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Elevating the voices of community college faculty: A phenomenological study of community college work

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ELEVATING THE VOICES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE WORK

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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August 2021

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my dad. He was a true believer in the power of education and my love for learning from a young age grew exponentially because of him. He passed away during the first year of my doctoral program and although he did not get to see me complete my degree, I hope I have made him proud.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my husband, Jeff, who never grew frustrated when I would sneak away into my office at every spare moment to write just one more sentence. Thank you for being such a supportive partner through this degree and always.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my son, Miles. Mom loves you.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty described their lived experiences concerning their work. Specifically, the study examined faculty work in terms of teaching, service, and other scholarly work. A phenomenological approach was taken to understand the individuals' shared experience of being faculty at a community college. Data was gathered through eight individual virtual, semi-structured interviews with unlimited-full time faculty who were recruited via email from a faculty union representative on their campus. All the participants within the study were from community colleges in the Minnesota State system. Participants were assigned numbers to ensure anonymity in the interviews. This study utilized Judge, Locke & Durham's (1997) Core Self-Evaluations Theory as a theoretical framework that guided the data collection and analysis. Although this theory provided the researcher with concepts to look for, the analysis of the data was not constrained or limited by this framework. The findings of the study provide insight, through their own voices, into the lived experiences of community college faculty. The findings also inform recommendations for actions included in the study.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

According to a National Center for Educational Statistics report, 8.7 million undergraduates were enrolled year-round in public two-year colleges in 2016-2017. As a comparison, four-year institutions had 10.5 million undergraduates enrolled, which means that in the fall of 2017, 34% of all undergraduates in the United States attended public two-year colleges (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2018). Simply put, in the United States, for a large percentage of college students, often low-income and students of color, their first foray into higher education is into classrooms staffed by community college faculty (Baum & Kurose, 2012). Further, because of the largely non-residential population and the rise of online learning, many community college students “chiefly interact with their instructors above all others at their college. As a result, many community college faculty play a pivotal role in shaping the higher education and life trajectories of their students” (Thirolf, 2015, p. 1).

Even though a large number of students in the United States start in community colleges, the research about such institutions has been minimal. “At best, community college faculty are ignored in literature about faculty and at worst, the literature perpetuates negative stereotypes about them” (Twombly & Townsend, 2007, p. 3). Although more research is emerging about faculty work at community colleges, the larger body of research often groups community college faculty in with four-year faculty or uses the community college faculty merely as a comparison group when discussing their four-year counterparts. Further, “even when these books do not engage in specific comparisons, but provide baseline data on community college faculty, their authors seldom delve into the nature of faculty work lives at community colleges in any great depth” (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, p. 8).

In a Chronicle of Higher Education article (2014), Townsend and Bradbury noted that in national policy meetings, “the absence of any apparent interest in faculty members, crucial players in the postsecondary education, seems remarkable if those efforts are intended to genuinely improve the quality of education for students and society” (p. 34). When community college faculty do get mentioned in literature, it is often to point out perceived shortcomings with little data or by relying on episodic reports to support those claims. Mellow and Heelan (2015), while calling the community college system in America an “emergent success story,” describe the very faculty who staff the institutions as people who believe that the focus on student learning is a fad. Mellow and Heelan (2015), go so far as to suggest that “faculty might look forward to the day when they can get back to the much more comfortable position of pronouncing their own thinking rather than trying to determine if their techniques work for their students” (p. 113).

Community college faculty are an integral part of the higher education landscape in this country that is often overlooked, and as Townsend and Twombly (2007) suggest, “undervalued.” Why is it that community college faculty, though serving a massive number of students across the country, are little studied and understood? How do community college faculty view their work? How do they describe, in their own words, their experiences in the profession? All of these questions beg answers. Exploration of community college faculty and the ways in which they experience and describe their work is a critical component to building a better understanding of not only the faculty and who succeeds at the job, but also the institutional mindset towards this work and ultimately how it effects the students who attend these intuitions. How can institutions support faculty if they do not understand them?

Using Core Self-Evaluation Theory (Judge et al., 1997) as a theoretical guide, this study addresses gaps in the existing literature and answers some of the previously posed questions. Not only does this study explore how community college faculty describe their work within the three tenets of teaching, service, and scholarly work, it also builds deeper understanding about faculty feelings towards those three tenets using the CSE sub traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability.

