UC Riverside
UC Riverside Previously Published Works

Title
The hybrid and dualistic identity of full-time non-tenure-track faculty

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8kr326kn

Journal
American Behavioral Scientist, 55(11)

ISSN
0002-7642

Authors
Levin, JS
Shaker, GG

Publication Date
2011-11-01

DOI
10.1177/0002764211409382

Peer reviewed

Article

The Hybrid and Dualistic Identity of Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

John S. Levin[1] and Genevieve G. Shaker[23]

Abstract

Colleges and universities rely on full-time non-tenure-track (FTNT) faculty to achieve their teaching, research, and service missions. These faculty are deemed both symptomatic of and partly responsible for academe's shortcomings. The ascriptions, however, are made with little attention to the faculty themselves or to their consequences for FTNT faculty. Through analysis of interview data of university faculty, the authors present and explain FTNT faculty self-representations of professional and occupational identity. Assumptions drawn from institutional and professional theory contextualize the research, and narrative analysis infuses the application of the framework of cultural identity theory. These FTNT faculty are found to possess hybrid and dualistic identities. Their work and roles are a hybrid and contain some elements of a profession and some of a "job." Their identity is dualistic because as teachers, they express satisfaction, whereas as members of the professoriate, they articulate restricted self-determination and self-esteem. This troubled and indistinct view of self-as-professional is

1 University of California, Riverside, CA, USA
2 Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, USA

Corresponding Author:
John S. Levin, University of California, Graduate School of Education
3 University Avenue Riverside, CA, 92521
Email: johnlev@ucr.edu

problematic both for FTNT faculty as they go about their daily work and for their institutions, which are in no small part responsible for the uncertain conditions and identities of FTNT faculty.

Keywords

faculty, identity, roles

In the United States, 69% of academics now work off the tenure track, and more than a quarter of these faculty are categorized as full-time faculty (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010). Full-time non-tenure-track (FTNT) faculty constitute 60% of new full-time faculty hires (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). FTNT faculty teach, research, administer, and serve their institutions just as do those with tenure, but they lack permanent employment protection, an acknowledged role in institutional governance, and an established or well-understood position in the academy. Although this suggests that they play a peripheral role in colleges and universities, FTNT faculty are core members of the professoriate on whom higher education and its students rely. Nonetheless, FTNT faculty are deemed accomplices, albeit unwitting, to the erosion of the academic profession, faculty power, and undergraduate education. Their perspective on these claims and self-assessments of their own identity as professionals are not considered when these ascriptions are made and, indeed, are rarely considered at all. This omission enables observers and commentators to portray FTNT faculty in a negative light and use them as scapegoats for the ills of higher education. Moreover, it leads to an incomplete scholarly understanding of the professional identity of faculty generally and perpetuates widespread ignorance about the nature of academic life.

To document this population's self-representations and position it within the postsecondary landscape, we employed a two-part approach. First, we undertook close study of interview data of a sample of FTNT faculty to foreground their professional experiences, placing them within the context of literature on the academic profession. We contextualized the research with assumptions drawn from institutional and professional theory. Second, we infused narrative analysis into the application of our framework of cultural identity theory. Through this approach, FTNT identity—and identity problems—emerged and a theoretical foundation was developed.

The two-part process suggests that FTNT faculty possess hybrid and dualistic identities. Their work and roles are a hybrid and contain some elements of a profession and some of a "job." Their identity is dualistic

because as teachers, they express satisfaction, whereas as members of the professoriate, they articulate restricted self-determination and self-esteem. This troubled and indistinct view of self-as-professional is problematic both for FTNT faculty as they go about their daily work and for their institutions, which are in no small part responsible for the uncertain conditions and identities of FTNT faculty. These uncertain conditions and identities, coupled with resource dependency of colleges and universities (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), likely foreshadow growing complications for U.S. higher education, where trends suggest that the numerical dominance of non-tenure-track faculty of all kinds will continue to grow (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006).

Understanding FTNT Faculty

In spite of the significance of FTNT faculty to students, institutions, and academe, generally the scholarly literature on the professional identity of FTNT faculty is muted, conducted with little reliance on FTNT faculty as sources of data, and atheoretical. The scholarly literature that does address them most often relies on administrative, institutional, tenure-track, or associational perspectives. The theoretical literature either bypasses this group or is prefaced on assumption-laden theories (Kezar & Sam, 2011 [this issue]) and, as a result, offers mistaken characterizations. For example, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), who rely on the concept of "academic capitalism" to capture the behaviors of faculty, are off the mark with FTNT faculty; Marginson and Considine (2000), with shades of neoliberalism permeating their portrait of universities, miss FTNT faculty altogether.

Researchers, however, have made some inroads into documenting the FTNT phenomenon and creating a baseline of general information about FTNT faculty. A 2001 monograph by Baldwin and Chronister provides an introduction to this faculty body, including the central rationales for its growth: cost savings and flexibility. These scholars also include a typology showing that FTNT faculty begin as tenure-track rejecters, non-tenure-track choosers, trailing spouses or partners, second-career selectors, or some combination of the four. These groupings have been used to explain the diverse and varied ways in which FTNT faculty internalize and respond to their nontenure positions (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Shaker, 2008). It has also been established that the predominant role of FTNT faculty is in teaching and that their instructional role is centered in the lower divisions and the lower prestige classroom assignments. However, they are also known to be core participants in the research mission of universities. In the

aggregate, they span the disciplines and serve at institutions of all types. A large percentage hold terminal degrees and, similar to tenure-track faculty, the FTNT population is growing older and more advanced in career stage (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006).

