities, necessary to succeed academically. As adult learners, adjunct faculty in this study, identified the need to advance their information and digital skills, sought professional development opportunities, and requested departmental support. They were confident that by enhancing their knowledge

about information literacy, they would be able to serve the students better. Overall this study points to the complexity of the adjunct faculty experiences when dealing with the new digital and information environments and highlights the need for contextualized statewide and local efforts to honor and support adjunct faculties experiences with teaching information literacy at community colleges in New Jersey.

**Chapter Six**

**Manuscript Two - Adjunct Faculty
Teaching Information Literacy at Community Colleges in New Jersey**

Information literacy has been a topic of discussion for many years with varying progress. Librarians, faculty, and students strive to keep up with updates on how information is used and taught in higher education institutions in the context of the constant changes in the digital and information environments (Badke, 2014). Information literacy for higher education is defined as a set of abilities to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively (ALA, 1989). Adjunct faculty in particular have the most influence on helping students in community colleges become information literate since they are becoming the largest instructional cohort in higher education (Baron-Nixon & Hecht, 2011; Datray et al., 2014). According to the American Association of University Professors (2018), adjunct faculty in community colleges teach approximately 73% of the courses in 2016.

I recently interviewed with adjunct faculty who teach at community colleges in New Jersey on their experiences with IL and one thing became clear: with all the changes in the information environment, faculty needed to enhance their information literacy skills, allocate time in class for teaching those skills to their students, and rely less on college librarians. Based on these findings, I identified strategies to help adjunct faculty become more involved with addressing information literacy implementation for community colleges in New Jersey. I suggest that in order to enhance adjunct faculty's intrinsic motivation to engage with the institutional goals of implementing information literacy, they need to feel included in collaborative initiatives and have access to trainings and resources.

**Adjuncts Teaching Information Literacy**

Most adjunct faculty do not account for information literacy skill building in their curricula. Some of the reasons for their reluctance toward addressing information literacy in their classes are the lack of time in the curriculum, not having sufficient skills to teach information literacy, or simply expecting students to become information literate on their own by doing research without explicit instruction (Gullikson, 2006; McGuinness, 2006; Oakleaf et al., 2011). Even if they decide to devote time to information literacy, they tend to concentrate more on the mechanics of writing a research paper than reinforcing the concepts of producing good research like understanding plagiarism, finding resources by constructing searches, and synthesizing materials (Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Head & Eisenberg, 2010; VanScoy & Oakleaf, 2008). However, to benefit all students at community colleges, according to who? the best approach should focus on finding teaching strategies that incorporate both perspectives.

**Adjunct Faculty from New Jersey Community Colleges Speak**

In the Fall of 2019, we engaged in research to explore adjunct faculty's experiences with teaching information literacy in the context of the fast changing digital and information environments. We used a qualitative case study design to explore the experiences of 20 adjunct faculty from community colleges, across New Jersey, who have taught classes that required research assignments. We discovered that they have been shifting their understanding from viewing information literacy through the prism of their respective disciplines to seeing it as a part of the general education. With all the changes in the information environment, many of the adjunct faculty interviewed agreed that they needed to allocate time in class for discussions about information literacy,

enhance their skills and teaching approaches, and rely less on the librarians at their

institutions. Here is a glimpse of what we gathered:

*#1 Tylor*

An experienced History adjunct professor, with a long adjunct career from

multiple educational institutions, he keeps his focus on the students and tends to their

changing needs: "My experience is that my non-traditional students, my older students

have tremendous difficulty navigating information literacy and some of the electronic

components. Well, I think we have to accommodate the students. So that everything in

the assignment is crystal clear." Implicit in Tylor's words is the conviction that whether it

is part of his responsibilities or not, he needs to allocate time in class for discussions

about information literacy, so he can serve his students' best interests, particularly those

less familiar with information technology. This is important because students with

challenged socio-economic status make up 65 % of the community college student body

(AACC, 2021).

*#2 Rose*

An experienced English adjunct professor, who has worked at both 2- and 4-year

institutions, understands how important it is for adjunct faculty to keep up with the

changing educational environment: "So I don't think it's too much to ask for paid

professional development. You end up with a stronger, more engaged adjunct

community." Again, we see reference to taking steps that will insure the students'

academic success. Rose is explicitly asking for professional learning opportunities that

will assist adjuncts with their personal and professional growth. It is important that these

professional opportunities are paid because it motivates adjuncts to participate and shows the institutional commitment to their interests.