A substantial reason for selection of this dissertation topic was the researcher's personal interest in elevating the voices of community college faculty. As a community college instructor, the researcher has often felt her work to be misunderstood and community college as an institution to be undervalued. One of the most gratifying experiences for a community college instructor is attending graduation each year where students, who "would not otherwise have had a chance to pursue higher education or vocational training demonstrate and are recognized for achieving goals they and their families might only have dreamed to accomplish" (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. xix). The work that is being done in these community colleges by the faculty have made real and meaningful differences in the lives of millions of students in the United States and understanding their work is a powerful tool for the success of community colleges as well as for the validity of the profession of community college educator.

Theoretical Perspective

Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that theoretical orientations provide "a lens through which to view the needs of participants and communities in study" (p. 18). Further, Krathwohl (1998) notes that when a study is able to "contribute to explanations or significant ideas, when it modifies, contradicts or extends them in some way, it multiplies its impact" (p. 84). The goal of

this study was to use Core Self Evaluation as a theoretical lens to extend the knowledge about community college faculty.

Core self-evaluation theory (CSE) (Judge et al., 1997) was used to inform the study. CSE asserts, “a key characteristic that differentiates people from one another is the fundamental evaluations we make about ourselves and how we relate to our environment. These fundamental beliefs are called core self-evaluations” (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011, p. 332). Four closely related characteristics, which have been shown to be highly correlated, are used as the guiding sub-traits for CSE: self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability. Research has shown that “these four characteristics show up as a single construct, with much shared variance across measures” (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011, p. 332), which means that examining these four combined sub traits has strong implications for determining things such as job attitudes, motivation, performance, and career success. Although this study does not measure these sub traits in a quantitative fashion, the four characteristics of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability, which make up an individual’s core self-evaluation (CSE) will serve to guide the questions in this qualitative phenomenological research.

Phenomenology can be described as “a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 26). When using a phenomenological approach, the focus is on “describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). By using a phenomenological approach in this study, the lived experience of being a community college faculty is examined in-depth to form an understanding of the essence of that experience. Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach in which the

“investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon under investigation” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78) will be used.

CSE has traditionally been used in quantitative studies (Chang et al., 2011) and is measured by using a 12-item Corse Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) that was developed by Judge, Erez, Bobo and Thoresen (2003). Initially CSE was used as measure of dispositional relation to job satisfaction, job performance, and career success (Judge, et al., 1998; Judge & Kammeyer-Muller, 2011). CSE was first used in a higher education setting to examine CSE in relation to student GPA (Broucek, 2005) and again to examine the relationship between CSE and approaches to student learning and studying (Starcher, 2015). Extensive use of CSE as a theoretical base and measurement when studying job satisfaction, job performance and life satisfaction, and the relatively recent extension of the theory into the higher education space made it a viable theoretical perspective to anchor this study. Using CSE as a theoretical lens provides the rich detail and scope for studying the lived experiences of community college faculty while extending CSE into the qualitative research space.

While CSE was first imagined as a theory in which quantitative measures are used, this study extends the theory into a qualitative space. Doing so provides rich and detailed descriptions about how faculty feel regarding each measure (self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability) when it comes to the three tenets of faculty work: teaching, service, and scholarly work. Using CSE as the basis in which to examine the lived experience of community college faculty provides a rich description of the phenomenon. CSE theory provided the lens through which to construct interview questions and provided concepts to look for but did not constrain or limit the analysis.

Need for the Study

Exploring this topic is to address several gaps that exist within the current research on community college faculty. As previously noted, research focusing on community college is generally underrepresented in academic literature. Even though a large number of students in the United States start in community colleges, the research about such institutions has been minimal. What research has been conducted has given us insight into topics such as community college faculty during unique pivotal institutional moves such as becoming degree-granting institutions or has been conducted as single intuition research, making it difficult to generalize (Martinez, 2019; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Quantitative research through the now defunct National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (1993, 1999, 2004) gathered valuable information on measurable indicators such as course-load, hours spent teaching and education level of faculty, with community college faculty serving as a portion of the respondents, along with four-year faculty, but again provided solely quantitative data.