FTNT faculty are also akin to tenure-track faculty in their high level of work satisfaction (Jensen, 1999; Levin, Shaker, & Wagoner, 2011). This is a surprise, given anecdotal reports from individuals, qualitative research findings, and union or association perspectives on FTNT positions (Shaker, 2008). It also unexpected, given the tenor of questions about their contribution to the profession and its future. These questions come from all quarters—including colleagues, scholars, administrators, and the public—and concern teaching and student outcomes, negative effects on overall faculty governance and commitment, and the unknown consequences of nontenure hiring for academia as a whole (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2006; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Umbach, 2007). The satisfaction of FTNT faculty in the face of overwhelming critique is only the first of several discrepancies that highlight the need for new theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of FTNT faculty. In spite of a sense of being maligned, for example, these individuals are willing to sacrifice much to be faculty members. Indeed, they seek to become established, long-term citizens of academia (Eisenberg, 2010; June, 2009). Additional paradoxes include high levels of attachment to faculty work and life but consternation about the conditions of their employment and the necessity of retaining a sense of self-worth, which is at odds with the preconceived notions about nontenure faculty that demean their value to the academy (Shaker, 2008). On one hand, FTNT faculty feel marginalized, desire respect, lack a peer networking group on campus, and are frustrated by the dearth of role clarity; on the other hand, they find collegiality in their collaborative work and praise the benefits of being part of the academic community (Bergom, Waltman, August, & Hollenshead, 2010).

These contradictions and inconsistencies coexist within FTNT faculty and, as well, within academe. In spite of commentators' and researchers' aforementioned concerns about costs of the turn toward nontenure faculty (and of nontenure faculty themselves)[1], higher education employs more and more of these faculty, entrusting them with an increasing proportion of the work of the academy. Although FTNT faculty are clearly a part of the fabric of their institutions, colleges and universities have yet to reformulate policies and practices to address their promotion, rights, and roles (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009). Institutional response to FTNT faculty is inconsistent and often halfhearted; their institutionalization is

incomplete despite their growing importance (Kezar & Sam, 2009; Shaker, 2008).

Analytical and Theoretical Framework

Thus far, perspectives on FTNT faculty have not addressed academic identity: the ways in which these faculty understand and conceptualize their role in colleges and universities as well as their understandings of their relationships to their institutions. The norms of the faculty profession and institutional politics and practices shape FTNT individual and collective identity, and the incongruities in their experience illustrate a permeating culture of self-doubt and self-questioning. Our focus on occupational and professional identity and "the subjective realities of identities" (Costello, 2005, p. 23) shows how this occurs and then plays out. Thus, we portray the construction and representation of identity—what individuals enact (Goffman, 1959) in their academic workplaces. Furthermore, we explain how identity is interwoven with what a person does—an occupation—and who a person is—a professional—within an institutional context.

Institutional and Professional Theory

In our analyses, we situate our population within universities—public, researchoriented institutions—and a professional context, where historically, the norms of research, teaching, and service have been institutionalized through the work and identity of tenured and tenure-track faculty. On one hand, academic work and the faculty body have altered in the past decades, particularly from the late 1970s to the mid1990s (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997); on the other, university professors have held fast to long-standing principles and characteristics of a professional identity (Brint, 1994). The university is a powerful instrument for institutionalization of professionalism, both as preparation for the profession and as the site for the practice of the profession.

Inherent in the established faculty profession, and indeed possibly defining it, is its stratified nature, which relies on both institutional type and a hierarchical system of expertise. Furthermore, the profession is characterized by the employment status of its members, such as categories of full-time and part-time; active and emeritus; assistant, associate, and full professor; and tenure and nontenure track (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). These distinctions act as tools for a host of decisions, assumptions, and policies regarding

professorial roles, rights, and responsibilities. They also serve as background for the development and establishment of a professional identity.

Identity Theory

To address the articulated and self-represented academic identity of FTNT faculty, we follow the tradition of identity development and projection in cultural worlds (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), which combines individual internal logic and social situations as shaping identity. We focus on identity development and its representation within the context of "historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds'" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 7). For our sample, articulation of identity brings together personal experiences and expectations with the socialcultural environment, specifically, the university, including its structures, norms, and practices. We use the concept of "figured worlds" (Holland et al., 1998) to frame the university setting for our population. Figured worlds is a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 53). Figured worlds is not a dissimilar concept to Anderson's (1991) imagined communities, where membership in an abstract community arises from common activities and identification with others who also participate in these activities. In figured worlds, such as colleges and universities, there are ascriptions of meaning attached to both actors and their actions. This would include actors—such as professors, administrators, and students—and actions, such as teaching, research, and service. Actors themselves have meaning and their connections and associations to the figured world are both ascribed by others and self-defined. We draw on the concept of "positionality" (Holland et al., 1998) to place our population within their figured worlds with respect to the status and roles accorded to them. To clarify the ways that members of our population define and explain themselves within the context of their figured, institutional environment, we turn to the concept of "selfauthoring" (Holland et al., 1998). Self-authoring reflects the extent to which and the ways in which actors engage in their figured worlds and the positions they take within those worlds. It is this authoring—in the ways that our faculty population represents their actions and engagement with or relationship to their figured worlds—that characterizes agency, the final expression we examine to determine FTNT identity. Traditionally, agency suggests actions that are self-directed, independent, and personally meaningful (Inden, 1990). But within the context of the professions or occupations, where social interactions and

cultural worlds are the norm, agency as traditionally understood may be compromised, bounded, and limited or skewed because of context. That is to say, in an institutional context, the norms of the institution provide a powerful shaper of behaviors, especially those of professionals (Scott, 2001); it is these norms that may place a particular strain on the agency of those on the fringes. Thus, to understand the cultural identity of FTNT faculty, we are obliged to consider not only context—the university, the department, the faculty within the department—but also the self-representations of FTNT faculty themselves. These self-representations are in the form of their narratives of their figured worlds, their positions within these worlds, and their self-authoring of their actions.

