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ACADEMICS JOURNEY INTO FULL-TIME FACULTY POSITIONS
THROUGH THE LENS OF COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

Tracy Sadlak McLaughlin

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FROM THE PERIPHERY: A CASE STUDY OF ASPIRING ACADEMICS'
JOURNEY INTO FULL-TIME FACULTY POSITIONS THROUGH
THE LENS OF COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

by

Tracy Sadlak McLaughlin

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Instruction and Curriculum Leadership

The University of Memphis

May 2020

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my family, including my grandfather, Mecoy, and my great aunt, Helen, who went before me—both in the physical realm by earning advanced degrees in days when people barely had high school diplomas and in the spiritual realm by cheering me on in heaven. To my Daddy, who joined them during the writing of this and was so excited for me. I miss you all every day. To my mom Bettye, my sisters Betsy and Missy, my nieces and nephews Elizabeth Jane, Shep, Brady, Ellie and Mary Taylor, love you so much and yes you must call me Dr. Sassy. Most of all, for Jim, for always having my back and for your endless love, patience, support, and humor. Thanks for never giving up on me.

A very special thank you to the amazing, dedicated staff at West Cancer Clinic.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Rockinson-Sapkiw, Happel-Parkins, Shepherd, and Leonard. I cannot express how much I appreciate your guidance, your encouragement, and your wisdom. You have each had such a positive impact on my life, both personally and professionally. I am so blessed to have had you as my team.

To the many colleagues over the years who have cheered me on, I am grateful. I especially thank Patsy Fancher and Dr. Karen Bowyer, who were instrumental in encouraging me to take this path and for keeping me on it. My graduate school cohort was amazing. Dennis and Scot, you talked me off of the ledge so many times and I am incredibly appreciative. Stephanie, my cohort bestie and precious friend, there are no words. We've been there and back and lived to tell about it.

Finally, to the faculty and administrators who participated in this study, this is your story and I am grateful for the opportunity to be the narrator.

Abstract

The low number of aspiring academics who are able to secure full-time positions at colleges and universities is concerning. One way to address this issue is to investigate the experiences of former aspiring academics who have earned full-time positions. This case study explored the successes and challenges of a group of former aspiring academics as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted to gather the experiences of the participants. These methods looked specifically at their experience related to a community of practice. Results of the study showed that the participants all shared initial feelings of being in the dark as adjuncts, in that there were obstacles they faced such as lack of resources, training, and connectivity. The faculty participants managed to overcome these challenges by treating the part-time position as if it were full-time, or being all in. Finally, though initially after earning full-time status, they felt “apart” from the community, with time they became “a part” of the community.

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List of Abbreviations

Community of Practice (CoP)	3
Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)	4

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Fifty-two percent of all faculty in higher education work in a part-time position (AFT Higher Education, 2010) and approximately 58 percent of community college courses are taught by adjunct faculty (Center for Community College Engagement, 2014). Therefore, adjunct faculty are the “new teaching majority” in institutions of higher education (Bakely & Broderson, 2018, p. 129). Adjunct faculty are intrinsic to the success of colleges (AAUP, n.d.; American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2010; Eagan, Jaeger & Grantham, 2015; Gappa & Leslie, 1993), yet adjunct faculty who wish to attain full-time teaching status find the path to employment difficult to navigate (Bakely & Brodersen, 2018; Feldman, 2001; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016).

Several factors drive the demand for adjunct faculty, including the fact that adjuncts are cheap labor. It is more cost efficient to pay adjuncts on a per-class basis than to hire a full-time faculty member and pay a salary and benefits. Adjuncts can earn as much as 60 percent less than their full-time colleagues (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Noble, 2000; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003; Yakoboski & Foster, 2014). Therefore, adjunct faculty are often hired when budget constraints prevent filling teaching positions (Baker, 2014; Noble, 2000). Adjuncts are asked to teach courses when gaps exist in class schedules (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Maritnak, 2013; Klein, Weisman, & Smith, 1996). For example, if enrollments increase or if a full-time faculty member takes a sabbatical, college administrators hire adjuncts. Adjuncts also satisfy the demand driven by the popularity of distance education courses (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2010; Yakoboski & Foster, 2014). In research from 2015, Allen and Seaman (2016) noted that 28 percent of higher education students in the United States had taken at least one online class. In the same year, more than 5.8 million students were enrolled in at least one online class, and 2.8 million of

those students pursued degrees while only taking online classes. With online enrollments growing and budgets tightening, colleges and universities often depend on adjunct labor to teach online classes (Allen & Seaman, 2016).

Despite their benefit to the bottom line at institutions of higher education, adjunct faculty can encounter many challenges in their part-time positions. For example, adjuncts can receive low pay, poor support from their departments, and little recognition from the colleges and universities where they teach (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Pons, Burnett, Williams, & Paredes, 2017). Regardless of the challenges, many adjuncts still aspire to be full-time faculty at their institutions. Gappa and Leslie (1993) labeled these adjuncts “aspiring academics,” and they are the fastest growing group of adjunct faculty (Coalition on the Academic Workforce [CAW], 2012; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). One challenge specific to aspiring academics is that they have no formal advancement track (Kezar, 2013a; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003), so they must invent their own promotion trajectory.

In spite of the need for adjuncts in higher education and regardless of the extensive research on adjuncts in general, limited research exists on adjuncts who aspire to full-time faculty status (Kezar & Bernstein, 2016; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017). Therefore, this inquiry explores the experience of a group of aspiring adjuncts, as it explains the challenges faced by part-time faculty and celebrates those former adjuncts who, despite the difficulties of part-time employment, overcame the obstacles and moved into full-time faculty roles. This study seeks to describe the phenomenon of pursuing entrance into and joining a community of practice as experienced by aspiring academics as they navigated from part-time to full-time status at a community college. This study also seeks to articulate suggestions for aspiring academics who are interested in progressing into full-time faculty positions.

Problem of Practice Statement

Adjunct faculty face numerous challenges in their positions, including low pay, lack of support, and lack of recognition. Colleges often offer adjuncts little to no administrative support, few or no opportunities to engage in campus governance, and no guarantee of continued employment (AFT, 2010; Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Kezar, 2013b; Pons, et al., 2017). Aspiring academics receive little or no guidance on how to progress from adjunct to full-time positions (Feldman, 1996; Kezar, 2013a). Only 25 percent of aspiring adjuncts eventually earn a full-time faculty position (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Because community colleges in particular save money by hiring adjuncts, many adjuncts at community colleges are unable to gain full-time status (Christensen, 2008). However, some aspiring adjuncts manage to weather the challenges and become full-time faculty (Kezar, 2013a; Ochoa, 2012).

Little research has investigated the trajectory or pathway of the aspiring adjuncts who earned full-time positions. One way to understand this trajectory may be from a Community of Practice (CoP) perspective; and thus, the CoP theory will serve as the framework for this inquiry. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a CoP as “[a]n intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning” (p. 98). Applied to the phenomenon of aspiring adjuncts’ progression from a part-time to full-time position, CoP theory suggests that adjuncts can move from a newcomer position to the acquisition of community-specific knowledge. By acquiring community-specific knowledge, the adjuncts experience legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). LPP is the process by which newcomers become a part of a community of practice through participation, moving from the periphery of a community into the

community. The knowledge gained participation may help adjuncts feel more a part of the institution. Thus, the community of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) will guide this investigation.

Purpose Statement

This investigation uses a case study approach (Stake, 1995) to understand the experiences of aspiring academics at a rural community college in Tennessee as they became full-time faculty members and integrated into the college community. This study examined the successes and challenges they experienced as they pursued entrance into and became part of a community of practice.

Question(s)

The problem statement and the purpose statement guided the central research question for this study. The central research question is stated broadly and begins with “What” as is appropriate for case study design (Creswell, 2014). The central research question is derived from research on aspiring academics and the CoP theory. The question is aimed at providing guidance for aspiring academics on how they may become full-time faculty. The central research question is:

Research Question (RQ). What can be learned from the successes and challenges experienced by aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice and became a full-time faculty member?

This question addresses the successes experienced by former aspiring adjuncts as they moved into a community of practice, as well as the challenges they encountered.

The sub-questions for the study seek a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. These sub-questions allowed for the discovery of themes and patterns in the data (Creswell, 2014):

Sub-question 1 (SQ1). What successes did aspiring academics at a community college experience as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice and became full-time faculty members?

Sub-question 2 (SQ2). What contributed to the success of aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice and became full-time faculty members?

Sub-question 3 (SQ3). What challenges did aspiring academics at a community college experience as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice and became full-time faculty members?

Sub-question 4 (SQ4). How did aspiring academics at a community college overcome challenges as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice and became full-time faculty members?

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were used:

Adjunct. Anyone teaching one or more classes at an institution of higher education without a full-time contract, sometimes referred to as part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, or contingent faculty (Dolan, et al., 2013).

Aspiring Academic. Part-time faculty who aspire to a full-time faculty position (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

Community College. “Any institution regionally accredited to award the associates in arts or the associates in science as its highest degree” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 5).

Community of Practice. “An intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage.

Participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). The term community of practice was later defined as “a learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain. They use each other’s experience of practice as a learning resource” (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2001, p. 9).

Involuntary part-time. “A term used to define adjunct faculty hoping for a full-time appointment” (Bakely & Brodersen, 2018, p. 130).

Legitimacy. With peripherality, legitimacy is one of the “two types of modification required to make actual participation possible. In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members. . .only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumbles and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion” (Wenger, 2000, p. 101).

Legitimate Peripheral Participation. The process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice; “engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35).

Peripherality. With legitimacy, peripherality is one of the “two types of modifications required to make actual participation possible. Peripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice . . . Peripheral participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice: to mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiations of the enterprise, and to the repertoire in use” (Wenger, 2000, p. 100).

Practice. “A ‘practice’ in the senses of ‘community of practice’ is an activity that people do, regularly and over time, for a purpose. If organizing is learning, the practice of the community that is self-organizing is the practice of learning” (Worthen, 2015, p. 426).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to learn about the successes and challenges experienced by aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into and joined an existing community of practice and became full-time faculty. Illustrating the need for this study, the review of the literature begins by grounding the research in the theoretical framework of community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Once the framework for the study is established, the plight of adjunct faculty is elucidated to allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences of aspiring academics. Within the discussion of the plight of adjuncts is a review of the challenges faced by all adjuncts, followed by the difficulties specific to aspiring academics. Recommendations for improving the working situation of adjunct faculty are addressed, and the literature review concludes by identifying the problem and the gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Ensuring a robust research design necessitated a solid theoretical framework for this qualitative study. According to Yin (2003), “[t]heory development before the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies” (p. 29). Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice (CoP) theory guides this inquiry. A discussion of CoP will ensue and begin with defining social learning systems (Wenger, 2000). CoP has its foundation in theory and research related to the social nature of human learning inspired by anthropology and social theory (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Lave, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). So, while the community of practice did not evolve out of the systems theory tradition, community of practice is well

aligned with the perspective of the systems tradition, as a community of practice itself can be viewed as a simple social system (Wenger, 2000).

Social Learning Systems and CoPs

Wenger (2000) defined social learning systems as the interplay between individual experiences of knowing, combined with the competence that derives from social interactions. Communities of practice are the “containers of competencies” that form a social learning system (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). While Wenger in 2000 defined CoPs as an element of a social learning system, the initial concept of CoP was developed by Lave and Wenger in 1991 and was defined as

A set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in connection with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage (p. 98).

The concept of CoP has continued to grow in its complexity. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) original definition came from an anthropological perspective. They argued that learning is more than just the absorption of information. Learning is, rather, “increasing participation in communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). Later, Wenger (1998) began to focus on the application of CoP to the workplace, thus advancing his definition. He articulated how employees’ professional identities, as well as their learning trajectories, are shaped by social resources. Subsequently, Wenger took the concept of CoP even further by defining it as a way of knowing and learning that can be applied to multiple contexts. These applications include business, organizational design, government, education, and civic life. More recently, Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) defined a CoP as a group of people who learn from each other within a

specific domain. Each person's experience within their own practice serves as a learning resource to the other community members.

Wenger (2004) also defines three basic characteristics of a CoP: domain, community, and practice.

Domain. The domain of a CoP is “the area of knowledge that brings the community together, gives it its identity, and defines the key issues that members needs to address” (Wenger, 2004, p. 3). The domain gives a group its identity and is what makes it different from a group of friends or a network of connections among people.

Community. Wenger (2004) defines the community as “the group of people for whom the domain is relevant, the quality of the relationships among members, and the definition of the boundary between the inside and the outside” (p. 3). For a group of people to be considered a community, the members must come together around topics of interest (i. e., domain) and work together to learn together.

Practice. The concept of practice is explained as “the body of knowledge, methods, tools, stories, cases, documents, which members share and develop together” (Wenger, 2004, p. 3). The concept of practice is what differentiates a CoP from a community of interest. In a CoP, participants work together and gather knowledge in their domain. This knowledge enhances their ability to perform both individually and as a group. A more recent definition of practice, from a Wengerian perspective, is from Consalvo, Schallert, and Elias (2005) who see practice as “a way of acting in the world” and as “a field of endeavor and expertise” (p. 3).

A successful CoP involves domain, community, and practice. Domain gives the group its focus, community enables the establishment of relationships for the purpose of learning, and

practice emphasizes the shared learning, knowledge, and actions of the community members (Wenger, 2004).

In addition to the three elements of CoP, CoP also involves the process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Through legitimate peripheral participation, discussed in detail below, learners enter a CoP and gradually take up its practices (Hoadley, 2012). As a newcomer enters a community, they engage in the ways of the community. The social structure of the community of practice, which includes power relations and conditions for being a legitimate part of the community, defines ways of learning for the participant. Lave and Wenger stated, “A person’s intentions to learn are engaged, and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice” (1991, p. 29).