A large amount of research exists on the topic of contingent, or adjunct faculty, in the community college system focusing on campus involvement, support from administration, and college completion rates. Because contingent faculty make up such a large percentage of faculty at community colleges – 67% (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016), recent research has shifted its focus to this subset of faculty, however; most research about this group of faculty seems to still be focused on four-year intuitions (Childress, 2019; Fuller, et al., 2017). While research about the new academic majority, contingent faculty, is important in its own right, we cannot forgo examination of the permanent fixtures of the campus: full-time faculty. Research suggests that the full-time faculty of a community college have the most significant impact on the students and the institution. When it comes to completion rates at community colleges, those with higher rates

of full-time faculty members have higher completion rates as compared to community colleges with lower rates of full-time faculty members (Jaschik, 2006, as cited in Landrum, 2009). Rifkin (1998) found that in comparison to full-time faculty, part-time faculty exhibit less involvement in curriculum, instruction, and scholarship; exhibit less autonomy from the institution; and appear less responsible for institutional behavior.

There is also a need to gain a broader understanding of the work community college faculty actually do as the student body they serve continues to become larger and more diverse. At a time when we are becoming increasingly reliant on community colleges to educate our populace, a deeper look at the faculty “enables policy makers and faculty members in other institutional settings to understand the parameters under which community college faculty function. Conversely, lack of knowledge about community college faculty results in reliance of portraits of community colleges and their faculties derived from a comparison with four-year college faculty, an inappropriate comparison” (Townsend & Twombly, 2007, p. 2).

To keep the mission of the community college alive and well, there needs to be more consideration given to those very people who staff the classrooms. Brown et al. (2016) further highlights the absence of community college faculty voices in the existing literature:

The working conditions, characteristics, and concerns of community college faculty largely have been neglected in the higher education literature, even in journals that extensively cover other issues in community colleges, such as student characteristics and learning outcomes, curricula, and articulation agreements. (p. 252).

“The three basic tenets of faculty work include teaching, research and service. The institutional type in which faculty are situated guides the amount of time they dedicate to each

tenet” (Martinez, 2019, p. 113). Teaching is widely accepted as the primary responsibility of community college faculty, both by the community college mission and by sheer number of hours spent performing the task (NSOPF, 2005; Townsend & Twombly, 2007; Cohen et al., 2014). Teaching is defined as “delivering of classroom, blended/hybrid and/or online course instruction. Conducting classroom research and other assessment/evaluation activities” (Minnesota State, 2019). Because of the open-access nature of community colleges and the heavy teaching load assigned to faculty, along with the expectation that teaching be delivered in multiple formats across a diverse student body, more research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of what exactly teaching in these institutions entails.

Townsend and Twombly offer a streamlined description of service for community college faculty: “participating in faculty governance, chairing and serving on departmental and division committees, and doing some administrative tasks” (2007, p. 40). The service component may be the most ambiguous of the three tenets of faculty work, as it can also include categories such as community service both inside and outside of the institution and expectations for service can differ across groups. “Women of color, in particular, face greater demands and expectations for service” (Martinez, 2019). This tenet of faculty service is ripe for exploration to form a more basic understanding of what activities community college faculty are participating in within this tenet.

While Minnesota State (2019) requires faculty to engage in scholarly and other professional development activities, it is not clear exactly what that entails. Scholarship, as the last tenet of faculty work, is not usually required of community college faculty, but even the definition of scholarship is debated. If we simply define scholarship as published research, community college faculty are not significant contributors. However, if we accept, as many

argue we should, a wider and more inclusive definition of scholarly work as laid out by Boyer (1990), which includes the scholarship of teaching, many community college faculty do engage in scholarly work. By talking to faculty about how they define their scholarly work, we can gain a broader understanding of another component of the overall work that faculty are engaged in on community college campuses.

This study explores the three essential activities of teaching, service, and scholarly work through the voices of the community college faculty by specifically focusing on the description of each activity by the faculty. Further, the study explores the CSE facets of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, in each of these three contexts. The data collected provides useful information that can benefit not only the participants, but the larger community college faculty body as well as inform administration within these institutions and within the larger systems. A major premise of this study is that community college faculty themselves hold the key for building a broader understanding of the work they undertake, and by elevating those voices, we can gain a broader understanding of the work in which they engage.

Significance of the Study

This study increases insight into the lived experience of community college faculty, a population that is underrepresented in academic literature. As highlighted by the lack of existing research, little understanding exists of the faculty that staff community colleges across the country, and what research does exist is usually survey-driven, qualitative data which does not honor the complexity of the role of these professionals, specifically in the areas of teaching, service, and scholarly work.