Methodology

We use interview data both as text for analysis and as the evidence for self-representation of FTNT faculty in research universities to address the occupational and professional identities of FTNT faculty. Eighteen FTNT faculty members participated in interviews of up to 3 hrs in duration, during the 2007-2008 academic year. All were affiliated with the discipline of English, which has expressed a special and longstanding interest in the roles, responsibilities, and rights of non-tenure-track faculty (Association of Departments of English, 1999; Modern Language Association & Association of Departments of English, 2008). Of the three public institutions in the study, one was a doctoral university, two were research universities, and one was unionized. The English departments that were chosen to participate had a large enough population of FTNT faculty for purposeful sampling to ensure that the participants were diverse in age, past professional experience, and education. We chose to use pseudonyms for the participants. Our purpose was to investigate matters of personal and professional import for these faculty while being mindful of the ethical responsibility of protecting our participants (Mason, 2002) and cognizant of their vulnerabilities.

The interview protocol was structured to draw out the faculty through a series of leading questions and follow-up prompts (Seidman, 2006). This semistructured strategy allowed the interviewer to respond to signals from the participant, enabling a degree of spontaneity in shaping the dialogue and often resulting in responses of considerable detail. This broad approach is effective for the study of identity because the participant details, in narrative form, both self-image and understandings of situated context. Interviews were transcribed and reviewed by the participants, a practice referred to as member checking (Miles & Huberman, 1994), before analysis. Ongoing participant involvement supported accuracy and appropriate interpretation;

it also was meant to foster agency of FTNT faculty. In our first phase of data analysis, we viewed interview transcripts as text wherein the participant provided a self-representation of himself or herself, particularly of his or her professional identity. We endeavored to provide an emic account, which comes from a person within the culture or setting, rather than an etic account laden with observers' biases and perspectives (Erickson, 1986).

To capture the self-representation of FTNT faculty, we relied on the narrative of text, created by these individuals in our conversations with them, and theoretical grounding to make sense of what we heard. For our population of university faculty, narrative analysis highlights individual and collective actions and the meanings of those actions (Laslett, 1999), pointing us toward an understanding of the occupational identity of this group. Narrative analysis addresses the stories constructed by individuals, stories that explain experiences and present-day conditions; and in the performance of the stories, in their telling, the actors construct and project their identities (Riessman, 2002). We used Riessman's (2000) explanation of one tradition of narrative analysis that is based on extended interviews and features detailed transcripts, care for structural features of discourse, attention to narrative created by the interviewer and participant, and a comparative approach.

We analyzed these data following the categories provided by Holland et al. (1998), and we determined which participant data were both congruent with and illustrative of the four domains of identity: figured world, positionality, self-authoring, and agency. Following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), we then used coding combined with conceptualizations to reduce the large data set and created coding forms for each participant's text and interview transcript. Finally, in this phase, we further reduced data by developing a collective coding form (see Table 1).
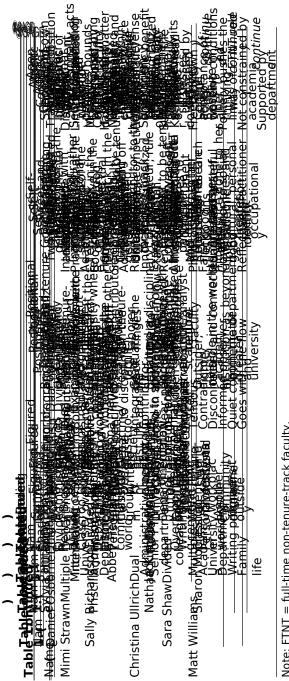
In the second phase of analysis, we relied on several techniques to generate findings. These techniques included clustering, making metaphors, making comparisons and contrasts, counting, locating intervening variables, and finally, making conceptual coherence. We then synthesized our observations of individual participant text to lead us to findings about the group as a whole. To confirm our findings, we identified and took into account outliers and looked for negative evidence, we put forward rival explanations, and above all, we relied on two researchers for analysis: one who developed personal connections and interacted face-to-face with the sample population and one who refrained from any contact with participants. In our conclusions and implications, theories led us to both relate our findings to larger understandings of institutionalism and professionalism and expand theory to encompass the FTNT phenomena.

Findings

The findings address the population as a whole, although in some instances, they pertain to a small portion of our participants; this is made clear in the text. The objective is to present findings that illuminate the self-representations of FTNT faculty and lead to knowledge about their professional and occupational identity.