*#3 Royce*

An experienced Psychology adjunct professor, with a full-time job as a psychologist, revealed how important it is, both for instructors and students, to have access to resources and institutional support: "I come at night, I would get there at 6 pm with 15 to 30 students and most things would be closed. I found it difficult to access those [IL services]. I always felt like I had to figure everything out on my own." Embedded in Royce's narrative is the necessity to enhance her skills and teaching approaches, so she can rely less on library resources and services.

**Reinventing Information Literacy Implementation**

The idea that adjunct faculty at community colleges in New Jersey are becoming essential to teaching information literacy may find some resistance among them. The adjunct faculty interviewed for this study revealed that they still believed that their role was teaching their subject, but that information literacy should be taught by specialists in the field. At the same time, they felt obligated to teach information literacy, so the students could produce research assignments at college level in the subject they taught. As a result of these findings, we are proposing the following:

*Invest in the Adjuncts*

By enhancing their digital and information literacies, adjunct faculty would be able to serve the students better. Teaching faculty agree that the changes in implementing information literacy are highly influenced by the demands to incorporate new technologies into the teaching methodology, especially after the start of the pandemic in

March 2020. If community colleges rely on adjunct faculty to teach more than half of their students, implementing information literacy into the general curriculum will highly depend on their commitment and professional skills (Burgess, 2015; Dawes, 2019; Foasberg, 2015; Burke, 2017). Access to paid professional development opportunities may not only assist with their career growth but may influence their job satisfaction and level of commitment to the institutional goals.

### *Bring Information Literacy into the Classroom*

Due to limited resources, information literacy instructions at community colleges are often designed as embedded sessions, taught by librarians when requested by the teaching faculty (Kim & Dolan, 2015). Unfortunately, this type of instruction is not always available to adjunct faculty and is often insufficient to address the overall issue with students' information literacy needs (Lloyd, 2005). Many adjunct faculty identify the need to teach information literacy, allocate time for discussions in class about information literacy, and rely less on the librarians. However, some adjuncts do not see the task of teaching information literacy as their responsibility. To unify the approach to information literacy at community colleges, especially among adjunct faculty, it is essential that information literacy is viewed as an essential part of the general education and included in the curriculum of every class.

### *Treat Adjunct and Full-Time Faculty Equally*

Adjunct faculty's part time employment status affects not only their salaries and benefits but the levels of their inclusion in institutional initiatives and access to resources. Lack of access to resources, mentorship programs, and institutional support are often described by adjuncts as not being valued and not receiving equal treatment with the full-

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time faculty (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018; Diegel, 2013). Any incentive toward recognizing adjunct faculty's efforts in teaching information literacy might increase their job satisfaction. Being included in departmental discussions, being offered recognition for service, and being able to acquire equal access to resources and professional development opportunities are some of the proposed approaches of increasing adjunct faculty's sense of inclusion and value.

**Future Considerations**

Since community colleges strive to prepare their students for the new digital and information environments, they need to engage the adjunct faculty cohort in the efforts to address information literacy teaching practices. It is essential that the educational institutions assist the adjunct faculty's movement through the transformative learning process by providing access to professional development opportunities that enhance and maintain their information literacy skills. In addition, access to resources and departmental support improves their commitment to the institutional goals by increasing their interpersonal motivation to improve. Further, the findings from this study expand the understanding of the importance of collaboration, support, and inclusion of adjunct faculty members in the information literacy initiatives since they teach more than half of the classes in community colleges. The study also serves as a stepping stone for future work on college facilitated professional development programs to support adjunct faculty in their personal learning processes associated with information literacy, including collaborations with full-time faculty and academic librarians.

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**Appendix A**

**Social Media Message for Identifying Potential Participants**

Hello friends! I'm starting my study and need your help please!!!

I am currently seeking participants for my study for my dissertation. I am a doctoral candidate at Rowan University in Educational Leadership Ed. D. I am seeking individuals who teach as adjunct faculty at community colleges in New Jersey and have taught for at least 2 semesters. I am conducting interviews, about forty-five minutes long, exploring adjunct faculty's experiences with information literacy implementation for community colleges.  The interviews can be done virtually or in person at your convenience. In addition to the interviews, if participants have any documentary artifacts like syllabi, assignment instructions, or institutional emails that relate to information literacy and adjuncts, I will be happy to collect them.

I look forward to hearing from interested individuals!

Co-Principal Investigators:

Aneliia Chatterjee 646-351-2616

Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, Ph. D.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB # xxxxxxx.

**Appendix B**

**Interviewee Selection Protocol**

1.  Do you agree to be interviewed, virtually or in-person for 45 minutes?

2.  Are you currently employed at least one community college in New Jersey?

3.  Do you have at least one year of experience, teaching freshman courses at a community college in New Jersey?

4.  Do you teach courses that require at least one research paper per semester?

5.  Do the syllabi for these courses indicate that the instructors are expected to incorporate at least one class during the semester for information literacy instructions?