In sum, communities of practice are groups of people who share a common goal or a common concern. The participants interact on a regular basis to deepen their knowledge and expertise (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and the emphasis is on learning through their social interaction (Wenger, 2000). As the community members spend time together, they share information and ideas, solve problems, and they may construct something physical like tools or manuals. They may even just create tacit understanding (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). As Wenger (1998) says, “Communities of practice are the prime context in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement” (p. 47). Although they share common goals, members of a community of practice are expected to have different interests and viewpoints, so participation at multiple levels is expected (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, despite the members having their own ways of understanding, the community of practice is where they can come together to “develop, negotiate, and share” their ideas (Wenger, 1998, p. 48). As participants interact over time, a certain amount of personal satisfaction comes from being with

colleagues who share unique perspectives as well as “a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches” to a topic (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 5). The result of this interaction and mutual understanding is a community of practice. By participating in a CoP, members decide among themselves what comprises expertise in a given context. For example, a community college might have certain standards for a faculty position, but the competence to do the job is determined among the faculty in their daily interactions.

Participation and Reification

As a newcomer enters into a community of practice, there are two means by which they can negotiate meaning to influence the community. Those means are participation and reification (Wenger, 1998). Participation, the first component of the negotiation of meaning, is the process by which members interact. Participation is based upon the idea of mutuality and how meaning is negotiated with others. By recognizing this mutuality, people become a part of each other (Wenger, 1998). Reification, the second component of the negotiation of meaning, is the creation and use of artifacts by the community members in order to affect participant behavior. Reification has been defined as the process of “giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1994, p. 58). However, reification can be referent to both a process and its product. The character of objects created in reification is “not only in their form but also in the process by which they are integrated into these practices” (Wenger, 1994, p. 60). While they are complementary, participation and reification can also make up for the weaknesses in the other. An example of these processes working in tandem is the use of a common course syllabus. If there is too much focus on the reification of the syllabus, instructor creativity could suffer. However, the use of a common syllabus, and its inherent shared verbiage and structured format, provides a basis of learning for a

newcomer. When a situation is ambiguous, reification and participation can work together to dissipate the confusion. According to Wenger (2010), artifacts without participation do not have a common meaning, and participation without artifacts is “fleeting, unanchored, and uncoordinated” (p. 180).

Mutual Engagement, Joint Enterprise, and Shared Repertoire

Participation and reification, over time, result in a set of criteria that participants use to recognize CoP membership (Wenger, 2010). These criteria are mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement is a combination of one’s own competence, the competence of others, and one’s ability to contribute to the knowledge of others. Group norms and practices are created through mutual engagement (Wenger, 2010). Joint enterprise is a negotiated understanding within a group for the purpose of the community (Wenger, 2010). Finally, shared repertoire is the creation of resources for negotiating meaning within a group. The community repertoire could include routines, language, or concepts. Interestingly, shared repertoire includes participation and reification because “it includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members” (Wenger, 1994, p. 83).

Engagement, Imagination, and Alignment

Once CoP participation has begun, members express their belonging in the community through three modes of identification: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Wenger (1998) noted that the three modes are not mutually exclusive.

The first mode of belonging is engagement. Wenger (1998) defined engagement as an active process whereby an individual participates in “the ongoing negotiation of meaning, the formation of trajectories, and the unfolding of histories of practice” (p. 174). For example, an

adjunct may begin engaging with a college community and its faculty by attending faculty meetings, participating in campus activities, and being on campus outside of their teaching hours.

While engagement requires participation in the community, the mode of imagination necessitates taking a step back from the community. Imagination, according to Wenger (1998), is “a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the work and ourselves” (p. 176). In other words, imagination is the image one develops of him or herself, one’s communities, and the world (Wenger, 2000). In belonging to a community, a person has to see themselves as being one of the community. In the case of adjuncts, they see themselves belonging to and being a part of the faculty. Imagination is central to understanding the reasoning behind the actions of community members (Wenger, 2000) and one’s position in the community (Wenger, 1998). For example, an adjunct may use imagination to reflect upon the college and its faculty, develop an image of a faculty member in the community, and in turn, envisioning him or herself as a faculty in the community doing faculty work.

Along with participation and imagination, the third mode of belonging is alignment. The process of alignment allows for members to coordinate their energy, actions and practices toward the community goals (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2000). Alignment ensures that “our local activities are sufficiently aligned with other processes so that they can be effective beyond our own engagement” (Wenger, 2000, p. 228). By the process of alignment, members become part of something bigger than themselves because of the part they play in the community. For example, adjuncts at a community college may align their behaviors through use of a standard college template to create a course syllabus.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

While legitimate peripheral participation is not a central construct in Wenger's writing, it is an important element or condition whereby a newcomer enters into and is included in a CoP. When a new participant engages in a community of practice, they usually begin on the periphery of the group (Wenger, 2000). Wenger (1998) describes this periphery as "a region that is neither fully inside nor fully outside" of the community of practice (p. 117). Peripherality, as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991), "suggests an opening, a way of gaining access to understanding through growing involvement" (p. 37). Legitimate peripheral participation defines how novices become a part of a community of practice; it is the way a newcomer moves centripetally from the periphery to become a legitimate member of the community, resulting in identity and knowledge shifts (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) also purported that there is not a specific way in which newcomers move from the periphery into the community; newcomers may use a variety of methods including, but not limited to, observation, supervision, and assistance. Lave and Wenger (1991), however, stress that the concept of being on the periphery should not be perceived as a negative. They claim that peripherality is dynamic and is a way of being involved. The researchers caution there is no single place in a community designated as the periphery and this periphery has no center (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) noted that there is no specific way for the phenomenon of LPP to happen: "No matter how the peripherality of initial participation is achieved, it must engage newcomers and provide a sense of how the community operates" (p. 100).

Peripherality and legitimacy are both required to make participation in a CoP possible (Wenger, 1998). Peripherality offers new members opportunities to try out full participation within the group; it engages new members and gives them a chance to see how the community

works. Legitimacy offers newcomers an opportunity to be treated as future members of the community (Wenger, 1998).

To summarize, the research for this study is grounded in the theoretical framework of community of practice and the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). New members to a community can put their mark on a community through participation and reification. The use of participation and reification result in criteria that define CoP membership: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Once members participate in a CoP, their sense of belonging is enhanced through engagement, imagination, and alignment (Wenger, 1998). Finally, legitimate peripheral participation is the movement of novice members of a community through the periphery of a group, and this process requires peripherality and legitimacy (Wenger, 1998).

Challenges Faced by Part-Time Faculty

Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct faculty are part-time employees of colleges and universities. The Coalition on the Academic Workforce claims that about 30 percent of adjuncts have doctoral degrees, 40 percent hold a master's degree, almost 17 percent have professional or other terminal degrees, and 7 percent are pre-dissertation postgraduate candidates (CAW, 2012). As noted in Chapter One, 52 percent of faculty in higher education work in a part-time capacity (AFT Higher Education, 2010) and approximately 58 percent of community college courses are taught by adjunct faculty (Center for Community College Engagement, 2014).

Despite the ever-increasing number of adjunct faculty who are part of higher education in the United States and despite a growing dependency on adjunct labor, few institutions of higher education have policies or practices in place to support this group (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001;

Kezar, 2013b; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Ochoa, 2012).

Adjunct faculty are not offered the same financial packages nor do they receive the same institutional support as their full-time peers. They are paid a stipend per course and typically earn about one-third the rate of a full-time faculty member (Carruth & Carruth, 2013; Noble, 2000). Adjuncts typically have little job security, receive no medical or educational benefits, and are provided few or no opportunities for promotion (Dedman & Pearch, 2004). Adjuncts are rarely included in faculty meetings and have limited administrative and technical support (Bakely & Brodersen, 2018).

Despite adjuncts' contributions, they are considered on the periphery of the primary academic function of colleges (Webb, Wong, & Hubbell, 2013). Adjunct faculty are, more often than not, considered outsiders at their institutions (Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017). The Coalition on the Academic Workforce surveyed approximately 30,000 full-time faculty and more than 20,000 part-time faculty. Most of the respondents were employees at Carnegie associates' institutions. The CAW survey results demonstrated that most adjunct faculty feel invisible at their institutions (CAW, 2012).

Not only do adjunct faculty often feel invisible, but they can also feel disconnected from their colleagues. The reasons for this disconnect are complex; however, it is partially due to issues with communication as well as logistical challenges. As their contracts may not be in effect year-round, many adjuncts deal with the frustration of their email accounts regularly being deactivated (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). Some adjuncts do not have campus mailboxes. They are not typically offered private offices, so their ability to meet with students privately is limited (Dedman & Pearch, 2004; Spaniel & Scott, 2013). Adjuncts are not usually included in departmental activities, nor are they invited to be involved in faculty governance (Kezar & Sam,

2012). If they are included in departmental activities, adjuncts are often unable to attend due to scheduling constraints (Dolan, et al., 2013; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). In Hoyt's 2012 study that identified factors predicting adjunct satisfaction and loyalty, only 56 percent of the 358 adjuncts surveyed had attended an orientation program at their college, and only 49 percent were assigned mentors. Only 37 percent had attended a department meeting, and five percent served on an academic committee. To contribute to feelings of isolation, many adjunct faculty teach at multiple campuses or at various institutions, resulting in limited opportunities for collegiality (Kezar, 2013a; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010).

Aspiring Academics

Aspiring academics struggle with the challenges faced by all adjuncts, but they are even more challenged by their quest to become full-time faculty. Most research on adjuncts does not differentiate between the types of adjuncts; however, some researchers have identified different categories of adjuncts. According to Gappa and Leslie (1993), there are four types of adjunct faculty. Adjuncts who have a primary occupation external to the institution were called specialists, experts, and professionals. Adjunct faculty holding several part-time occupations are called free-lancers, and those adjuncts who are transitioning from careers outside of teaching are called career enders. Aspiring academics are adjunct faculty members who desire full-time faculty status (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Antony and Hayden (2011) differentiated adjuncts as voluntary part-timers and involuntary part-timers. Faculty who prefer part-time employment are designated as voluntary part-timers and involuntary part-timers are those who would prefer full-time faculty positions. Aspiring academics are the focus of this study and, thus, for this study it was important to distinguish between the types of adjuncts.

While there are several terms to define types of adjuncts, little research exists to explain why some adjuncts are aspiring academics and some are not (Ott & Dippold, 2018). However, it is important to note that not all adjunct faculty are dissatisfied with their positions, and part-time faculty who do not aspire to full-time status exhibit more satisfaction with their positions than do their aspiring academic peers (Hoyt, 2012; Ott & Dippold, 2018). According to Ott and Dippold (2018), “a discrepancy exists when job status is incongruent with employee preferences” (p. 192). Therefore, aspiring academics are less likely to be satisfied with a part-time position (Feldman, 1996). In Ott and Dippold’s 2018 study of 1,245 adjuncts at ten community colleges, they found that two-thirds of the respondents were interested in becoming full-time faculty, and 47 percent showed a “strong, immediate” interest (p. 197).

Perhaps due to their desire for full-time status, aspiring academics are more motivated than are their voluntarily part-time peers (Antony & Hayden, 2011; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Ott & Dippold, 2018). Ott and Dippold’s 2018 study showed that voluntarily part-timers (those adjuncts who do not desire full-time employment) are willing to take less pay to have a flexible schedule and convenient working hours, while aspiring academics are more likely to participate in college activities and professional development opportunities than their adjunct peers. Aspiring academics are also more willing to teach more classes than do full-time faculty (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). In a 2018 survey of seven aspiring adjuncts at a community college, Bakely and Brodersen found that the participants believed that if they went above and beyond in their adjunct role, they would be at an advantage when there was a full-time position open at the college. Unfortunately, this did not happen, as none of the adjuncts surveyed were hired at their college.

Despite their attempts to be involved, many aspiring academics have found little to no opportunities for new challenges, to be mentored, offered feedback, encouraged to be included on campus, or presented opportunities for career enhancement (Feldman, 1996; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Sam, 2012; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003). Aspiring academics also sense a lack of respect from their full-time colleagues and they feel frustrated with administrators (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018; Dolan, et al., 2013; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015).

Aspiring academics are further frustrated by the absence of a full-time career track trajectory, lack of advancement opportunities for adjuncts, and lack of knowledge as to how to obtain a full-time position (Feldman, 1996; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016). These adjuncts have found that the supply of qualified instructors dramatically exceeds the demand (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003), and there is an over-supply of Ph.D. graduates who expect to attain tenure-track positions (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). While there are colleges that do support their adjunct faculty and published studies documenting their assistance, these publications (e.g., research from Johnson County Community College by Burnstad in 2002 and by Smith in 2007 at Rio Salado College) have no mention of full-time faculty career-track assistance for their adjuncts.

Unfortunately, many aspiring academics never realize their goal of full-time employment. Approximately one in four aspiring academics end up with tenure-track positions, and there is little permeability between part-time and full-time faculty at most colleges (Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Aspiring academics can find themselves caught in a cycle of term-to-term contracts with no chance for promotion (Kezar & Sam, 2012). Even though Boylan (2002) recommended filling open full-time positions with adjuncts, adjunct faculty are

often overlooked by administrators for these positions (Boylan, 2002; Feldman & Turnly, 2001). Many aspiring academics end up leaving academia after five years of teaching, when they realize the support for their positions will not improve (Carruth & Carruth, 2013; Kezar, 2013a; Kezar, 2013b).

Summary

Adjunct faculty face numerous challenges; however, aspiring academics deal with additional frustrations, given their desire to become part of an institutional community and enter full-time faculty positions. These aspiring academics go beyond the call of duty for their institutions in hopes of being promoted (Bakely & Brodersen, 2108; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Ott & Dippold, 2018), yet they find few opportunities for promotion to full-time status (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Feldman, 1996; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Ochoa, 2012). In Bakely and Brodersen's 2018 study of seven aspiring academics, the participants shared their frustration at their inability to attain full-time positions at their institutions, despite their efforts. Many aspiring academics end up leaving academia (Carruth & Carruth, 2013; Kezar, 2013a; Kezar, 2013b). To avoid losing this valuable cohort of personnel, Carruth and Carruth (2013) encouraged higher education organizations to hire adjuncts for full-time positions or expect them to leave the profession.