Figured Worlds of FTNT Faculty

Through interpretation of their environment, interactions, and observations, individuals create the figured worlds that they inhabit (Holland et al., 1998). These worlds are important because they in turn serve as the reference point around which identity is constructed. The FTNT faculty worlds expressed in this study are neither singular nor homogenous; more aptly, they are characterized as divided between several units or fields or communities. These are discipline, program, department, and the university. Moreover, their worlds are rarely aligned with the larger intellectual community

1468

1469

1470

1471

Note: FTNT = full-time non-tenure-track faculty.

1472

beyond the university, such as national associations or global, traditional disciplines. For several of these faculty, the figured world is characterized by dissonance, where one set of values or norms is not congruent with another. For example, when one figured world is the classroom, where interactions with students are directed by the FTNT faculty and where teaching is the key valued behavior, another is the department, where tenure-track faculty dominate and where research and publication are the valued activities. Abbey Heynen, although non–tenure track, wants to participate in the world of tenure-track faculty.

> I want to publish; I want to be involved in the discipline's conversation. I'm really interested in that kind of intellectual world, gathering and producing of material that goes on outside the classroom. . . . I want to move toward publication and kind of add my voice to the conversation.

Although her position is not a tenure-track one, she functions as if it were at least "a position that requires the traditional triangle of activities." Yet her daily, weekly, and monthly work is teaching.

In these figured worlds of FTNT faculty, personal histories and daily experiences are connected to their occupations. Jason Busch teaches composition but he was trained as a linguist, a subject he does not teach. "I was trained as a teacher of English. . . . All my training was in applied linguistics, which is teaching classes in anything related to English. . . . It's my profession; it's what I was trained to do." He is "stuck" in a non-tenure-track job. "I try to separate my sorrows of not being where I am supposed to be at this time of my life [nearing retirement]. I should be at least an associate or a full professor somewhere."

Unlike Jason and Abbey, Sylvia Hutchins does not portray her world as divided, in part because that world is an administrative one, where she directs the writing program, is engaged across the university, and is not oriented solely to teaching.

> I like communicating with faculty across the university. . . . I'm now corresponding with assistant and associate deans from the various colleges, particularly since . . . all students coming to the university take a composition course. . . . We're directly involved with the curriculum from all of the colleges.

In this world, Sylvia experiences greater coherence and unity in her professional identity; that is, her world of work, her level of authority, and her abilities are matched.

For most, it is not simply that divisions between figured worlds are nested within an English departmental context and thus are singular for FTNT faculty in English, but the distinctions are between occupational status—tenure track and non–tenure track— and between personal life and professional life. Robert Butiste, although he has grown into acceptance of his non-tenure-track status, continues with some lingering concerns about his low-status position. "I was dissatisfied with my status, to some extent, as a non-tenure-track person. . . . I felt like . . . my abilities . . . [were] better than what they appear to reflect, and I think that's still a concern that I have to some extent now." Sally Richardson walks a line between her disciplinary community and her family life, including children. But she also exists in a temporal world of her past experiences, which lead her to wonder if how she is treated is a consequence of her gender. Nathan King functions within two distinct worlds: one his teaching domain as a composition instructor and the other his creative writing persona.

Finally, Matt Williams identifies several worlds as his own from the larger one of academia generally; his own university; his English department; the writing program, nested within the English department; and last, his family life. These several figured worlds, exemplified by Matt in the extreme, point to the problematic nature of the figured worlds of all classes of FTNT faculty. Their level and degree of integration into these worlds are variable, and likely this variability affects the roles the faculty play in their professional lives.

Positionality

As an individual's figured world emerges through his or her narrative of experience, so too does his or her perspective on a position inside that world (Holland et al., 1998). When the department is primary among their figured worlds, FTNT faculty are outsiders: They describe themselves as foreigners, detached observers, members of a counterculture. This may be because they are excluded by virtue of their assigned work and role and also because FTNT faculty hold back from becoming too deeply invested. Both behaviors are evident in the articulations of Henry Brosseau.

> I essentially passed on using the [voting] franchise this year because I knew my life was too up in the air, and I wouldn't be going to meetings. . . . Where I have a direct role or have some authority, then I might speak to that. . . . Most of the

> agenda items are regarding curricular development in upper-
> division classes that do not pertain to me, and in many cases
> where I don't have enough expertise or background in to
> comment on.

Henry and his peers labor in less-than-ideal circumstances in their
department of affiliation (e.g., many course preparations, large
numbers of students, and a substantial grading load). Indeed, the
more central the department is to their identified world of work,
the more FTNT faculty see themselves as subalterns.

Those whose figured world is more connected to students and
classroom teaching, or alternately, those with administrative roles,
such as Sylvia Hutchins, represent themselves as centrally or
prominently positioned as insiders; they are leaders and active,
dedicated participants. Additionally, those with substantial
institutional experience possess cultural capital, which establishes
them as significant players within the institution. They are more
integrated and more aligned with their figured worlds, with less
stress and greater satisfaction than other FTNT faculty (and
sometimes less empathy toward and little identification with the
struggles of the less adjusted FTNT faculty). Mimi Strawn
demonstrates that FTNT perspectives can change over time and
can vary depending on shifting positionality and figured worlds; as
well, she suggests that identity can be strengthened through
involvement and self-determination. "I can remember when I
thought that department meetings did not involve me at all. . . . I
don't think that's the case now. . . . You can choose to get
involved; you can choose to sit on committees; you can choose not
to." During the periods of her university career where teaching
writing was her primary role, she thought of herself as abused
although competent in her world of teaching. "I could make myself
miserable and be upset . . .
or I could simply accept that as part of the job and flourish in my
own little corner."