**Appendix C**

**Interview Protocol**

**Research Questions**

**RQ1**. How do adjunct faculty's professional and personal experiences with information literacy affect the integration of new knowledge when they are confronted by new meaning making in today's changing learning environment?

**RQ2.** How does adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their assumptions and beliefs informs changes in their current teaching practices?

**RQ3**. How do adjunct faculty change their frames of references when they need to adapt to the new information literacy requirements for their classes?

**RQ4.** How do adjunct faculty's experiences of becoming better learners and achieving greater autonomy inform changes in their current teaching practices?

**Interview Protocol Questions**

1. How long have you been teaching as an adjunct at a community college in New Jersey? (You said you taught at more than one community college. How is your experience different?)

2. With regard to your own experience and background, how do you think information literacy for higher education changed in today's digital and information environments?

3. What is it like teaching a course at a community college when affected by changes in today's learning environment?

4. In what ways did the need to teach information literacy for your classes change your understanding of information literacy in the new learning environment (if at all)? Please provide specific examples.

5. How did teaching information literacy for your classes in today's digital and information environments affect your own professional development needs (if at all)? Please provide specific examples.

6. In your opinion, in today's changing learning environment, what is the role of the adjunct faculty within the context of teaching information literacy?

7. How would you describe your access to resources and support services related to information literacy on campus (if any) when you teach information literacy in class? Please provide specific examples.

8. In what ways do you feel supported by the institution/department in your efforts to teach information literacy (if at all)? Please provide specific examples.

9. To what extent did the changes in the digital and information environments have an effect on your experience of teaching information literacy over the years?

10. How (if at all) have you changed your teaching practices as a result of the need to teach information literacy for your classes? Please provide specific examples.

11. What supplemental materials (documents/handouts/tutorials/websites/apps) do you find useful using in class for teaching information literacy? (Do you have any documents that can help me understand what we have been talking about?)

12. Now that you know what my research is about, is there anything I should have asked?

**Appendix D**

**Document Collection Protocol**

Choice

1. Who created the document?

2. Was the document intended for adjunct teaching faculty?

Context

1. Was addressing adjunct faculty the main purpose for creating the document?

Content

1. Does the document provide information about information literacy requirements for the course?

2. Does the document provide information about adjunct faculty's teaching practices on information literacy?

3. Does the document provide information about support services related to information literacy that adjunct teaching faculty can use?

4. Does the document provide information on resources, available to adjunct faculty on information literacy?

**Appendix E**

**Letter of Informed Consent**

**Project Title:** Using Transformative Learning Theory to Explore Adjunct
Faculty's Experiences with Teaching Information Literacy: A Case Study of Community
Colleges in New Jersey

**Investigators:** Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D. and Aneliia Chatterjee, Ed.D.
Candidate.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how adjunct
faculty experience transformative learning as a result of their efforts to teach information
literacy for their classes at community colleges in New Jersey. Specifically, this study
investigates how adjunct faculty's ongoing process of critical self-reflection about their
prior experience and background affect the integration of new knowledge when they are
confronted by new meaning making in today's digital and information environments.

**Procedures:** During this project you will be interviewed by Aneliia Chatterjee to
discover your experiences and perceptions of information literacy for community
colleges as an adjunct faculty at a community college in New Jersey. The interview will
be recorded for data analysis purposes only and should last about 45-60 minutes.

**Risks:** There is little to no risk of harm. Your information will be assigned a code
number that is unique to this study. No one other than the researchers would know
whether you participated in the study.  Study findings will be presented only in summary
form and your name will not be used in any report or publications.

**Benefits:** The information you provide will inform future attempts to engage
adjunct faculty in the efforts to address information literacy implementation at

community colleges in New Jersey. The study will also provide insights on future collaborative initiatives with academic librarians and opportunities for professional development, as perceived necessary by the adjunct faculty.

**Extent of Confidentiality:** All of your responses, writings, or other materials will be kept confidential, meaning that no one will be made aware of your participation. Your name or any other identifying information, such as your role as an educator and place of employment, will not be disclosed in any discussion or written documents about the research.

**Permission to Withdraw:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer and withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Your signature below gives permission to use the data collected from your interview for the research project. You will also receive a copy of this form for your record. You will be given the option to review, provide clarity, and make revisions of the transcripts.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, at 856.256.4500 x.53818 or email at johnsona@rowan.edu or the co-investigator, Aneliia Chatterjee, at 646.351.2616 or email at chatterja6@students.rowan.edu.  If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Rowan University Glassboro/CMSRU IRB at 856-256-4078.

Participant Name _____ Date _____

Researcher Name _____ Date _____