The Gap in the Literature

While three-fourths of aspiring adjuncts do not attain full-time status at their institutions, one-fourth do, and that successful one-fourth is the subject of this study. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the successes and challenges experienced by aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into a college community of practice, joined the community, and gained full-time employment as faculty. This research

contributes to the body of knowledge as to how aspiring academics use community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. The findings apply the CoP theory to aspiring academics who obtain full-time employment at community colleges and thus provide a better understanding of the significance of the theory with this population and phenomenon.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This case study examines the successes and challenges experienced by a group of aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice, becoming full-time faculty members. The purpose of this study is to establish recommendations for aspiring academics who wish to become full-time faculty at their institutions. This chapter begins with the investigation plan, including the research questions, delimitations of the study, and discussion of trustworthiness. A description of the participants, the setting for the study, and a researcher positionality statement are also provided. A discussion of the data collection methods and procedures follow and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the data analysis procedures.

The Investigation Plan

Design of the Study

A qualitative, case study design was used to examine the phenomenon of aspiring adjuncts pursuing entrance and joining a community of practice as a full-time faculty within a community college setting. Through this study, I sought an in-depth understanding of the challenges and successes encountered by the aspiring academics experiencing this phenomenon and provide a rich description of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). A holistic understanding of rich, contextual, and generally unconstructed, non-numeric data (Mason, 2002) was garnered by engaging in conversations with the research participants (i.e., aspiring adjuncts) in a natural setting (i. e., a community college; Creswell, 2014). The focus, in alignment with the case study design, was on describing process(es), individual or group behavior in its total setting, and the sequence of events in which the behavior occurs (Stake, 2008). As the defining feature of case

study research is its emphasis on “how” and “why” questions (Myers, 2013), the primary research question and sub questions focused on both “how” and “why.” The phenomenon studied, as is characteristic of case studies, was bounded by a system (e.g., community college). Defined by the fact that the participants are former adjuncts at the same community college who all moved into full-time positions, the case is narrow in scope and intensive in its focus (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Yin (2003) claimed that the technical definition of a case study is research, based on experience that considers a phenomenon from a real-life perspective, with an emphasis on situations where the boundaries between phenomenon and context overlap. Yin continued, “The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (pp. 13-14). Simons (2009) added to the definition of a case study by saying

A case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, or system in a real-life context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods, and is evidence-led (p. 21).

Considering these definitions, a case study was deemed the most appropriate methodology for this study. While several design methods were considered, case study research was chosen in order to answer the “how” and “why” questions to explain a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Case study research was also the most important methodology because the community of practice theory and legitimate peripheral participation are bound within the context of the case, as the adjuncts are part of the same college. A phenomenological design was not used because

the study is not attempting to only uncover the lived experiences of participants who experienced the phenomenon (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Grounded theory was not suitable because the goal was not to develop a theory from the data (Bhattacharya, 2017). The culture of a group was not being studied, so an ethnological study was not used (Bhattacharya, 2017). Finally, a quantitative research study design was not employed because the research sought to gain “well-grounded rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable contexts” that can be found in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). A case study design was chosen as the most appropriate.

Stake (1995) classified cases into three categories: (1) instrumental, (2) intrinsic, and (3) collective. In an instrumental case study, the case is secondary to understanding a specific phenomenon. The focus of the research is usually known in advance and is designed around an established theory or method. Because this study sought to understand the participants’ experience joining an established community of practice and was situated within the CoP theory, it is an instrumental case study. Finally, an interpretative approach to case study research, grounded in pragmatism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003) was selected because it focuses on the practical implications of research (Creswell, 2014).

Delimitations of the Study

Several delimitations were applied in the selection of the case for this study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). To be included in this study, the setting had to be a community college in which a significant number of adjuncts had been promoted to full-time faculty from adjunct status. The former adjuncts had to be employed by the same college to ensure that they had the same experiences and opportunities for advancement. The participants had to be adjuncts who aspired

to and received a full-time faculty position, and the participants had to see themselves as being a member of the college community where they held the faculty position.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is central to ensuring research is meaningful (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strategies of credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability were used. By examining multiple data points, triangulation helped ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). I explain this further as I discuss the strategies.

Credibility. By examining multiple data points, triangulation was used to confirm the credibility of the study (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). For, Stake (2008) recommended a methodological triangulation of data in a case study to “substantiate a definition or to clarify its different meanings” (p. 173). For this single instrumental case study, the triangulation of instrumentation include multiple sources: interviews, focus group interview, surveys, and life maps. Data was collected from multiple perspectives (e.g., former aspiring academics and two administrators). Member checking was used to further guarantee the credibility of the findings as well as the accuracy of the researcher’s analysis.

Confirmability. Confirmability relates to the level of objectivity brought to qualitative studies, to reduce researcher bias, and to increase the possibility of corroboration of the study’s findings by others (Patton, 2002). Ensuring that the participants’ voices, rather than the researcher’s, are heard is an essential component of establishing trustworthiness. Confirmability is aided by triangulation of data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), which was achieved through the use of various data sources and methods for data collection.

Dependability. Dependability addresses the extent to which a study can be replicated with similar outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I used triangulation of data to

increase dependability. I used code-recode during analysis. I coded a segment of data, waited for a week, and then recoded to compare the results (Krefting, 1990).

Transferability. Transferability relates to the degree to which a study's findings can be applied to other settings or situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Krefting (1990) claimed that one of the criteria of transferability is the use of dense description. To increase transferability of findings, I have provided a detailed description of the design and a rich description of findings (Yin, 2009). Through the life maps and interviews, I offered enough background information on the participants and the research context to enable others to recreate the study (Krefting, 1990).

Researcher Positionality Statement

Qualitative researchers should understand and acknowledge who they are and what they believe in order to understand how these factors might influence the research (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). I am a Caucasian female in my early 50's. I am a former aspiring academic who is now a full-time faculty member and I used to be employed at this college, so I was cognizant of my own biases, as well as the potential biases of the participants (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). I chose the site for the study because I knew of many former aspiring academics at the college. However, I documented the experience of others, I did judge the community of practice or the legitimate peripheral participation process. Therefore, I do not see my experience as potentially affecting the outcome of the study. The participants are former aspiring academics who are now full-time faculty, and I hold no power over their full-time status, therefore I do not have any ethical conflicts with the study.

Participants

A purposeful sample was drawn from former adjuncts who are now full-time faculty at a community college in the southeastern United States. Purposeful sampling requires the selection of participants based on the researcher's judgement of which participants can provide responses that are "information-rich, with respect to the phenomenon being studied" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015, p. 353). The participants for this study included former aspiring academics, a dean from the college, and a coordinator. The dean and the coordinator were included as participants because they offered rich insight on the adjuncts' activities as well as information on the college's hiring practices. The dean and coordinator were recommended as participants by the president of the college. The dean was asked to recommend potential participants who are full-time faculty and were former adjuncts. Each person recommended by the dean was contacted and a survey (see Appendix A) was sent to them to ensure they meet the criteria of being a former aspiring academic who sought entrance and joined the college community, hired within the past ten years. All of the faculty surveyed who met the criteria were asked to participate in the study. The participants' demographics and experience are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

The Participants

Name	Position	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Years as adjunct	Years as full-time faculty	Credentials
Dawn	Dean	F	44	Caucasian	2	10	Master's
Leann	Faculty	F	59	Caucasian	2+	1	Master's
Lynn	Faculty	F	48	Caucasian	2	3	Master's
Joy	Faculty	F	45	Caucasian	9	3	Master's
Mary	Staff	F	55	Caucasian	11	4	Master's
Suzy	Faculty	F	54	Caucasian	7+	4	Master's
Gloria	Faculty	F	42	Caucasian	2	4	Master's
Kevin	Faculty	M	42	Caucasian	1+	5	Doctorate
Yurdi	Dean	M	36	Caucasian	N/A	N/A	Doctorate
Calypso	Coordinator	F	50	Caucasian	N/A	N/A	Master's

Setting

The setting for the case study is situated within a community college, which includes three campus locations in Tennessee. The main campus is central to the seven counties served by the college. The main campus is located over 115 acres and this is where the majority of the administrative offices are located. The first satellite campus is comprised of three buildings on a little over 100 acres. This campus includes a 54,000 square foot building which houses a

Learning Resource Center, Student Center, and public library. The third campus is located approximately an hour from the main campus, on the same grounds as a local high school.

The college offers over 70 programs of study as a part of four degree programs, including multiple university transfer and career associate degrees, as well as over 15 technical certificates. The average student age is 24.13. Female students comprise 67.9 percent of the student body, with males comprising 32.0 percent. The racial breakdown is 17 percent Black, 75 percent White, 0.3 percent Hispanic, .01 percent Asian, and .04 percent Other.

Data Collection Methods

Stake (2008) stresses that researchers in case studies should focus on the activity and functioning of the case. The focus of this case study included observing phenomena that are possible to observe, asking for observations from others, and gathering artifacts that illustrate the functioning of the case. Creswell (2014) recommends the use of observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials as data for a case study. Stake (2008) endorses a methodological triangulation of data to “substantiate a definition or to clarify its different meanings” (p. 173). Therefore, the instrumentation used for this case study included interviews (both individual interviews and focus group interview), a survey and life maps, and the researcher’s journal.

Individual Interviews

To learn more about the successes and challenges experienced by a group of aspiring academics at a community college as they pursued entrance into and joined a community of practice, former aspiring adjuncts from the same college were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews included pre-determined, open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allow for pre-determined questions as well as adding additional questions

based upon the participants' responses. This allows the researcher to stay open to the data (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). A semi-structured interview allowed for the time to be used wisely and kept the interview focused (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

The faculty participants were interviewed to learn about their successes and challenges as they sought entry into a community of practice. The questions began with the solicitation of information about their background, continued with their experience as an adjunct seeking a full-time position, their successes and challenges, and ended with their experience becoming full-time faculty.

The dean and coordinator were interviewed to learn about the college's hiring practices as well as their perception on hiring adjuncts. The questions for the administrators began with the hiring practices for adjunct faculty. Questions continued in an effort to learn about the administrators' perception of the participants' interactions as adjuncts. The questions concluded by eliciting information about how the adjuncts' interactions affected their achievement of full-time status. The interview protocol for aspiring academics are in Table 2 and Appendix B. The interview protocol for administrators is in Table 3 and Appendix C.

Table 2

Interview Questions for Aspiring Academics

1. Please tell me about your background and education. (R)
2. How did you become interested in a higher education teaching position? (R)
3. Please tell me about your higher education teaching journey.
 - a. Tell me about how you became an adjunct. (R, S1-2)
 - b. Tell me about your experience as an adjunct. (R, S1-4)
 - c. Tell me about your experience moving from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position. (R, S1-2)
4. What were the key factors that helped you move from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position? (R, S1-2)
5. Do you feel you are currently part of the college community?
 - a. If so, when did you begin feeling like part of the college community? (R, S1-2)
 - b. What are the key factors that inhibited you from feeling part of the college community? (R, S3-4)
6. What were the key challenges you experienced in moving from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position? (R, S3-4)

Note. R=Central Research Question S=Sub-question. Numeral(s) indicate(s) specific sub-question(s).

Table 3

Interview Questions for Administrators

-
1. What are the requirements for hiring adjuncts? (R, S1-2)
 2. What are the adjuncts' job responsibilities? (R, S2)
 3. What opportunities for interaction are adjuncts provided with within the college? (R, S1-2)
 4. What are the faculty and administrators' perceptions of adjuncts? (R)
 5. There have been numerous adjuncts hired as full-time faculty at the college. How does the process work? (R, S1-2)
 6. What benefits, if any, do adjunct faculty have in obtaining a full-time position when posted? (R, S1-2)
 7. What challenges, if any, do adjunct faculty have in obtaining a full-time position when posted? (R, S3-4)
 8. What benefits, if any, do adjunct faculty have in entering the college community? (R, S1-2)
 9. What challenges, if any, do adjunct faculty have in entering the college community? (R, S3-4)

Note. R=Central Research Question S=Sub-question. Numeral(s) indicate(s) specific sub-question(s).

The purpose for the questions regarding the aspiring academics' prior experience is to understand how they experienced being an adjunct and their motivation to move into the college's community of practice and full-time position. After the questions exploring their background (1-2), the questions delve into the adjuncts' experience to investigate how they became part of the college CoP (3a, 3b, 3c). The next set of questions (4, 5a, 5b) examine their

successes, and how those successes were achieved. Question 6 looks at the challenges they faced.

The questions for the administrators began with the hiring process, responsibilities, and opportunities for adjuncts (1, 2, 3). Question 4 queried how adjuncts were perceived as they interacted in the college. Question 5, 6, and 7 examined the hiring process for full-time faculty, how adjunct participation affected their ability to earn a full-time position at the college, and challenges faced by adjuncts. Questions 8 and 9 concluded by examining how adjuncts can enter the CoP as well as barriers to entrance.

Surveys and Life Maps

A survey was given to potential participants to ensure their eligibility for the study and gain insight into their adjunct experience as they joined the community and gained full-time employment. Survey questions five through nine are the criteria questions; they addressed whether or not the potential faculty participant was an adjunct at the college, whether or not they wanted to become a full-time faculty member, and whether or not they felt like part of the college community after they achieved full-time status (see Appendix A).