Mimi represents herself as gaining confidence by providing a
crucial service to her colleagues and through new responsibilities.

> One of the neat things about the [administrative] job is that
> you get to create the job; you get to choose what projects
> that you're going to take on during the year. . . . I think I'm in
> a position to provide professional development for a lot of
> faculty. . . . I've developed administrative skills. I've
> developed connections on campus.

There are those exceptions who combine both insider and outsider roles, occupying two or more distinct worlds, such as Jack Hilton, where in one, they are detached, as Jack is from his department, and in the other, they are integral players, as Jack is with his students in the classroom.

Self-Authoring

Individuals author themselves—that is, they present themselves in particular ways— when they reflect on and share from their experiences (Holland et al., 1998). These representations reveal how they see themselves as well as how they want to be seen by others. The majority (10/18) of FTNT faculty in our sample represent themselves with incoherent or conflictive identities. Generally, they are divided selves, chameleonlike: They both accept and reject aspects of their professional roles and status, they live in the present but also in a future that is projected as better than the present, and they have to adjust to be appropriately FTNT. Daniel Osborne views himself as a literature person who teaches composition. He authors himself with a future identity as a teacher, which he contrasts to his present detached role as a non-tenure-track writing instructor at a research university. "I think I would like to be working with students either in a high school or a college as a teacher, an advisor, like student services, like a writing center director kind of position." Charlotte Brown occupies dual roles in her department. "[My] role as a member of the department . . . kind of goes back and forth between a participant and an observer." Her professional role, however, is only an aspect of her identity.

> I don't exactly feel that my work defines me either. I have a lot of other areas of my life that are important to me, so I'm not clinging to it as . . . who I am. It's what I do, but it's not who I am.

Others play particular roles that serve to make their identities more consistent with self-understandings—joker and trickster, team player, adapter, good citizen—and they shape their jobs to their personalities and predispositions and vice versa. In Christina Ulrich's service and administrative roles, she voices her strongly held views, and in the classroom, she perceives herself as an innovator and risk taker.

> I'm kind of well known for being a trouble maker. . . . I'm kind of notorious for [standing up for faculty and representing

faculty] but in a good way. . . . [I am] somebody who's willing to take on even the upper echelons of administration to fight for what faculty should have or should know.

Jack Hilton fashions himself as a trickster figure, much like the magician Houdini, an escape artist. "When it's the first meeting of the school [year] I'm supposed to go. I know this is a bad thing to say, but I try to sit in the back so I can just crawl out." Mitch Hamilton sees his on-campus involvement and citizenship as extensions of his personal identity.

I've been an activist, a political activist all my life, so committee work comes as second nature to me. . . . I think because I've allowed myself to spread out throughout the university.

In the ways that the participants author themselves is a thread of discontent with their current condition, which causes them to reimagine themselves across time or within academe. None fashions himself or herself as a scholar or researcher, but several associate themselves with intellectual values, and several are published writers. A few shape themselves around a preferred future and much of this is wish fulfillment behavior. This "dreaming" permits them to cope with the present, and although they may dislike present conditions, these conditions become tolerable with a fantasy future. Several represent themselves as ill fit for the positions they occupy, preferring a tenure-track literature or creative writing position rather than the FTNT appointment in composition.

As university instructors or professors, the large majority view themselves as teachers—either as teachers who have a subject orientation, such as writing, or as teachers who are trying to develop students generally, or as teachers contributing to the social good for all. Pam Commons was both teacher and writer and among those who expressed the three perspectives.

I really did want a job where I was helping people. . . . I want [the students] to learn. . . . I do want to know that when my students leave this . . . my classroom, that they . . . are on their way to being confident communicators.

Sara Shaw found a spiritual component in the helping aspect of her work. "So I see a lot of what I do in my classroom and my job as ministry," she said. In this domain— teaching students—FTNT faculty present themselves as confident, effective, and personally

rewarded. They author themselves, without exception, as satisfied and skillful master teachers with a great deal to contribute and a near-unwavering dedication to their craft.

Hesitation in offering self-definitions as professionals stems from the demanding workload and the nontenure appointment's lack of ultimate job security vis-à-vis tenure; the two are major themes that affect self-authoring. Mitch Hamilton notes that "[FTNT English faculty] are a dime a dozen." "You simply are expendable," said Sharon Moore. Although their contracts may have been tenuous in duration, on the basis of their workload and labor concerns, the FTNT positions are unlikely to be cut for the lack of teaching work or for a failure to complete the assigned tasks. Those who emphasize workload and/or their lack of permanency approach their profession as an occupation or a job and project themselves as workers. Priscilla Johnson spoke of the workload more than seven times and noted that she, her FTNT colleagues, and their work "are kind of off the radar to a certain extent . . . because they would never do anything like [teach four courses per quarter] as tenure track faculty," thereby setting forth an undeniable contrast between tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty and unintentionally differentiating between the professionals and the nonprofessionals. Because FTNT faculty represent themselves more as employees than as stakeholders in their institutions, their actions are most often limited by their self-authoring, determined by their positionality, and shaped within the context of their figured worlds.