This study has potential to inform future higher education at community colleges in two distinct ways. First, by better understanding faculty, the intuitions can have insight into how to support them, which should ultimately lead to more success for the students. By inquiring directly to the faculty about elements such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability, this study is answering the call put forth by Townsend and Twombly (2008):

We need more research that, like Grubb and Associates (1999), seeks to get beyond the rhetoric that community colleges care for the success of their students and that individuals who teach in community colleges are excellent teachers simply because they teach in teaching colleges. (p. 20)

Second, the faculty themselves can develop a better understanding of the lived experiences of their colleagues and more deeply understand their shared experiences with one another, thus potentially increasing communication and empathy within the faculty body. Broadly, the results from the study may be helpful for other community college systems as they seek to gain a deeper understanding and engagement with the faculty.

The community college has finally arrived in the sense that it is widely acknowledged as an important component of the higher education system. It employs a considerable number of faculty members who must be better understood. At the same time, it is time to reenvision the faculty as more than just failed four-year college and university faculty members. (Townsend & Twombly, 2007, p. 129).

The reenvisioning of faculty that Townsend and Twombly (2007) call for requires that we seek to build a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the current state of the three main tenets of faculty work: teaching, service, and scholarly work.

Research Question

The research question that this study explores is:

How do community college faculty describe their lived experiences concerning their work?

Sub Questions:

How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

Research Design

A phenomenological approach was taken to understand the individuals' shared experience of the phenomenon – being faculty at a community college. The study was conducted specifically focusing on transcendental phenomenology, as described in Creswell and Poth (2018) because the analysis process involves a thorough examination of both experiences of the individual as well as the context of those experiences:

The researcher analyzes data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statement into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textural description of the experiences, a structural description, and a combination of the textual and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78).

This study used interpretive qualitative research methodology. Data was gathered through individual electronic meetings, using semi-structured interviews. Unlimited full-time faculty in

community colleges in the Minnesota State system was the target for the study. Based on guidance from Creswell and Poth (2018), “researchers can interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (p. 79), eight individuals were interviewed for this study. The participant pool consisted of four females and four males across four institutions in the Minnesota State system (one male and one female from each). Community colleges of roughly the same size in student population that are geographically diverse were targeted. Gathering data from colleges of roughly the same size eliminated the outliers of very large institutions as well as very small institutions, which may skew faculty descriptions and perceptions of their lived experiences because of different institutional circumstances. Because the system in which this research took place is comprised of community colleges across the state of Minnesota, it is important to gather voices that span the system geographically rather than have a concentration in more heavily populated areas, which again may skew descriptions and perceptions of the lived experiences.

The researcher sought to include faculty from a variety of disciplines in both liberal arts as well as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines to provide an understanding of the broad experiences of faculty within differing disciplines. Focusing on faculty from a variety of disciplines made it possible to get a general idea if differences in disciplinary areas affects the lived experience of community college faculty.

Assumptions and Limitations

Collecting information through qualitative interviews inherently asserts that the researcher is embracing the idea of multiple realities. “Different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied and the readers of a qualitative study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). When a researcher undertakes a qualitative study, he or she understands that

not everyone (including himself or herself) sees the same reality – people see things and experience events differently, thus constituting ontological assumptions. In this study, the researcher assumed that each community college faculty member expressed honest responses and views based on their individual experiences and realities.

Due to the nature of interaction in the interviews along with the researcher's own position within the community college faculty profession there is an assumption from an epistemological perspective that the interviewer and the interviewee will influence each other in their interactions. To be transparent, the researcher admits to the value-laden nature of the study and her positionality within the research. The researcher is a community college instructor within the system in which the research will be taking place and holds the belief that the work that is done each day at community colleges by the faculty is remarkable given the lack of resources and the overwhelmingly underprepared and diverse students that these institutions serve. The effort to elevate the voices of these faculty is based on the researcher's beliefs that community college faculty are a valuable and unique piece of the higher education landscape in this country.

A final methodological assumption concerns the choice of the Core Self-Evaluation Theory as a methodological framework. Although the framework was not derived in higher education studies, it has been widely used in research regarding job attitudes, motivation, performance, and career success; however, it has not been widely applied to the overall lived experiences of community college faculty. Thus, although this framework will provide the researcher concepts to look for, the analysis of the data will not be constrained by them.

Delimitations

Delimitations for the research study were established prior to the research study implementation. Delimitations and limitations help to “establish the boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications inherent in every study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 147). These delimitations include:

1. The study is delimited to one community college system in the country – Minnesota State, thus the results will not be generalizable to all community college faculty.
2. The study relies on interviews that only capture a small number of community college faculty who all have an unlimited, full-time (UFT) status, thus excluding adjunct or probationary faculty from the study.
3. The participants included in the study are volunteers.