Prior to the individual interviews, the faculty participants were asked to create a life map (see Appendix H), allowing them to depict their journey from birth to the present, noting events significant in their journey as academics. They were asked to think about, “What are events that have influenced your understanding of your role as adjunct and full-time faculty? What influenced your decision to take an adjunct position? What are events that have influenced your pursuit of and persistence in working toward a full-time position?” Creative flexibility was offered, and participants were allowed to create life maps as timeline drawings, annotated curriculum vitas, and tables with dates, event labels, and brief descriptions.

Focus Group

Once the data was analyzed, all the participants were asked to participate in a focus group interview to review the study outcomes and to elicit their feedback on the findings. The focus group began with a summary of the findings of the study. The summary was followed by semi-structured interview questions. The interview questions are listed in Table 4 and Appendix I.

Table 4

Interview Questions for Focus Group

1. Do you agree with the themes that developed from the interviews?
 2. Why or why not?
 3. Is there any topic/theme that you experienced while moving from adjunct to full-time faculty status did not come out in the data? If so, what are these topics?
 4. Do you feel these themes are an accurate representation of your experience as an adjunct moving into the college community? Why or why not?
-

Researcher's Journal

Additionally, a field journal documented the researcher's experiences throughout the study. The notes included, but were not limited to, descriptions of the setting, the participants, direct quotes, and the feelings, reactions, and perceptions of the researcher (Merriam, 1998).

Figure 1 summarizes the various data collection methods and how they relate to each research and sub-question.

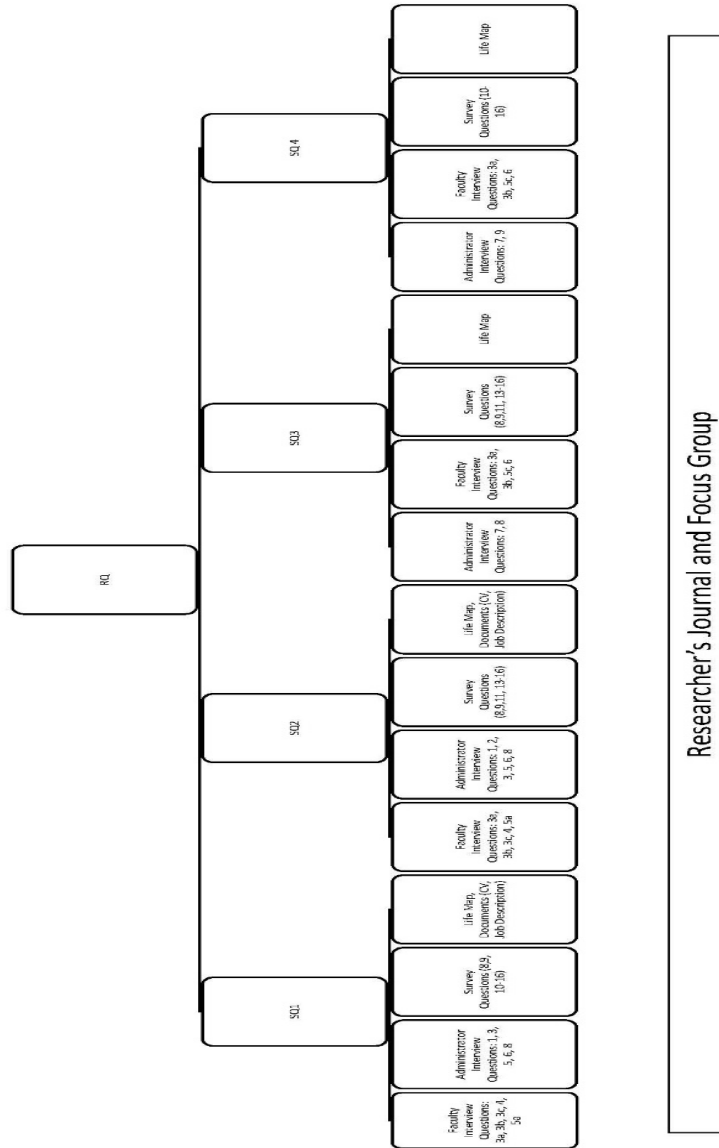


Figure 1

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Procedures

Procedures for the study began with the application for IRB approval from the community college where the study was conducted as well as IRB approval from the University of Memphis, where I am a doctoral student. Once IRB approvals were secured, a dean at the college was contacted via email to ask for names of former adjuncts who became full-time faculty. Within that email, the dean was asked to participate in the study, as well being asked permission to contact a department coordinator. The coordinator was emailed and asked to participate. Both of the administrators were asked to sign informed consent documents, which were sent via email once they agree to participate (Appendix G). After informed consent was secured, interviews were conducted with the administrators. The interviews were recorded using audio recording software at a place and time that was convenient and comfortable for them.

In order to select participants, a survey was sent to the potential faculty participants. The survey (see Appendix A) was used for purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once the surveys were evaluated, the faculty who met the sample qualifications were contacted via email. In order to be considered aspiring academics, the participant must have been an adjunct at the college who became full-time faculty. They must have aspired to be full-time faculty while working as an adjunct. Outlined in the email was an explanation of the study's goals, the amount of time involved (roughly an hour and half for the interview and an hour for the focus group) and they were asked for their participation. The dean was copied on the emails. Once participation was secured, interviews were scheduled on days and times and at places convenient for them. A week before the interviews, the participants were sent the informed consent document (Appendix F) as well as the life map and its instructions (see Appendix H, with a

request that it be returned within three to five days before the interviews. Two days before the interviews, and after receiving the life maps and signed, an email was sent to the participants that included the interview questions.

The faculty participants were interviewed using an audio recording app, at a place and time that was convenient and comfortable for them; all of the interviews were held in the participants' offices. At the meeting with the faculty participants, the goals of the study were explained again. The participants were provided information about the study's time frame. The participants were asked the interview questions, and audio software was used to record the interviews. The interviews were transcribed. Researcher notes were taken during the interviews to describe non-verbal conversation aspects, and the researcher's journal was used to record notes before and after the interviews. Within a few days of the interviews being transcribed, the accuracy of the transcripts was checked and emailed to the participants for member checking. The participants were asked to review the questions and answers to ensure transcript accuracy.

Once the interviews were transcribed and coded, the faculty participants were sent an email with a request for a time for a focus group. The focus group of faculty participants was held to ensure that the participants agree with the themes that were developed from the interviews. These themes included the ideas of Being in the Dark, Being All In, and Being A Part and Apart. The email included a summary of the findings.

Triangulation of data was used to ensure validity and trustworthiness (Yin, 2003). This triangulation method included interviews with both aspiring academics and administrators, observations, and document review (Yin, 2003). Surveys, life maps, and the researcher's field journal were examined and coded.

Ethical Considerations

For confidentiality reasons, pseudonyms were used for participants. The purpose of the research (i. e., the examination of the successes and challenges of community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation for adjunct faculty) were revealed so that participants could make an informed choice about their willingness to be involved in the study.

Transcripts of interviews were emailed to participants to allow for member checking and researcher contact information was provided to allow for participants to contact the researcher if there are questions or concerns during the course of the study. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time if they desire to do so (Creswell, 2014). The researcher adhered strictly to requirements from the college where the study was being conducted and from the University of Memphis IRB to ensure privacy. The researcher passed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), the training module in the Responsible Code of Research available through the University of Memphis IRB department.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included an examination of the survey results, life maps, interview responses, focus group data, and the researcher's journal. The transcribed interviews and life maps were coded using Saldana's (2016) first cycle and second cycle coding methods. For the first cycle of coding, *initial coding*, formerly called "open coding", was used along with *in vivo coding*. It is appropriate to combine the two forms of coding (Saldana, 2016). Initial coding is suitable for all qualitative studies but is especially useful for case studies that include several forms of data (Saldana, 2016). The process of initial coding requires that the data be broken down into parts, then analyzed for similarities and differences (Strauss, 1987). The researcher

went line by line through the interview transcripts and documents, looking for process (-“ing”) codes as well as referents for those codes. The researcher developed codes that are connected and only the participants’ responses were coded, not the interviewer’s remarks.

In vivo coding, the second coding method used, is also appropriate for primarily- or all-qualitative studies (Saldana, 2016). Through in vivo coding the researcher can better understand behaviors and how problems are resolved (Strauss, 1987). In vivo coding allows participants’ meanings to be preserved in the coding (Charmaz, 2014). In vivo coding is also a suitable method for the first cycle of data analysis for small-scale studies (Saldana, 2016). During the first cycle of coding, along with using initial coding to document processes, significant words and phrases spoken by the participants were highlighted to capture the meanings inherent in their statements (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding was also processed line by line, with in vivo codes put in quotation marks. After the first cycle of coding, an analytic memo was created to reflect on the coding process. “Memo writing also serves as a code- and category-generating method” (Saldana, 2016, p. 118).

For the second cycle coding, the method of focused coding was used (Saldana, 2016). According to Saldana (2016), “Focused Coding searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus” (p. 240). As with in vivo coding, focused coding is appropriate for all qualitative studies, especially when there is a need to develop significant themes and it is used to categorize data (Saldana, 2016). After initial coding and in vivo coding, the data was mined again to find common words and phrases that allowed the development of categories from the codes. The process (-“ing”) codes from initial coding was used to generate tentative category names. After using focused coding, another analytic memo

was written to reflect on the process, which helped with code- and category-generation (Saldana, 2016). A log explained the codes and their meanings (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

Once the data was coded and categorized, the categories were converted into themes. “A theme is a unifying or dominant idea in the data and finding themes in the heart of the data analysis process” (Savin-Badin & Meyer, 2013, p. 427). The categories were also examined for dominant ideas present through the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

As discussed previously in this manuscript, aspiring academics tread a difficult road when trying to earn a full-time position at a college or university (Bakely & Brodersen, 2018; Dolan, et al., 2013; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Feldman, 1996; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Sam, 2012; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003). This study explored the experiences of formerly adjunct faculty members at a multi-site community college in the Southeastern United States, as they pursued entry to and joined the community college as full-time faculty members. This study examined their successes and challenges during this journey and as they became part of a community of practice. Data were collected through surveys, individual interviews, life maps from the aspiring academics, the researcher's journal notes, and focus group responses. Eight of the participants were formerly aspiring academics and two of the participants were already employed as administrators at the college. Chapter Four begins with a description of the case, followed by a list of the themes generated from the data, and concludes with a summary.

The Case

This case study was conducted at a rural community college in Tennessee serving 1,732 degree-credit students, 935 non-credit students, 710 online students, and 799 dual-enrollment students in the spring semester of 2019. The per capita annual income for the college's service area is \$20,227, reflecting a 20.6% poverty rate. The college is comprised of three campus locations serving seven counties. Twenty percent of the residents in the college's service area do not hold a high school diploma; eighty percent hold a high school diploma or higher. Fourteen percent of the residents in the college's service area hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The college offers over 70 programs of study, including multiple university transfer and career

associate degrees, as well as over 15 technical certificates, and the college had 90% job placement of 2017 graduates.

In the fall of 2018, which is the most recent published data, the college employed 57 full-time faculty members and 102 adjuncts. Sixty-seven percent of student credit hours were taught by full-timers, and 33% were taught by part-time faculty. Two hundred forty-four course sections were taught by the full-time faculty members and 144 course sections were taught by adjuncts. The average salary for full-time faculty ranged from \$48,204 for instructors to \$63,846 for professors. Twenty-one percent of the full-time faculty held a terminal degree, 74% held a master's degree and 6% had a bachelor's or associate's degree. Adjunct pay is \$700 per credit hour. The organization of the college includes three division deans who report to the vice-president for the college. The department coordinators answer to these deans, and the faculty report to the coordinators.

The decision to hire adjuncts is based on increased enrollment, the number of unstaffed classes, and the need to replace adjuncts who leave the college. Adjuncts are an ongoing need and are often hired over full-time faculty to save money and to cover classes being offered. The hiring process for adjunct faculty begins with the position being posted on the Tennessee Board of Regents' website. The adjunct postings stay open until the positions are filled. The applicant submits an application, a letter of interest, and a curriculum vita to the Human Resources division, through the TBR website. The division dean reviews the applications with the department coordinator and selects two or three applicants to interview by telephone; adjunct faculty are rarely interviewed in person. The only time they are interviewed in person is if the department coordinator requests an in-person interview. From the two or three applications, the

coordinator chooses a candidate, the division dean contacts the human resources department, and the candidate is made an offer.

Before teaching a course, all adjunct faculty attend a mandatory orientation meeting which is offered one evening each semester before classes begin. The orientation, called Adjunct Faculty In-Service, lasts for three hours and adjuncts are paid \$50 for attending. It begins with dinner, where the president welcomes them to the college. The vice president of student services reviews discrimination, harassment, and FERPA policies and the vice president of technology shares emergency procedures. After dinner, the adjuncts report to stations, which include computer lab, contracts/name tags, payroll services, dual enrollment, the college's learning management system, library services, parking, and another FERPA session. After completing the stations, the adjuncts meet as a group with their coordinators where they review course content and expectations of the department, then have a chance to meet their division dean.

After the orientation is complete, courses are offered to adjunct faculty based upon the college's need. Courses may be offered to an adjunct when course enrollments are high and not enough a full-time faculty members are not available to staff the courses. As courses become available, the coordinator for the department contacts adjuncts who are qualified to teach the courses. Adjuncts are selected to teach courses based on their seniority; senior adjuncts get first choice of classes. After that, selections are made based on adjuncts' availability and course preference. An adjunct may agree to teach the course or not. Once they agree to teach the class, they are informed of the day, time, and classroom, and given the textbook and any ancillary materials. Adjuncts are not offered mentors, nor do they have dedicated office space. Adjuncts are invited to participate in professional development opportunities, but they are not invited to faculty and staff meetings.