Agency

Agency is an individual's willingness and capacity to take action within a given context and in light of his or her positionality in that context. Actions that are selfdirected, independent, and personally meaningful (Inden, 1990) are both bounded and limited within institutions where professional norms shape social behaviors. This is especially the case for FTNT faculty, who are a subclass subordinate to tenure-track faculty, and thus agency is primarily reserved for actions that fall outside of the traditional purview of tenure-track faculty. Only 2 of the 18 of the FTNT faculty sample suggest unbounded agency: One represents himself as a nonconformist, a radical, and a trickster figure; the other projects himself as full of confidence, without constraints and able to rise above the fray. Jack Hilton characterizes himself as a jester to facilitate student learning and effect change.

> I walk in and just tell them, "Welcome to a semester in hell; I'm Satan, your tour guide. I'm going to take you to the very depths of hell, and we're going to have fun." . . . I tell them, whatever they're for, I'm absolutely against, and they might as well get used to it. . . . I enjoy it; to me it's fun.

Matt Williams, in some contrast to most other FTNT faculty, recognizes and accepts the limitations of his formal institutional position but indicates he can transcend these limitations.

> I think it's possible for one, who's not afraid of the limits . . . to . . . thrive here in positive ways. . . . I think the challenges arise out of the definition of the position, and that definition sets its limits, and those limits themselves create challenges. But here I have found room to work within those limits and make the most of what's available.

The others are bounded in part by the institution's structures—particularly, their non-tenure-track status and role—and in part by their own sense of self within the world. One aspect of their agency is their view that they can and may leave the job and the institution—to locate another similar job, attain a tenure-track job, or retire. Thus, although they express their potential capacity to leave, they may concomitantly see little need to act in the interim. Pam Commons, who has been at her university for almost two decades, recognizes that her actions, not the institution's, are now front and center if she wants to enact another identity.

> I could pursue other things . . . Am I going to stay? Am I going to go on and get another degree and hopefully continue a job as an educator, or move on to some other type of job altogether. And I can't—I honestly can't tell you. It's been a matter of great anxiety for me in the last couple of years.

The boundaries for behaviors require some individuals to resort to unusual exercises of agency. These include enacting agency through imagination, whereby the individual connects to a culturally and socially preferred world via his or her mind's eye (Anderson, 1991), or by play and improvisation (Holland et al., 1998), whereby one alters his or her figured world or dreams a figured world in the future where one does exercise agency. Several participants take this approach.

Between creatively constructed agency and those with unbounded freedom to act are FTNT faculty who express more moderated levels of agency. The positionality of some allows them

a greater sense of self-direction. Through his involvement with the library and athletics and long institutional history as a faculty member and alumnus, Mitch Hamilton possesses social connectivity, which enables him to act independently. Similarly, Christina Ullrich pushes the boundaries of what FTNT faculty can do by serving on committees at the university's highest levels and through sharing her teaching expertise. Her expressions of agency are typically directed to helping others and standing up for her FTNT peers. On the whole, in their classrooms, FTNT faculty portray themselves as free to teach how, although not what, they see fit and provide the educational experience they deem most beneficial and suitable for their students.

Conclusions

Both the scholarly literature and empirical investigations such as ours suggest that FTNT faculty are not exactly professionals, nor are they an occupational class similar to full-time tenure-track faculty. Professional theory (Brint, 1994; Krause, 1996) does not apply neatly to FTNT faculty. Although this is also the case for faculty at different institutional types, such as community colleges (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006) and likely low-status 4-year colleges (Clark, 1987) and even unionized institutions (Rhoades, 1998), the incongruity is more apparent with FTNT faculty at universities. Although this group has some trappings of professional university faculty, especially high levels of education and training, there are voids in several important areas, such as identification with a body of experts in the faculty's field nationally and internationally and the enabling structures to pursue their intellectual interests and selfmonitor their work as well as select their own colleagues. In part, they are managed professionals (Rhoades, 1998); but they are also more an occupational class than a professional body, given the evidence we amass in this investigation.

Results of our analysis offer two distinct understandings of this FTNT faculty. The following observations are made with the caveat that the identity of FTNT faculty in disciplines other than English and working at other institutional types than included in this study may vary. First, the self-doubt and inconsistent identities that are apparent from the ongoing shifts in their self-authoring and positionality suggest that this faculty group is burdened with connotations simultaneously associated with the nontenure label and out of place in traditional conceptions of a professional identity for faculty. Identity for FTNT faculty suggests a product that is the result of personal characteristics and the institutionalization of

university practices and status. As is clear from the findings, most of the participants take on different characteristics in different settings, making the professional identity of FTNT faculty dualistic at best: In the classroom and with students, they have practice identities as expert teachers; in interactions with tenured faculty, FTNT faculty become subalterns as their placement on the academic hierarchy diminishes their influence and power within their figured world. In this world, the university is a professional bureaucracy, where high-status professionals or professors set the norms on the basis of research traditions, which largely exclude FTNT faculty. In the world of their classrooms, however, their low institutional status matters little, because that position is of little import or visibility to their students.

FTNT faculty possess a "hybrid" identity. This blended identity is expressed by the participants in the distance they maintain from their institutions; few appear to be fully comfortable with their institution and their placement within it as well as their formal professional designations. Instead, by keeping one foot inside the door and one foot outside, the participants maintain a figured world aside from the tenure setting. Inevitably, however, their concerns about status and equity interrupt even this selfcreated context. Unease about their nontenure status becomes a barrier to their agency:

The nontenure identifier is inescapable and overshadows the quality of their contributions. Although a majority express some sense of job protection and security, few admit to activities that test that security. By holding back from pursuing their concerns, FTNT faculty constrain both their agency and their professional identity.