Definition of Terms

Community College: Any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited to award the associates in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree. This this definition includes community colleges that collaborate with the universities to offer baccalaureate degrees but excludes those that confer their own” (Cohen, Brawer & Kisker, 2014).

Faculty: “A faculty member with a full-time assignment for an academic year that carries the assumption that such employment will continue on a full-time basis in subsequent years. To qualify for unlimited full-time status, the faculty member must meet minimum qualifications for the credential field and successfully complete probationary status” (MSCF Master Agreement, 2019-2021).

Minnesota State: “Consists of 20 colleges and 7 universities with 54 campuses throughout the state (of Minnesota) and offers over 4,000 programs” (Minnesota State, 2020).

Teaching: Delivering of classroom, blended/hybrid and/or online course instruction. Conducting classroom research and other assessment/evaluation activities (Minnesota State, 2019).

Scholarly work: Engage in scholarly and other professional development activities (Minnesota State, 2019).

Service: Department and college curriculum development. College-wide initiatives. Participate in department accreditation and review. Mentor and advise students (Minnesota State, 2019).

Summary

Chapter One provided the reader with a brief overview of the study including background information, the need and significance for and of the study, the research question, and limitations and assumptions of the study. A theoretical framework that serves as a lens for the researcher was described, along with the methodology of the study including an overview of the participants and provided key definitions. The next chapter (Chapter 2), the Literature Review, provides examination and synthesis of historic and current scholarly literature on the concepts of community colleges, students, faculty, teaching, service to the college, and scholarly work. It also provides a greater understanding of the theoretical perspective that was used to inform the research. In Chapter Three, the research methods used to carry out this study are described in detail. Chapter Four focuses on the findings of the study, while Chapter Five summarizes the research, reviews the process the researcher followed to conduct the study, as well as provides recommendations for further study. Lastly, a bibliography and appendix conclude the study.

.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study aims to address gaps in the existing literature to explore how community college faculty describe their work within the three components of teaching, service and scholarly work while also building a deeper understanding of how faculty feel about those three components through the framework of Core Self-Evaluation Theory (CSE). By using CSE as lens to examine this phenomenon, we can unearth attitudes and feelings the faculty hold, using the defined and clear subtraits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability as a guide.

The purpose of Chapter Two is to review, synthesize, summarize, and critique the published literature on a variety of topics that pertain to this study. Additionally, the literature review seeks to demonstrate what is known, what is not known, and provide further explanation about how this study will expand the knowledge base about community college faculty and the work in which they perform.

Through previous, largely quantitative, research much is known about community college faculty in terms of the characteristics of the activities in which they engage and the varying institutions and student bodies whom they serve. Community college faculty spend a great deal of time engrossed in teaching activities, often to largely underprepared students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Cohen, et al., 2014). Community college faculty engage in various forms of service and in general, do not contribute substantially to traditionally defined scholarly research (NSOPF, 2005).

The literature review first provides the process used to search for existing research surrounding Core Self-Evaluation Theory (CSE) and the three primary components of community college faculty work: teaching, service, and scholarly work. Next, the theoretical framework of CSE, which was used to inform the study, is described along with an overview of CSE's use in previous studies, specifically pertaining to higher education. Following the theoretical framework, a thorough examination of the literature about the community college as an institution is conducted, including the placement of community colleges in U.S. higher education landscape, the historical context of community colleges, and the current role of community colleges. Next the literature review turns to community college students and to the primary focus of the study, the community college faculty. Common themes and findings from the existing literature are highlighted concerning the purpose of this study. Lastly, an overall summary and critique of the previous literature is provided.

Methods of Searching

To begin, the researcher searched for what has already been studied about community colleges in general and community college faculty, specifically. Through Minnesota State University Moorhead's Livingston Lord Library, searches were conducted using broad categories such as "community college" and "community college faculty". Initial searches conducted were through the library's broad search function, OneSearch, to ensure inclusion of materials other than solely academic journals. Databases included in OneSearch ERIC, Academic Search Complete, and Education Research Complete, among others. In these initial stages, Google was also used to locate any dissertations of interest from other institutions in the United States. Through Google searches, the researcher was able to locate material from important non-traditional sources such as the publications Inside Higher Ed, The Chronicle of

Higher Education, and the American Association of Community Colleges, as well as many university dissertation libraries.