The hiring process for full-time faculty begins with a budget hearing, triggered by the college's need for staffing. The need to hire full-time faculty is based on increased enrollment, the loss of a faculty member, and/or the number of unstaffed classes. The budget manager for the department meets with the college president, the vice president, and the vice president of finance. The number of students and current staffing are considered, and it is determined whether a full-time position is justified and is financially viable. Once approved, the job description is created, approved, and advertised. Positions are usually kept open until they are filled. Any interested applicant may submit a letter of interest and curriculum vita to the job postings page on the Tennessee Board of Regents' website. Once a position is posted, the college sends out an email alerting all faculty and staff to the posting. A hiring committee is formed, which typically includes faculty, a staff person, and a minority representative, who is typically a person of color. The hiring committee reviews the applications and selects six or seven candidates for phone interviews. The committee interviews the candidates telephonically, and the interviews last about an hour. Committee questions for the applicants typically include topics such as leadership opportunities, challenges, and successes. The chair of the committee proposes a list of questions and the committee decides which member asks which questions. The committee narrows the list to two or three candidates, who are brought in for in-person interviews that last about two hours. The interviewee is usually asked to perform a teaching demonstration and they also meet with the division dean. After the interviews, the committee sends a list of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses to the division dean and the vice president of the college. They add their comments and forward the list to the president. The president discusses the recommendation with the chair of the search committee and then goes to the human resources department to discuss

salary. Once a decision is made on the final candidate, either the chair of the search committee or the dean makes an offer.

Once hired, the faculty member completes new hire training, which lasts throughout the faculty member's first semester. The initial part of the training is held the week before classes begin and is led by the chair of the Faculty/Staff Development Committee. New faculty attend classes where they learn about many aspects of the college, ranging from financial aid to the online learning systems. After that, new faculty attend on-campus training sessions every other Friday for approximately six sessions. During these training opportunities, led by the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, new faculty learn teaching tips and have the opportunity to share challenges and ask questions of their peers. Once the semester begins, new faculty are assigned offices and faculty mentors. Possible mentors are chosen by the deans and the department coordinators and are asked if they will agree to be a mentor. If yes, the dean or the coordinator then communicates to the new hire the name of their mentor. All faculty are expected to participate in all faculty meetings and professional development opportunities, which are offered on-site twice a semester. Faculty attend Update at the beginning of each semester and Conference is held mid-semester. These all-day meetings involve the entire faculty gathering in the mornings and then faculty break out for individual department meetings in the afternoons. Faculty are required to teach five classes in both the fall and spring semesters.

Participants

Ten participants helped develop this case. Eight of the participants were aspiring adjuncts who became full-time faculty and two of the participants were administrators at the college, both administrators were former faculty members. The administrators were an integral part of the interviews, as they offered insight into the college's perception and treatment of adjunct faculty.

The aspiring academic participants included Dawn, who began as an aspiring academic in Fall, 2007. While serving as an adjunct, Dawn was also working full-time at a hospital. She became full-time faculty in 2009 and moved into the dean's position in the spring of 2014. Two other participants, Lynn and Leann, are in Dawn's department. Lynn worked as an aspiring academic twice at the institution, the first time for fifteen months and the second time for a year. She did not desire a full-time position after serving as an adjunct the first time because she was happy in her full-time position at another school. Lynn became a full-time instructor in the spring of 2018, after working as an adjunct for the second time. Leann's career as an aspiring academic for the college began in 2014, and she moved into an instructor position in the summer of 2016. Leann did aspire to a full-time position while working as an adjunct.

Joy and Mary both worked as aspiring academics in the same department as Calypso, an administrative participant. Joy was an aspiring academic for over nine years; she began as an adjunct with the college in January 2007. She was offered a full-time position in August of 2016. Mary taught as an adjunct for eleven months, beginning in the spring of 2014. She became full-time in fall, 2015, when she was offered an administrative position with the college. Prior to joining the college in a full-time capacity, she worked for a family business.

Suzy and Gloria are in the same division as Calypso, Joy, and Mary. Suzy served in an adjunct position from 2008 until the fall of 2015, when she became full-time faculty. Gloria was an adjunct from 2013 until she was hired as faculty in 2015. Both Suzy and Gloria worked as adjuncts at other colleges during their tenure as adjuncts at this college.

Kevin worked in the medical field prior to joining the college. He began teaching at the college as an aspiring academic in the summer of 2013 and accepted a full-time position approximately one year later in August of 2014.

Yurdi and Calypso were the two administrative participants. Yurdi began as a faculty member at the college in January of 2011. He was promoted to assistant to the vice president in August of 2014 and division dean in July of 2015. Calypso was hired as a faculty member in August of 1997 and was promoted to department coordinator in August of 2004. The interviews with the administrators were integral in corroborating the information provided by the aspiring academics. All of the participants offered unique perspectives to this case study.

Themes

Following Saldana's (2016) recommendation for case studies involving several forms of data, the surveys, life maps, interview transcriptions, and focus group data were first analyzed using initial coding and in vivo coding. I reviewed the data, particularly the transcripts, line-by-line, teasing out similarities and differences. Using in vivo coding, I also recorded salient words and phrases from the participants' own voices, and these were noted in the margins of the transcripts and life maps. From the margin notes, codes were developed that illustrated the similarities in the experiences of the participants, and I employed memo writing to organize the emerging codes (Charmaz, 2014). Next, focused coding was used to determine categories, which were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and then analyzed to develop the themes from the research.

The first theme to emerge was drawn from the questions related to challenges faced by the participants in their role as adjuncts. I coded and then categorized their struggles, as the life maps and interview transcriptions described issues with lack of control, information, communication, resources, and other struggles. It quickly became clear that all of the participants felt a sense of "being in the dark" as adjuncts.

As the surveys, life maps, transcription, and the researcher's notebook were further examined, categories emerged that illustrated the fact that the participants were determined to be as professional as possible in their adjunct role, despite the barriers to inclusion in the community. The theme generated from the data related to overcoming challenges was the theme of "being all in" as adjuncts. Regardless of the obstacles faced, the participants maintained their integrity as professionals.

Finally, once hired as full-time faculty, the faculty participants eventually felt as if they were part of the community, although this was not immediate. Physically they entered the community fairly rapidly, but the emotional and social movement into the community happened over time. Thus, the final theme from the research is the theme of "being apart and a part

Being in the Dark

Being in the dark was the first theme to emerge describing the challenges aspiring academics faced as they pursued entrance into and joined the community college as full-time faculty. As evidenced in this research, and congruent with previous research, participants as aspiring academics felt invisible and like outsiders at the college (CAW, 2012; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Webb, Wong, & Hubbell, 2013). Throughout their interviews, in their surveys, and on their life maps, the participants described a feeling of being invisible and in the dark, because they did not know what to do in their roles after being hired as adjuncts. Nor did they know how to interact with others in their program areas, their departments, or at the college. The aspiring academics' lack of control, connectivity, communication, resources, and training were elements that contributed to their feelings of being in the dark. However, as faculty moved out of adjunct positions into full-time positions, participating in faculty meetings and mentorship, feelings of being in the dark diminished.

Almost every aspiring academic described an instance during which he or she lacked a sense of control. This lack of control was often in respect to their schedule, such as having a course added or canceled at the last minute. Joy explained, “When you get a class that is popped on you as an adjunct at the last minute, which happens a lot, they tell you to just roll with it.” Suzy similarly reflected that she often felt like a last minute “add in”, as in “let’s stick this thing in.” Last-minute schedule changes had both financial and emotional consequences (e.g., income loss, frustration). For some adjuncts, lack of control over scheduling, coupled with poor communication from full-time faculty and college leadership, left them feeling devalued and these were the times that they felt ostracized from the college, or “in the dark”. Suzy recounted her frustrations as an adjunct:

The state had reduced the number of classes we can teach from four to three, at any one institution. We weren’t informed of that until it was too late to really look around more. When they realized a full-time professor wasn’t teaching enough classes, they started taking classes away from me. My budget was already set and now you’re telling me no and I can’t go and find something else. You know, I was really mad. I felt bad about it later, but I was pretty much shouting at the vice president at one point.

While her department coordinator was willing to work with her, Joy described a similar lack of control over her schedule, which dictated her financial situation and ability to provide therapy services for her child with special needs. She describes the situation:

I mean there is no job security adjuncting [sic] ...all of those years the money I made decided how much therapy my son would get. We [she and her husband] strictly paid for his therapy using my adjunct money. So, I would get my adjunct schedule, and I would

be on the phone with the therapist telling her that I have money for the next six months, so keep the therapy rolling. But there was never any job security.

Kevin's experience with class cancellations illustrates the emotional stress adjuncts experience when they lack control. Kevin taught part one of a course and became "connected" with his students. He was prepared to teach the second part of the class; however, the second part got cancelled. As he tells the story:

I didn't have any say in the decision to cancel, I wasn't involved at all. I wasn't happy about that because I was connected to the students and they ended up going somewhere else. Having no input on that decision was very eye-opening, I guess. But I've just learned that's the way it is. So that was a challenge.

Often these last-minute course changes coupled with a lack of communication left the aspiring academics in this study feeling irrelevant.

As another example, Suzy explained that she was asked, a day before classes started, to facilitate an online course that had been designed by a full-time instructor who was scheduled to teach the class. The course was designed in a manner that did not align with her teaching style. As such, she made changes. She noted that the difficult part of last-minute course scheduling and taking on a full-time faculty member's course is that "[t]here's no chance to communicate. ...they tell you to not worry about it because they're going to send you the other person's stuff. And then you're looking at the stuff thinking, 'What is this?'"

Kevin said he was rarely aware of activities going on at the campus and this lack of awareness made him feel, at times, "disconnected" and "overwhelmed." He said that it was normal to be told, "That was due last week." He remembered thinking he had no idea and saying to himself, "Well, I'd better get that done." During his interview, he described a separation

between adjuncts and everyone else on the campus and mentioned it several times, noting “[T]here was a lack of communication with adjuncts and trying to connect them in.”

Suzy agreed with Kevin. When asked during her interview about her on-campus involvement as an adjunct, she relayed that it was not uncommon for her students to notify her about school activities. “I would occasionally go to something that the student organizations were doing, because the students would mention it and say you should come. So, I would go.” Similar, Gloria mentioned that students, along with department secretaries, were often the primary conveyors of information to aspiring academics. For Gloria, communication rarely came from a department coordinator or other faculty. Like many of the others, Gloria reported that she struggled to get clear directions or answers to questions, and “didn’t connect.”

Lack of control and communication left the aspiring academics feeling under-appreciated. Calypso, an administrator, remarked:

I think the administrators see adjunct instructors as necessary. I think that they perhaps slightly under-appreciate them. I think they think they’re moveable objects on a chessboard and they can make this person do this and this person do that and move them around and it will be fine. No, just like anybody else, adjuncts have strengths and weaknesses. They have preferences. They have things they can and can’t do. Just because we want them to teach on a Monday night, they might not be able to teach on a Monday night. I’ve had adjuncts who have said they are not comfortable teaching certain classes. So, in that respect, they’re not interchangeable. I also know they are 100% needed.

Another challenge that contributed to feeling in the dark was a lack of resources, such as office space and opportunities for training. For example, due to lack of office space Mary explained that she was never given office space or a phone. Her students, therefore, did not have

a university-provided means to contact her, aside from email. They did not have space to meet. She thus recalled, “I’d always tell my students, here’s my home phone number, but don’t call me after nine.” She would make arrangements to meet with them before or after classes in the classroom or at a nearby location. She said it was a struggle to connect with her students outside of the classroom.

Similar to Mary, Suzy believed that office space was a resource lacking. During her interview, she suggested that colleges should provide a designated space where adjuncts could meet with their students. She also discussed her struggle to meet with students, given lack of office space:

It would be helpful to most adjuncts if there was a space for them. It’s very difficult to do anything with students who need to see you after class. I mean, we want to see the students who need to see us, but we also want to see the students who may just want to come by and say hi. I think this would make adjuncts feel more like part of the community.

Lack of office space for adjuncts often resulted in limiting time on campus. And, as Suzy noted, this resulted in limited interactions with colleagues, feeling “isolated,” and not having the opportunity “to know many of the faculty ... which was kind of a tough thing.”

Participants often used words in their interviews and on their life maps such as “disconnected,” “isolated,” and “misunderstood” to describe their feelings as an aspiring academic. The lack of connection and community with the college, administration, and full-time faculty was, in part, a consequence of the lack of control, lack of communication, and lack of resources. However, participants also noted that contributing factors included a lack of opportunities for training, meetings, and on-campus activities. Many of the participants, when

serving as adjuncts, were only required to be on campus to teach classes; they typically left after teaching their classes. Three aspiring academics from one of the health programs noted that their work as adjuncts took place at the hospital, not on campus. Therefore, they spent almost no time on campus during their tenure as adjunct faculty. They felt distanced, not only from the other faculty but distanced from the college campus itself. As Dawn stated, “I did not come to campus for any reason except for workshops. My whole role was communication with the coordinator through email.” However, in discussing lack of opportunities to engage in meetings, trainings, and other on-campus activities, many of the participants in the study also took responsibility for the lack of on-campus interaction, noting that their personal lives and responsibilities often took precedence over their part-time adjunct work.

All of the participants as aspiring academics had families and most of them had other jobs, so external responsibility was another reason they did not spend time on campus and connecting with full-time faculty and leadership/administration. Leann claimed that her personal schedule inhibited her ability to spend time on campus and thus, limited her connection with others and sense of community. Being an adjunct was her second job. This, coupled with having a family, often made it impossible to spend extra time connecting. She suggested that, while colleges have a responsibility to assist adjuncts in connecting and building community, adjuncts also have responsibility. She purported that lack of connection and community may be attributed to adjuncts’ choices and priorities:

As an adjunct, they are invited to things. But this is a second job. You have a first job, and many of our adjuncts are in the hospitals or they are active with other things and it makes it hard for them sometimes to be involved. We invite our adjunct faculty to things

and we meet with them, we try to do it. But a lot of them live outside of the community.