Their dualistic self-representations and ongoing lack of agency suggest that FTNT faculty are without sufficient autonomy for professionals—they are limited in their development by their inability to control their own destiny—and their principal work, teaching, is undervalued by the academy. Thus, FTNT faculty cannot—and cannot be expected to—take on a professional identity wholesale. Both collectively and individually, they express satisfaction with their daily work and a sense of considerable independence in their self-representations within particular contexts and in certain conditions. We suggest that these expressions are the result of (a) individual preferences mediated by personal characteristics and organizational characteristics of their workplaces and (b) choices made in their personal career development. Yet their institutional experiences negate their

development as professionals, and their occupational conditions are viewed as beyond their control.

Our second understanding is that a substantial portion of those who are FTNT experience a condition of dissonance (Costello, 2005) in an occupation in which the work is satisfying but the conditions are not. Although teaching matches their tastes, the non-tenure-track role does not match their aspirations. Most in our sample found their way to their current roles in accidental fashion, or as a substitute for a tenure-track position, or expecting or hoping that they would be teaching in another genre. Essentially mired in their institutional positions, these faculty focus on the occupation of teaching rather than the role of professor. Only a limited group of the participants embrace (or dare to explore) the professional opportunities that their institutions offered. One consequence is that they are as unlikely to commit to their institution as their institution is unlikely to commit to them. As a result, the majority move through their days with short-term occupational perspectives—often 1 year at a time or aligned with their contract duration. Alternately, they dream about a future where their aspirations can be fulfilled—as tenure-track faculty, as professional writers, or as retired. This technique allows them to reflect on larger concerns but only occasionally. If they reflect on their situated context too often or too deeply, they could compromise personal satisfaction and fulfillment, specifically, their achievements through self-managing their figured world.

Implications for Practice

From the findings and our two understandings, if there is value in universities' having an academic body of professionals and in moving teaching and learning to a more central position within institutional functions, then progress must be made in the development of a professional identity for FTNT faculty, one that can diminish their lack of agency. The institutionalization of this faculty body is a critical beginning to this process, as evidenced by the problem of the participants' shifting positionality and chameleonlike qualities. Institutions can embark on this project in a variety of ways that take into account their own needs as well as public perceptions about higher education's priorities. These include providing greater authority for FTNT faculty in curriculum and instruction decisions; enhanced integration into decision making in departmental business and appropriate opportunities to lead, administer, and serve; and fewer divisions in institutional opportunities for research support and professional development

as well as less status differentiation between those whose primary responsibilities are teaching and those whose primary responsibilities also include research. Divisions of labor should not mean status divisions. Moreover, the study participants' internal struggles evidenced the depth and cost of the negative associations affiliated with the nomenclature of the nontenure track—including the terms *non-tenure-track* and *contingent*. This could be remedied through the creation of more inclusive and respectful terminology. Creativity in naming the positions may also include more thoughtful and equitable ways of framing these roles when it comes to salary, job security, and appointment policies and structures, all additional hurdles for professionalizing FTNT faculty. Although their job functions are different from tenure-track faculty, and their salaries and employment contracts will differ as well, the disparities cannot be in extremis so that faculty view themselves as subalterns as many did in this study. Salaries that are modeled on a pro rata scheme, contracts that suggest more than a temporary relationship, and equitable promotion and recognition structures would close the gap that separates FTNT faculty from their tenure-track colleagues. Resources mapping out promising practices are readily available from organizations such as the American Association of University Professors, the New Faculty Majority, and the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, as are a set of recommendations from scholars and practitioners (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Gappa et al., 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2009; Shaker, 2008).

FTNT faculty themselves also have the power to change their own destiny; a reminder of this seems fitting, given that their subaltern position led many of the participants to lose track of their own agency. Although we could suggest that they are entitled to a "redo," a more reasonable recommendation is that FTNT faculty either make the best of their employment conditions and embrace their occupational roles or walk away from the distress they encounter and look for more satisfying positions. Faced with such an either-or prospect, it is likely that most, if they find the work as fulfilling as those in this study do, will continue through their current circumstances. This may entail seeking alternate roles in their universities through participation in service, administration, and governance. FTNT faculty could fill disciplinary niches, for example, becoming experts in teaching online and with technology or honing in on departmental service needs. In doing so, individual FTNT faculty members will be invaluable and irreplaceable as well as organizationally influential—as a select few in this study were through their enhanced roles and participation. Furthermore, their

making the best of the situation could involve refusing to be invisible and advocating for change. This may come through involvement with existing associations for faculty or non-tenure-track faculty or establishing new campus-based associations or support structures for the occupation, where the interests, concerns, and conditions of FTNT faculty can be addressed. Collective action on university campuses will allow FTNT faculty to work together to institutionalize their roles in the academic operations of their universities.

Solutions to the identity problems of FTNT are in no way one-sided. Policy changes and the "official" integration of FTNT faculty into the cultural framework would solidify their position within organizational life. This in turn would enable those who choose to continue as, or join the ranks of, FTNT faculty to develop and legitimize their professional status. Without greater role legitimacy, not only will FTNT faculty maintain a problematic professional identity, but also teaching in the academy is unlikely to advance as a valued practice. Ultimately, our universities and students could suffer the consequences.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Note

1. Recent research has now begun to call into question the prevailing notion that tenure-track teaching quality, classroom practices, and student outcomes are invariably better than those of nontenure faculty (Garver, Shaker, Nelson-Laird, & Palmer, 2010; Jaeger & Eagan, 2010).