For them it is difficult.

Lynn mentioned that, while she enjoyed being an adjunct, that her position was “an outside commitment, it wasn’t my true focus.” Her commitment was to her family and her first job, so “it was hard to think about having any outside time for the college.”

Further, perceptions of being viewed by full-time faculty as “second-class citizens” contributed to aspiring academics’ feelings of disconnection and poor sense of community. Many of the participants, like Joy, noted that “there is almost an adversarial relationship set up between full-time faculty and adjuncts.” Joy never felt that she could be part of the full-time faculty “clique.” Mary said that she always felt like an outsider when she was on campus. She used the term “lone ranger” and claimed:

I always knew my role as an adjunct. That I don’t really fit in here, but it’s okay. Because I enjoyed what I was doing, I didn’t have a problem with not being on that committee or not having to do this or that. But it was weird.

She was invited, as an adjunct, to attend events such as graduation but she did not attend because she felt that she would be the only part-time person attending.

As aspiring academics, however, almost all of the participants desired training that did not exist for them. While the college now offers training options online, most participants felt there were few training opportunities offered to adjuncts during their tenure.

Dawn and Kevin discussed the challenges of teaching without having a background in education. Dawn said that, when she began teaching, she did not know what the word “pedagogy” meant, despite having a master’s in her subject area. She said, “Education was a foreign language when I came here. Just learning about the education world was a huge

challenge.” Kevin felt similar to Dawn when he was asked to write objectives using “Bloom’s Taxonomy,” stating “I didn’t have a lot of education experience. I had been a teaching assistant, but you don’t know what it means to sit down and really prepare a class, outcomes and all.”

Recognizing the importance of training and involving adjuncts on-campus, Calypso, a department coordinator, stated during her interview that the department had evolved since many of the individuals interviewed had served as adjuncts, and that the department had changed, differing from other departments and colleges by offering extensive training for adjuncts. She felt that adjuncts should feel like they are “a part of this” and she wanted “top performers” in the classroom. When relating the training offered to her adjuncts, her response included “adjunct in-services” at the beginning of the semester, as well as “several different training sessions” throughout the semester. She also offered extra training opportunities for those teaching dual-enrollment, online courses, and grammar workshops. “Training provides the ability for my adjunct instructors to feel part of the college and our department and for them to bond with each other.”

All of the faculty participants, backed up by statements from the administrative participants, dealt with a dearth of control, information, communication, resources, and opportunities as adjuncts. Multiple research studies have confirmed a lack of resources and lack of control allowed to adjuncts (Dedman & Pearch, 2004; Kezar & Sam, 2012; Spaniel & Scott, 2013). As was illustrated in the interviews and life maps, these factors were inhibitors in allowing the aspiring academics to feel like they were a part of the college community. They were in the dark.

Nevertheless, and even experiencing the feeling of being in the dark, the participants relayed that, as aspiring academics, they employed strategies to deal with the challenges they

faced, and many intentionally employed strategies to become full-time faculty and a part of the college community. By nature, they demonstrated characteristics and employed strategies in their work as adjuncts that helped them gain full-time employment and entrance into the college community. The theme that emerged related to these strategies was *Being All In*.

Being All In

The faculty participants in the study made the decision to be “all in”, both psychologically and behaviorally, in order to counter the issues faced as adjuncts. As was described in the review of the literature, aspiring academics are more motivated than adjuncts who do not desire full-time status (Antony & Hayden, 2011; Bakely & Broderson, 2018; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Ott & Dippold, 2018). Therefore, despite the challenges faced as adjunct faculty, many of these participants as aspiring academics intentionally decided to be “all in” while working as adjuncts. They recognized the need to overcome the trials of teaching part-time and, for some, realized that in order to pursue entrance into the college community, they would need to be purposeful. Again, while some of the participants intentionally sought full-time employment and employed these strategies to do so, others practiced the strategies simply by nature, recognizing the importance of moving from the periphery of the group toward the center. Based upon information from the surveys, interviews, and life maps, all of the participants recognized the importance of doing their best work as adjuncts and employed strategies such as displaying an excellent work ethic, focusing on the students, getting involved and connected, and pursuing continuing education and being a life-long learner.

A strong work ethic is a key component in being successful as an aspiring academic and earning a full-time position. Lynn reflected, like many other participants did, “I have a work ethic where I believe that if this needs to be done, it’s going to be done. If it’s at midnight or on a

Sunday, I'll be here if it has to be done.” Many of the participants touted that professionalism and working hard were vital in being seen as potential contributing members of the college community and in earning respect from other faculty and from administrators. For example, a full-time faculty member in Gloria’s department retired and no one was hired to fill her position. Therefore, Gloria took on extra responsibilities because she recognized that the other adjuncts were not getting the assistance they needed. She became an unofficial adjunct trainer, working out shortcuts to help them learn processes, such as using the course delivery system.

Work ethic was a salient factor almost all of the participants attributed to getting hired as a full-time faculty member. Joy remembered, “I think my work ethic played a big part.” Suzy agreed that by the time she was hired to teach at the college, she had enough experience as an adjunct that she considered herself “a professional adjunct.” She already had experience teaching and was able to use her knowledge and experience to be successful in her role as a part-time instructor. When asked what made her stand out as an adjunct, her response was, “It was the teaching. This is my professional thing.”

Kevin recognized early on not only the importance of hard work but also the significance of student evaluations. His evaluations were strong because he was dedicated to being an effective instructor, noting, “I want students to want to come to class so that they can be successful.” He did not mind going out of his way to help students and he wanted to “bring real life to them.” In regard to teaching, he said, “You have to be engaged with students. It’s much more than just presenting your material, it’s about them connecting with the material because this is who they become.” In her interview, Leann reflected on her teaching strategies and how she used personal stories to connect with her students. “Students love stories. They put that on my evaluations. They’ll mention my stories and how these are things that apply to the content.”

She also described “going the extra mile” as being salient in good evaluations and being seen as a team player in the department. She went on to describe a situation in which students needed additional support for a group project and how she met the students at the college to provide additional support,

I came back up here and told them that we were going to walk through this step by step...

I intended them to feel better. It was extra time on my part to do this, but it was more important to make sure that that they know what they're doing.

Leann went on in her interview to attribute her ability to connect with students and their evaluations of her as important reasons she was considered for a full-time position.

Calypso, an administrator, corroborated the idea that work ethic and student evaluations were important in consideration for a full-time position. In her interview, she noted that adjuncts have an advantage when applying for a full-time position because they are a “known quantity.” She can “observe, interact, watch, and see the performance” of that adjunct instructor. Good work ethic and students’ perceptions contribute to whether she, as well as other faculty members and administrators, consider an adjunct qualified for a full-time position. Calypso went on to explain, “Do the students say that they want to take that teacher again? That’s the kind of thing I look for.” She also noted that reasons an adjunct may not be considered for a full-time position may include student complaints, not following policy, poor work ethic, and less-than-favorable interactions with other faculty and administration.

Trying to become part of the community and getting involved was another factor key to gaining full-time employment, and ultimately, gaining entrance to and becoming part of the college community. While some of the participants sought to be involved when serving as

adjuncts, others revealed, through their interviews and life maps, that getting involved when becoming a full-time faculty was vital to gaining entrance into and becoming part of community.

Gloria is an example of how getting involved as an adjunct led to her full-time position. Gloria was very active and well-known in the community as an adjunct. “I had connections in the community. A few people had heard [of] me.” Because of these connections, she was recommended for, and eventually offered, a full-time position.

Although aspiring academics can sometimes find it challenging to connect to other faculty, all the participants found ways to connect with other college employees. As an adjunct, Dawn befriended her department coordinator, the campus secretaries, one of the college deans, and other adjuncts. Gloria connected with several administrators, and they ended up working on campus projects together. Gloria asserts that, because of these connections, she was offered the full-time position:

I think that getting that connection is key. If you can walk in and say you’ve taught as an adjunct, you know how to work the system, you know how to follow the rules, if you can navigate things like accessibility and digital engagement—if you get familiar with those then you’re more marketable.

Kevin befriended his coordinator, and Lynn and Leann both sought to get to know other faculty in their department and their administrators.

While participants attested to the importance of aspiring academics and early career faculty members accepting responsibility in seeking involvement and relationships, several participants, like Lynn, also emphasized the importance of the administration cultivating a community on campus that including adjuncts. At the time of this research, and perhaps

somewhat unique to this case, the college had a president who was committed to developing community. Lynn explained,

It really is a community and a family here. The president goes out of her way to make sure we feel that. As an adjunct, I brought my mom to a campus event, and she [the president] went out of her way to meet my mom. And, I know she had other things on her mind, but that's the way the leadership is here.

Yurdi, one of the administrator participants in the study, concurred that campus leadership builds community and is “very appreciative of the things adjuncts do.” This may contribute to aspiring academics being hired as full-time faculty and becoming part of the college community as either adjuncts or full-time faculty. Yurdi explained a few of the initiatives the college offered to include and support adjuncts, including an adjunct orientation session each semester. Dinner is provided at these sessions and the meetings give adjuncts an opportunity to meet other adjuncts as well as the administrators. The college also offered an “Adjunct of the Year” award. In describing the award, Yurdi said, “Adjunct faculty are awarded if they're particularly outstanding based on the selection process,” stressing the importance of adjuncts getting involved if they are interested in a full-time position. He also noted that, as an administrator, he notices adjuncts who “become a part of the community” and that “being active and a big part of the community is key” to going from adjunct to full-time faculty.

Finally, continuing education in the form of professional development, certification, and degrees was inherent to the successful transition of adjuncts to full-time positions in this case. Three of the participants revealed that seeking additional credentials made them more qualified for a full-time position and seen by the community as a potential contributing member with a shared interest.

Joy provided a good example of earning additional credentials. The first time that Joy applied for a full-time position at the college, she was not eligible for the job due to her educational background. As she recounted the experience of being turned down for the position, “I said I was never going to have this problem again. So, I went back to school as a non-degree seeking student and just popped out a bunch of classes in a row to build up my graduate credit hours.”

Yurdi, as a division dean, also recommended that adjuncts who are interested in full-time positions earn credentials in more than one subject. During his interview, he suggested, “Getting credentialed in another area is a huge benefit, especially to a small school where resources are limited.” He said that any candidate with more than one credential has a hiring advantage over other candidates.

In sum, the participants recognized that an excellent work ethic, a focus on students, being involved and seeking connection, and pursuing continuing education were essential strategies for moving from aspiring adjunct to full-time faculty member. Being seen as valuable, contributing community members was crucial to their success as they sought and gained entrance into the college community as adjuncts or early-career full-time faculty members.

Being Apart and Being a Part

Atypical of the research, which demonstrates that most aspiring academics do not secure full-time positions (Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2012), these aspiring academics were offered full-time positions at the college. After accepting full-time positions, most of the participants immediately felt that they were “a part” of the community from a physical perspective. They had offices, they were on campus on a regular basis, and they were able to attend meetings. However, they all reported that it took time, and the

ability to hurdle new obstacles, before they began to feel they were part of the community from an emotional and social perspective. Therefore, while they were physically “a part” of the campus community, initially they felt “apart” from the community socially and psychologically. When considering Wenger’s (1998) three modes of identification for how members express their belonging in a community (engagement, imagination, and alignment), the data in this study revealed that the mode of engagement was almost immediate once members became full-time faculty members and participated in campus activities, creating the sense of being “a part”. For some, this began even when they were still adjuncts, as noted in the previous section. Imagination and alignment, however, took time to develop, impeding the members’ sense of identity with the community and causing them to feel “apart”. However, once the sense of identity was formed, the participants felt a sense of “being a part” of the community. The following stories exemplify how the aspiring academics came to feel like they belonged in the community of practice.

As an adjunct, Joy felt she had an almost adversarial relationship with the full-time faculty. Due to her family circumstances, her coordinator gave her a preferential schedule, even if it was to the detriment of the full-time faculty. While in the adjunct role, Joy had little to no interaction with the other faculty and even felt a sense of antagonism from them. She perceived the faculty to be in a “clique” in which she would never be a part. Even after attaining full-time status, it was difficult to imagine herself as a member of the department community and she felt “apart” from the community. However, after a semester, she says:

Eventually they started to joke with me that they were glad I was hired so that I would not steal their classes anymore. I got a chance to explain what was going on for all those years, and I found out they didn’t know anything about my situation. They just thought

the coordinator was arbitrarily assigning classes. I was able to explain that I wasn't trying to take anybody's classes away and I felt like they understood a little bit better. And then I began to feel like part of the group.

Suzie, Kevin, and Dawn were hesitant to accept full-time positions, once offered. As adjuncts, they became aware of the amount of work involved with a full-time position. They were hesitant to leave their current positions to become full-time faculty. Therefore, after accepting faculty positions, they initially struggled with imagining themselves as part of the community and were overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the position. Soon after being hired, Kevin jumped into sponsoring a student group and said, "I got in over my head very quickly." All of the participants reported feeling beleaguered once they started full-time, describing feelings of "stress" and "difficulty." Lynn depicted the move from part-time to full-time as "a huge learning curve." Gloria described the transition to full-time as "flying by the seat of your pants." Even though there were training opportunities for new hires, the participants claimed there was still much for them to learn. Dawn asserted:

For the first year it was really rough. I questioned my decision almost daily. Education was a totally different world than what I was expecting. The struggle was much more than I thought. The students were much more than I thought. The environment, just everything, was much more than I thought. It was culture shock for me.

All of the participants reported that they continued to rely on their strong work ethic and commitment to their position to surmount the strain of the full-time position and during these months of feeling "apart". Within a semester to a year, they all felt more comfortable with their full-time status. Five of the participants claimed that, after sharing their struggles with other full-

time faculty, they discovered that those faculty members had the same issues with the workload when they began teaching.

While on-campus engagement was inherent once the participants became full-time and were engaged on campus, they struggled to imagine themselves as “a part” of the community. They also found that it took time for them to develop a working relationship with their colleagues in order to fulfill the college’s goals. This struggle with alignment (Wenger, 1998; Wenger 2000) was an impediment to their sense of identity within the community. Most of the participants reported that it took them anywhere from a semester to a year to begin to identify as part of the college community. Dawn was particularly challenged in her full-time role. Aside from imagining herself as “apart” from the community, there were challenges within her department that kept them from working cohesively with the rest of the campus:

I felt our department thought of themselves as prima donnas and there was not an open line of communication. I was raised to believe you treat the custodial staff the same way you treat the highest person in the building and you’re friendly to everyone in between. Coming here there were a group of faculty that made this very challenging for me. We were pretty much told that we had to be here Monday through Friday, 9 to 4:30. There was a lot of micromanagement; there were a couple of faculty who tried to keep us within ourselves. They would almost chastise you if you talked to other divisions. So, there was a disconnect between the reality of the job and my perceived reality of the job.

When asked about how the situation changed, she responded,

Eventually some of the people in the department left. Barriers started to break down and I started making bonds with people outside of the division. I realized we all had the same goal in mind. That’s when it started happening and I felt like part of the group.

Dawn became the dean of the department and made many changes intended to break down barriers, and noted, “We don’t have those issues now.”

Although all of the participants as aspiring academics in this study were offered faculty positions, accepting the positions did not create an immediate feeling of being “a part” of the community and they continued to feel “apart” from their peers. The participants were immediately engaged in the community by virtue of their presence on campus and ability to interact regularly with their colleagues. Imagination and alignment were more elusive, as the aspiring academics dealt with overwhelming workloads and struggled to form bonds with their peers. However, interacting with their colleagues over time, having more open lines of communication, and using humor to defuse difficulties led to decreased anxiety, while institutional changes, such as shifts in departmental personnel, also facilitated their eventual identification as “a part” of the community.

Summary

As part-time faculty members, the aspiring academics felt a sense of *being in the dark*, due to factors such as lack of control, connectivity, communication, resources, and training. However, by *being all in* through the use of a strong work ethic, staying student focused, being involved, and pursuing learning, the participants were able to gain full-time employment when positions opened up. Some began entering the college community as they gained respect and recognition as contributing community members. Others, however, did not begin entering and feeling part of the community until being hired full-time. Upon joining the faculty full-time, the participants were physically part of the group, but the modes of identity related to imagination and alignment took time to develop, which contributed to feeling *apart* from their peers. When the participants in a community of practice have regular interaction, it allows them to share

ideas, problem solve, and create tacit understanding. This regular interaction serves to deepen understanding and promotes expertise (Wenger, 2000; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Thus, within a semester to a year of their hire, all of the participants identified as *being a part* of the college community, due their presence on campus and ability to communicate on a regular basis with their colleagues, their continuing efforts to *be all in* to overcome issues with the workload, and changes in personnel.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

A case study approach (Stake, 1995) was used to understand the experiences of aspiring academics at a rural community college in Tennessee as they became full-time faculty members and integrated into the college community. This study examined the successes and challenges they experienced as they moved from adjuncts to full-time faculty, pursued entrance into and became part of a community of practice. Eight former aspiring academics and two administrators at the college participated in this study. Faculty participants completed an initial survey to determine their qualification for the study, and administrators were selected based upon the recommendation of the president of the college. Once participants were identified, they completed a life map and one-on-one interviews. After the surveys, life maps, and interviews were transcribed and coded for themes, a focus group interview was conducted to review the resulting themes from the data and to ensure reliability. My researcher's journal was used to triangulate the data.

The data collected from surveys, life maps, and interviews were analyzed, and themes were identified using initial and in vivo coding for the first round of coding, and focused coding was used for the second round. This chapter begins with a summary and discussion of the findings related to the study's research question and four sub-questions. The summary is followed by suggestions to improve practice, a discussion of limitations, and recommendations for further research. Chapter Five concludes with the key findings from the study.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The primary research question focused on the successes and challenges experienced by aspiring academics as they became full-time faculty members, pursued entrance into and joined the college community. Sub-questions focused on factors that contributed to their successes and ways they overcame challenges.

Three themes emerged to answer the research questions. As aspiring academics, the participants in this study were faced with such challenges as a lack of control, connectivity, communication, resources, and training, leading to feelings of segregation and *Being in the Dark*, the first theme. Such challenges inhibited the participants' ability to enter and join the college community. The participants mitigated these challenges by employing strategies of *Being All In* (the second theme), including demonstrating a good work ethic, focusing on the students, getting involved and connected, and pursuing continuing education. As some of the participants employed these strategies, other faculty and administrators began viewing them as adjuncts who could be valuable and contributing members of the community. As part of being all in, some participants began to join the college community. All of the participants gained full-time employment as faculty members and as they moved into their full-time faculty positions, some were recognized, and some began to recognize themselves, as *Being a Part* of the college community. Within this theme, it became apparent that while they all immediately engaged in activities as members of the community after becoming full-time faculty, it took many of the participants a semester to a year to imagine themselves as faculty members who were part of the college community and to align themselves with the goals of the community.

Aligning with previous community of practice (CoP) research, the participants' movement toward and entrance into the community occurred as they employed strategies of

being all in and began interacting with other faculty and administrators within the community when engaging in full-time faculty activities. The concept of practice (Wenger, 2004) came into play for some while they were still adjuncts, and for others, up to a year after becoming a full-time faculty member. Through faculty meetings and other on-campus activities, participants worked with others in the community, sharing and gathering knowledge, to enhance department policies, curriculum, and other areas that enriched the department, college, and discipline. For example, as an adjunct, Gloria worked to develop training materials for other adjuncts and partnered with an administrator to create a fun faculty presentation for an in-service meeting.

Participants learned from other faculty and administrators how to be effective faculty members, mediating initial anxiety and, as Consalvo, Schallert, and Elias (2005) wrote, learned “a way of acting in the world.” As Kevin mentioned, his department coordinator was a key to mitigating much of his stress and Joy’s trepidation was assuaged as she was able to intermingle with her colleagues. Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) defined a CoP as a group of people who learn from each other within a specific domain and this study’s participants were able to teach and share with members already part of the community.

While this study does not contribute any theoretical elements to the CoP framework, the findings indicate the applicability of a CoP to aspiring academic. These findings also cohere with previous research showing that adjunct faculty face challenges such as lack of control and connection, few resources, limited inclusion in departmental activities, and minimal opportunities for collegiality (Dedman & Pearch, 2004; Kezar, 2013a; Kezar & Sam, 2012; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010; Spaniel & Scott, 2013). The finding of this study also confirm that aspiring academics often go beyond the call of duty for their institutions in hopes of being promoted (Bakely & Brodersen, 2108; Gappa & Leslie, 1993;

Ott & Dippold, 2018); however, this study adds to the literature and illustrates that adjuncts need to be intentional (e.g., good work ethic, focusing on the students, getting involved and connected, and pursuing continuing education) in several ways, so that they can be seen as valuable and potential contributors in the community if they desire to enter the community as full-time faculty.

While previous studies have shown that, despite their efforts, few adjuncts find opportunities for promotion to full-time status (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Feldman, 1996; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Ochoa, 2012), this study demonstrates that it is possible to gain full-time employment and enter a college community. At the same time, administrators within a college need to value adjuncts and community and find ways to meet the needs of aspiring academics. As suggested by Pons et al. (2017), part-time faculty should be included in faculty meetings and college functions and allowed to participate in student success programs. They also recommended that administrators and full-time faculty make an effort to associate with part-time faculty.

Similar to previous multiple studies (Antony & Hayden, 2001; Bakely & Boderson, 2018; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Ott & Dippold, 2018), the findings of this study also demonstrates that aspiring academics find ways to persevere through the trials of being an adjunct and, ultimately, can prevail and move into a full-time position. Going above and beyond their part-time role, the aspiring adjuncts in this study an advantage when a full-time position became available.

Suggestions to Improve Practice

While the findings from this study are not generalizable, it does provide suggestions to improve practice. The challenge of the idea of being in the dark offers implications for how

college administrators can support aspiring academics and minimize barriers, including lack of control, connectivity, communication, resources, and training.

Lack of control, especially when it comes to teaching schedules, would be improved with transparency. During an adjunct faculty in-service or orientation, the process for scheduling classes and selecting faculty to teach them could be explained in detail. The class cancellation policy and time frames for notifying faculty regarding class cancellations could be explained. Equipping faculty with knowledge may provide a better sense of control. Research by Schieman and Plickert (2008) revealed that individuals who have some control over their schedules have a higher than average level of personal control.

Connectivity and communication may be improved through the development of a communication plan that includes adjuncts. Meixner, Kruck and Madden (2010) reported that email dysfunction is one reason adjuncts may be excluded. Colleges typically have email groups, set up for faculty and other college and department personnel, to make communication with these groups easy. Colleges and departments, with the help of human resources or IT, can create adjunct email groups and assign specific personnel to manage the group, ensuring that adjuncts are added within a week of hire. Adjuncts' cell phone numbers should be added to groups for text alerts.

While communication can be improved with simple technological changes, connectivity to the rest of the campus is also a need for adjuncts (Hoyt, 2012). One solution to connectivity issues is to offer mentors for adjuncts, similar to the way that junior faculty are often offered mentors. The mentors could be introduced to their partners at the adjunct faculty in-service. Research has shown that novice educators are more productive when mentored by experienced colleagues. Mentoring augments professional identity, and it increases professional morale

(Bakely & Brodersen, 2017; Nick, et al., 2012). In establishing a mentoring program for adjuncts, training for the mentors is requisite. Burlew (1991) stated, “Establishing mentor training programs is an acknowledgement of the importance of mentoring” (p. 213). Although focused on STEM faculty, Pfund et al. (2013) reported that over 50% of the participants in a mentor training program reported specific changes in their mentoring practice between the initial and final sessions of the program.

Connectivity and community concerns could be addressed by offering resources and training opportunities. Adjuncts are not typically offered office space (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Kezar, 2013b), which communicates an administrative lack of concern for adjuncts’ comfort and results in a lack of space for adjuncts to meet privately with students, nor does it allow them to spend time with their full-time colleagues. The college should have a dedicated office area for adjunct faculty, to encourage them to spend more time on campus and, therefore, have the opportunity to interact with other faculty. The space should be a room with cubicles, computers, printers, and office supplies specifically for adjuncts’ use.

It is also assumed that adjunct faculty do not have the time, nor the inclination, to attend faculty meetings and professional development opportunities. However, the participants indicated that they would have attended faculty events, if invited. Aspiring academics in other studies also displayed their willingness to participate in continuing education opportunities (Bakely & Brodersen, 2017; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Ott & Dippold, 2018). Therefore, colleges should devote more time and effort to promote education for their adjunct faculty. Santisteban and Egues (2014) suggested that institutions of higher education offer the same workshops to their adjuncts that they offer to full-time faculty. Colleges would be prudent to recognize that most faculty are not trained in best practices related to education, and offer

continuing education opportunities to teach topics such as assessment, class management, etc. These courses could be offered online, or during the evening or weekend hours to accommodate the need for flexibility in scheduling, as participants noted that the outside demands on their time, as adjuncts, did not allow for participation in training opportunities that were offered during business hours. As Knowles et al. (2005) and Harper and Ross (2011) asserted, the assumptions of andragogy can be applied in traditional classrooms, online instruction, or a blended environment.

Once hired, the aspiring academic participants shared the challenges faced by new faculty, as they struggled to become a part of the community. One of those struggles was workload. Several participants indicated that new faculty orientation left them exhausted and, because it was held immediately before the school year began, they began their new position overwhelmed, and the feeling of engulfment persisted throughout the semester. While some colleges are improving their on-boarding process, many still hold orientations that include an intense week (or more) of training. Austin et al. (2007) recommended that, rather than offering an initial week-long training, colleges hold a brief orientation at the beginning of the semester followed by a series of seminars and workshops throughout the year. Having multiple opportunities for engagement also provides the opportunity to form meaningful relationships throughout campus. Beyond orientation, however, higher education could do more to create a livable work environment for new faculty. Eddy and Gaston-Gayles (2008) asserted:

A major factor in creating a more balanced life for new faculty hinges on institutional support systems and systematic changes in faculty expectations. Participants who were in programs with specific outlines of expectations and integrated programs to support new faculty felt less stress than those participants in programs without intentional programs to

support new faculty. As institutional leaders begin to prepare for hiring of new faculty, it is important to consider what support structures can be put in place to help make the transition to new faculty roles easier and less stressful. The ultimate outcome can then result in more effective departmental and university operations and a better sense of personal balance for faculty.

Thus, colleges should ensure that expectations are communicated and support programs are in place for new hires.

Another struggle faced by the participants, as they attempted to join the community, was the effort required to connect with their peers. Eddy and Gaston-Gayles (2008) advocated for more communication between seasoned faculty and their new colleagues. Historically, teaching involves little sharing among faculty. Sharing ideas and tips, however, will increase the efficacy of new faculty members.

While the findings of this research offer numerous suggestions focused on what the institution can do to promote community for aspiring academics, this research also revealed mechanisms that aspiring academics can use inherently to enter a community. These suggestions include seeking out employment at colleges that value their adjuncts and values community; exemplifying their best work, even when in a part-time position; concentrating on student success; and engaging life-long learning.

Aspiring academics, when interviewing for positions, should attempt to discover the college's opinion of their adjunct employees; investigate how the adjuncts are treated; and explore professional development opportunities for adjuncts. The interview questions could include queries about adjunct training, scheduling, and inclusion. The interviewee can ascertain if there is a work area for adjuncts and how often, if at all, adjuncts are included in departmental

meetings and committees. A college that puts value in their adjuncts is a workplace where a sense of community for adjuncts will be most quickly realized and adjuncts may be more readily recognized when full-time positions become available.