References

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York, NY: Verso.

Association of Departments of English. (1999). Report of the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing. *ADE Bulletin*, *122*, 3-26.

Baldwin, R. G., & Chronister, J. L. (2001). *Teaching without tenure: Policies and practices for a new era*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bergom, I., Waltman, J., August, L., & Hollenshead, C. (2010). Academic researchers speak. *Change*, *42*(2), 45-49.

Bland, C., Center, B. A., Finstad, D. A., Risbey, K. R., & Staples, J. (2006). The impact of appointment type on the productivity and commitment of full-time faculty in research and doctoral institutions. *Journal of Higher Education*, *77*(1), 89-121.

Brint, S. (1994). *In an age of experts: The changing role of professionals in politics and public life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chronicle of Higher Education. (2010). *Almanac issue, 2010-11*. Washington, DC: Author.

Clark, B. (1987). *The academic life: small worlds, different worlds*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Costello, C. Y. (2005). *Professional identity crisis: Race, class, gender, and success at professional schools*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Cross, J. G., & Goldenberg, E. N. (2009). *Off-track profs: Nontenured teachers in higher education*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ehrenberg, R. G., & Zhang, L. (2005). Do tenured and tenure-track faculty matter? *Journal of Human Resources*, *40*(3), 647-659.

Eisenberg, P. (2010, June 29). The "untouchables" of American higher education. *Huffington Post.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pablo-eisenberg/the-untouchables-ofameri_b_629815.html

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Gappa, J., Austin, A., & Trice, A. (2007). *Rethinking faculty work: Higher education's strategic imperative*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Garver, A., Shaker, G., Nelson-Laird, T., & Palmer, M. (2010, October). *Effective teaching among nontenure-track faculty: How discipline matters*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network, Saint Louis, MO.

Goffman, I. (1959). *The presentation self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Holland, D. C., Lachicotte, W., Jr., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Inden, R. (1990). *India*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Jaeger, A. J., & Eagan, M. K. (2010). Examining retention and contingent faculty use in a state system of public higher education. *Educational Policy*, *24*(4), 1-31.

Jensen, J. D. (1999). Job satisfaction of full-time tenured/tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty at the University of Minnesota Duluth. *Dissertation Abstracts International.* (UMI No. 9924649)

June, A. W. (2009, October 18). Full-time instructors shoulder the same burdens that part-timers do. *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Full-TimeInstructors-Shoulder/48841/

Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2009, November). *Institutionalizing equitable policies and practices for contingent faculty*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Vancouver, BC.

Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2011). Understanding non-tenure-track faculty: New assumptions and theories for conceptualizing behavior. American Behavioral Scientist, 55(11), 1419–1442.

Krause, E. A. (1996). *Death of the guilds: Professions, states, and the advance of capitalism, 1930 to the present.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Laslett, B. (1999). Personal narratives as sociology. *Contemporary Sociology*, *28*(4), 391-401.

Levin, J. S., Kater, S., & Wagoner, R. (2006). Community college faculty: At work in the new economy. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levin, J. S., Shaker, G. G., & Wagoner, R. (2011). Post-neoliberalism: The professional identity of faculty off the tenure-track. In K. Kempner, S. Marginson, I. Ordorika, & B. Pusser (Eds.), *Universities and the public sphere: Knowledge creation and state building in the era of globalization.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Marginson, S., & Considine, M. (2000). *The enterprise university: Power, governance and reinvention in Australia*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Modern Language Association & Association of Departments of English. (2008). *Education in the balance: A report on the academic workforce in English*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved from http://www.mla.org/report_aw

Rhoades, G. (1998). *Managed professionals: Unionized faculty and restructuring academic labor*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Riessman, C. (2000). *Analysis of personal narratives*. Unpublished manuscript, Boston, MA.

Riessman, C. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 695-710). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schuster, J. K., & Finkelstein, M. J. (2006). *The American faculty: The restructuring of academic work and careers*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Scott, R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Shaker, G. G. (2008). *Off the track: The full-time nontenure-track faculty experience in English* (PhD dissertation). Indiana University, Bloomington. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses @ CIC Institutions. (Publication No. AAT 3387054)

Slaughter, S., & Leslie, L. (1997). *Academic capitalism, politics, policies, and the entrepreneurial university*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Slaughter, S., & Rhoades, G. (2004). *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state, and higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Umbach, P. D. (2007). How effective are they? Exploring the impact of contingent faculty on undergraduate education. *Review of Higher Education*, *30*(2), 91-123.

Bios

John S. Levin is a professor and dean of the Graduate School of Education, University of California, Riverside, as well as the Bank of America Professor of Education Leadership. He is the author of several books on community colleges, and his work has addressed nontraditional students, faculty, organization, and administration as well as influences of globalization and neoliberalism on higher education. A revised edition of his work *Community College Faculty: At Work in the New Economy* will be published in 2011. His current research addresses college and university faculty work and professional identity.

Genevieve G. Shaker is an assistant professor of philanthropic studies at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University and Director of Communications and Creative Services in the School of Liberal Arts at the Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. Her dissertation research on full-time non-tenure-track faculty was recognized by the Association for the Study of Higher Education as the 2009 Bobby Wright Dissertation of the Year and by the Professional and Organizational Development Network with the Robert J. Menges Award. Her present research centers on the intersections between philanthropic action, concepts, and the professoriate.