Aspiring academics should make effort to be all in and treat their part-time positions with the same professionalism and effort as a full-time position. Every aspiring academic participant in this study claimed that their work ethic was a primary contributor to their success as an adjunct, and the administrative participants claimed that adjuncts' professionalism was a mitigating factor in being offered a full-time position. Related, three of the aspiring academic participants and one administrator stressed the importance of pursuing continuing education as an adjunct. It is important that aspiring academics take advantage of education opportunities, whether that is continuing education or the pursuance of another certification, having the goal of life-long learning to contribute to and enhance their chances of a full-time position.

Another mitigating factor for hiring was student evaluations, and this was supported by statements from all participants throughout the data. As the aspiring academic participants recognized, aspiring academics should be mindful of promoting student success, including providing timely responses and feedback, offering extra assistance, and offering office hours. Supporting student success is often reflected in student evaluations, and as the administrative participants in this study noted, evaluations are important when considering an adjunct for full time employment.

Finally, aspiring academics, despite the challenges of balancing a full-time job, family, and adjunct work, need to make every effort to get involved on campus, if they desire to become part of the community and attain full time employment. Form relationships with other staff

members and faculty is also vital as these relationships can foster a sense of belonging to the community, even though a full sense of belonging may not be fulfilled immediately.

Limitations and Recommendations

The findings and implications of this study should be applied with caution and in recognition of the limitations. While this study resulted in several key findings, there were also limitations. First, this study explored the personal experiences of aspiring academics and these findings are unique to their individual environments (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It should be noted that the participants in the study were all Caucasian, mainly female, close in age, and limited to a few disciplines. While they were part of different departments, the participants were also all located at the same college and were all hired as full-time faculty within the last ten years. The setting was a rural community college in Tennessee where several participants noted that the president seeks to cultivate a culture of community and measures are taken to acknowledge adjuncts. This is atypical, as is recognized in the review of the literature (i.e., Chapter 2). While, the detail provided in this study offers the opportunity for transferability as it illustrates the thoughts of the participants and how their experiences as adjuncts shaped their experiences as full-time faculty, the findings outlined for this study may not be the same for other aspiring academics at other institutions. The findings are not generalizable.

Moreover, while the choice of site, participants, and research methods used in this study were suited to its purpose. Going forth, the study should be expanded to include more diverse participants (including diversity in ethnicity, gender, age, and discipline), a different geographical location, and an increase in sample size. Future reiterations of this research would be enriched by using a larger, more diverse group of participants, or participants at an urban university. Future studies should also consider the plight of aspiring academics through other

theoretical lenses. For example, self-efficacy, persistence, and mindfulness are all valid theoretical viewpoints from which to explore this topic. The efficacy of interventions (e.g., communication systems, professional development, mentoring) offered in the implication section could also be explored via qualitative and quantitative methodologies, examining their effect on adjuncts' sense of belonging and persistence in positions.

Conclusion

The findings of this case study are important as they provide rich detail about a group of aspiring academics as they sought to enter an existing community of practice. Given the ongoing research on adjunct faculty and the literature illustrating the need for better treatment of the largest cohort of faculty (Carruth & Carruth, 2013), this research highlights the challenges experienced by this group of aspiring academics and the way that they surmounted obstacles to entering the community of practice.

This study serves as a foundation to creating a better experience for faculty in adjunct roles. Given the findings, colleges should work to offer resources for their part-time faculty that will allow for a greater sense of community within the college environment. Aspiring academics should be aware of the college's viewpoint in regard to adjunct faculty and seek out institutions that promote inclusion of their adjuncts. Finally, aspiring academics should always act professionally in an adjunct role and endeavor to get involved with their full-time faculty peers as well as participating in activities at the college.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questions for Adjuncts

1. What is your highest degree?
 - a. bachelor's degree
 - b. Master's degree
 - c. Doctoral degree
2. What is your age (in years)?
3. Please indicate your sex.
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
4. Please indicate your ethnicity.
 - a. Black/African-American
 - b. Asian
 - c. Caucasian
 - d. Hispanic
 - e. American Indian
 - f. Other (please specify)
5. Were you an adjunct in the department before becoming full-time faculty? (R, S1-4)
Yes
No
6. When you began your work as an adjunct, did you aspire to become full-time?

7. Please explain your answer to the previous question. If you did not began your work as an adjunct aspiring to be full-time, explain how this desire changed and lead you to apply for a full-time position.

8. While serving as an adjunct, did you feel like you are a part of your college community? (R, S1-2)

Yes

No

9. As a current full-time faculty, do you feel like you are a part of your college community? (R, S1-2)

Yes

No

10. How many years and months were you an adjunct? (R, S-4)

11. In what semester and year did you become a full-time faculty (E.g., Fall 2018)? (R, S1-4)

12. How many positions at the college did you apply for before you became full-time? (R, S-4).

13. How many years and months have you been a full-time faculty member?(R, S 1-4)

14. In what area of study is your master's degree? (R, S1-4)

15. If you have a doctorate, what is your area of study? (R, S1-4)

16. What courses do you teach? (R)

Appendix B: Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions for Aspiring Academics

1. Please tell me about your background and education. (R)
2. How did you become interested in a higher education teaching position? (R)
3. Please tell me about your higher education teaching journey. (R, S1-4)
 - a. Tell me about how you became an adjunct. (R, S1-2)
 - b. Tell me about your experience as an adjunct. (R, S1-4)
 - c. Tell me about your experience moving from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position. (R, S1-2)
4. What were the key factors that helped you move from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position? (R, S1-2)
5. Do you feel you are currently part of the college community?
 - a. If so, when did you feel like part of the college community? (R, S1-2)
 - b. What are the key factors that inhibited you from feeling part of the college community? (R, S3-4)
6. What were the key challenges you experienced in moving from an adjunct position to a full-time faculty position? (R, S3-4)

Note. R=Central Research Question S=Sub-question. Numeral(s) indicate(s) specific sub-question(s).

Appendix C: Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions for the Administrators

1. What are the requirements for hiring adjuncts?
2. What are the adjuncts' job responsibilities? (R, S2)
3. What opportunities for interaction are adjuncts provided with within the college? (R, S1-2)
4. What are the faculty and administrators' perceptions of adjuncts? (R)
5. There have been numerous adjuncts hired as full-time faculty at the college. How does the process work? (R, S1-2)
6. What benefits, if any, do adjunct faculty at the college have in the hiring process? (R, S1-2)
7. What challenges, if any, do adjunct faculty at the college have in the hiring process? (R, S3-4)
8. What benefits, if any, do adjunct faculty at the college have in entering the college community? (R, S1-2)
9. What challenges, if any, do adjunct faculty at the college have in entering the college community? (R, S3-4)

Note. R=Central Research Question S=Sub-question. Numeral(s) indicate(s) specific sub-question(s).

Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Do you agree with the themes that developed from the interviews?
2. Why or why not?
3. Is there any topic/theme that you experienced while moving from adjunct to full-time faculty status did not come out in the data? If so, what are these topics?

Do you feel these themes are an accurate representation of your experience as an adjunct moving into the college community? Why or why not?

Appendix E: Informed Consent for Interviews and Life Map for Faculty Participants

You are invited to be part of a research study that is exploring former adjuncts who became full-time faculty members. You are being invited to participate in this research because you are a former adjunct who became a full-time faculty member employed in higher education. Your participation in this research study will be helpful to increase awareness and understanding of former adjuncts' faculty experiences as they moved from adjunct to full-time faculty status.

This informed consent outlines the facts, implications, and consequences of the research study. Upon reading, understanding, and signing this document, you are giving consent to participate in the research study.

Researcher:

Tracy McLaughlin, University of Memphis

Inquiries:

The researchers will gladly answer any inquiries regarding the purpose and procedures of the present study. Please send all inquiries via email to Tracy at tmclghln@memphis.edu or tmclaughlin@southwest.tn.edu.

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of former adjuncts as they moved from adjunct to full-time faculty status at their college.

Procedures:

You are being asked to complete a Life Map and individual interview. The estimated time to complete each phase in the research is the following: Life Map – 20 - 30 minutes; audio recorded interview – 45 -75 minutes. Participation is voluntary and will in no way influence your relationship with the researchers or the university. The researchers will take precautions to protect participant identity by not using the names of participants or their affiliations. The researchers will use the results for publication and presentation purposes.

Untried Procedure:

The researcher has developed the questionnaire, Life Map, and individual interview questions specifically for this study. They have not been previously utilized for research. Nor have they been validated or reliability tested.

Participant Risks:

As a result of participating in this study, awareness of stressors relating to your role as a mother and/or faculty member may increase. The study may involve additional risks that are minimal and no more than would be encountered in everyday life.

Participant Benefits:

Participants may benefit from increased understanding of awareness about their past and their present roles as faculty members and mothers. The potential publication of the findings of this

study may prove beneficial to other adjuncts as well as higher education administrators as they seek to understand the experiences of adjuncts who wish to become full-time at their institutions.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive any financial compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The researchers will take precautions to protect participant identity by not linking data information to participant identity. Interviews and Life Maps will be completed in a private office of the researcher (or research assistant) or via a private e-conferencing system. The researchers will not identify participants or their places of employment by name; however, since this study is limited to faculty in a limited number of universities, the identities of the participants could be inferred by individuals familiar with the school, the individual, and the presented article.

The researchers will store all research documentation on a password-protected computer database on their university computers for the duration of seven years and will then delete the documentation from the computer database. Any hard copies of the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and shredded at the end of seven years.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. To withdraw, please e-mail tmclghln@memphis.edu or tmclaughlin@southwest.tn.edu to request to withdraw from the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study any data collected from you will be destroyed and will be excluded from the final analysis of findings. Your choice to decline this invitation or withdraw from the study will in no way influence your relationship with the university or the researchers.

Disclosure:

Signing below I acknowledge the following:

I have read and understand the description of the study and contents of this document. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that I must be **18 years or older to sign this informed consent and participate** in this study. I understand that should I have any questions about this research and its conduct, I should contact one of the researchers listed above. If I have any questions about rights or this form, I should contact the Institutional Review Board, The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152 or email at irb@memphis.edu.

Check here if you agree to be recorded for the purpose of transcription as part of the interview portion of this research.

Print name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix F: Informed Consent for Interviews for Administrative Participants

You are invited to be part of a research study that is exploring former adjuncts who became full-time faculty members. You are being invited to participate in this research because you are an administrator at a college where several adjuncts became full-time faculty. Your participation in this research study will be helpful to increase awareness and understanding of former adjuncts' faculty experiences as they moved from adjunct to full-time faculty status.

This informed consent outlines the facts, implications, and consequences of the research study. Upon reading, understanding, and signing this document, you are giving consent to participate in the research study.

Researcher:

Tracy McLaughlin, University of Memphis

Inquiries:

The researchers will gladly answer any inquiries regarding the purpose and procedures of the present study. Please send all inquiries via email to Tracy at tmclghln@memphis.edu or tmclaughlin@southwest.tn.edu.

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of former adjuncts as they moved from adjunct to full-time faculty status at their college.

Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in an individual interview. The estimated time to complete the video-recorded interview is 45 -75 minutes. Participation is voluntary and will in no way influence your relationship with the researchers or the university. The researchers will take precautions to protect participant identity by not using the names of participants or their affiliations. The researchers will use the results for publication and presentation purposes.

Untried Procedure:

The researcher has developed individual interview questions specifically for this study. They have not been previously utilized for research. Nor have they been validated or reliability tested.

Participant Risks:

As a result of participating in this study, awareness of stressors relating to your role as a mother and/or faculty member may increase. The study may involve additional risks that are minimal and no more than would be encountered in everyday life.

Participant Benefits:

Participants may benefit from increased understanding of awareness about their past and their present roles as faculty members and mothers. The potential publication of the findings of this study may prove beneficial to other adjuncts as well as higher education administrators as they seek to understand the experiences of adjuncts who wish to become full-time at their institutions.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive any financial compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The researchers will take precautions to protect participant identity by not linking data information to participant identity. Interviews and Life Maps will be completed in a private office of the researcher (or research assistant) or via a private e-conferencing system. The researchers will not identify participants or their places of employment by name; however, since this study is limited to faculty in a limited number of universities, the identities of the participants could be inferred by individuals familiar with the school, the individual, and the presented article.

The researchers will store all research documentation on a password-protected computer database on their university computers for the duration of seven years and will then delete the documentation from the computer database. Any hard copies of the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and shredded at the end of seven years.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. To withdraw, please e-mail tmclghln@memphis.edu or tmclaughlin@southwest.tn.edu to request to withdraw from the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study any data collected from you will be destroyed and will be excluded from the final analysis of findings. Your choice to decline this invitation or withdraw from the study will in no way influence your relationship with the university or the researchers.

Disclosure:

Signing below I acknowledge the following:

I have read and understand the description of the study and contents of this document. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that I must be **18 years or older to sign this informed consent and participate** in this study. I understand that should I have any questions about this research and its conduct, I should contact one of the researchers listed above. If I have any questions about rights or this form, I should contact the Institutional Review Board, The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152 or email at irb@memphis.edu.

Check here if you agree to be recorded for the purpose of transcription as part of the interview portion of this research.

Print name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix G: Life Map Form

This exercise is an opportunity for you to become more conscious of your professional story and to create a map of your journey from in academia.

Instructions: Use blank paper and markers to create a continuum, at timeline drawing, an annotated CV, etc. that reflects your journey from birth to full-time status. In thinking about your experience, focus especially on significant academic events. While creating your life map, consider these questions in particular:

1. What are events that influenced your understanding of your role as an adjunct and full-time faculty?
2. What influenced your decision to take an adjunct position?
3. What are events that influenced your pursuit of and persistence in acquiring a full-time position?

Please be as creative as you wish with this project. Do make sure to date and label significant events, along with descriptions.

Appendix H: Example of a Life Map