As materials were collected, a plethora of additional sources were discovered by using the references of these works. From the references of those articles that were deemed especially pertinent to this research, a better understanding of what was considered seminal research on community colleges and community college faculty was developed, and the researcher was able to either purchase the material or acquire it through the Livingston Lord Library. As the searching intensified and narrowed, much more specific search terms were used such as: “community college teaching”, “community college faculty service”, “community college scholarly work”, “community college faculty”, “Core Self-Evaluation Theory”, “Core Self-Evaluation Theory and education”, and “Core Self-Evaluation Theory and higher education”. The researcher continued to search Community College to comb through any relevant materials.

Theoretical Orientation for the Study

For this study, Judge, Locke and Durham’s (1997) Core self-evaluation theory (CSE) was used as an analytical lens applied to the experiences of the two-year community college faculty members that were interviewed. While examining the theoretical framework of CSE, the literature pertaining to education generally and higher education specifically within this framework was both synthesized and critiqued.

Core Self-Evaluation Theory

“A characteristic that differentiates people from one another is the fundamental evaluations we make about ourselves and how we relate to our environment. These fundamental beliefs are called core ‘self-evaluations’” (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011, p.332). Core Self-

Evaluations are “fundamental, bottom-line evaluations that people hold about themselves, the world, and others” (Bono & Judge, 2003, p. 6). There are four latent factors, or traits, that determine an individual’s core self-evaluation: self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability. Bono and Judge (2003) give a definition of each of the first three traits:

- Self-esteem: “the approval of oneself and the degree to which one sees oneself as capable, significant, successful, and worthy.”
- Self-efficacy: “one’s estimate of one’s capabilities of performing, at a global level (not situationally based) across many contexts.”
- Locus of control: “one’s belief in one’s ability to control one’s environment.” (p. 6)

The final trait of emotional stability is defined by the American Psychological Association (2020):

- Emotional stability: “predictability and consistency in emotional reactions, with absence of rapid mood changes”

As a general example, Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2011) provide the following scenario:

People who have positive core self-evaluations see themselves positively across a variety of situations, and approach the works in a confident, self-assured manner. They believe that they are capable of solving problems (high self-efficacy), worthy of respect and regard (high self-esteem), in control and responsible to what happens to them, (internal locus of control), and prone to be optimistic... (high emotional stability). (p. 332)

Conversely, those who believe that they are not capable of solving problems, are not worthy of respect, are not in control of what happens to them, and are prone to be pessimistic would have negative core-evaluations. Since the measurement for this higher order construct is quantitative in nature, the results of one's CSE are determined through an instrument developed by Judge et al. (2006), called the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES).

When it comes to community college faculty, these four sub traits are especially important to succeeding in their work. Self-esteem measures one's feelings of being capable and confident and this is a critical component to the work of faculty members. If a faculty member does not feel capable and confident, that will show in every aspect of their work, especially when interacting with students in the classroom. The expectation for any faculty member is that they are a subject matter expert and if a faculty member does not have confidence in their knowledge or ability to convey that knowledge, students may notice, and it could ultimately impact the success of the students in the course.

With a wide variety of students filling the classrooms each day, it is increasingly more important for faculty to have confidence in their abilities in many different situations, or a high amount of self-efficacy. There are challenging situations and difficult conversations taking place in the work that faculty undertake both in the classroom and at the institutional level. Community college faculty are asked to fulfill a range of duties across the institution including participating in shared governance (Cohen, et al., 2014). Having confidence across a variety of unrelated situations is becoming a necessary trait for faculty.

Locus of control, or autonomy, matters for community college faculty. On any given day, faculty may be required to make split second judgement calls in their classrooms. Being able to

make independent decisions is critical not only to the satisfaction with the work, but with the ability to perform the work competently as well. If a faculty member had to go to a supervisor every time a student wanted an extension on an assignment, when investigating a case of plagiarism, when dealing with disruptive behaviors in the classroom, or a when a student needed an accommodation, it would be an untenable situation indeed. Being able to make decisions for themselves and for the students in their charge is a critical component faculty work in a community college setting.

Lastly, emotional stability is necessary to remain professional in extremely difficult situations. Community college faculty are often faced with students who are homeless, are experiencing food insecurity, are incarcerated mid semester, or have any number of very emotional and difficult situations. Sometimes students do not listen, sometimes colleagues do not listen, and sometimes community college faculty see what feels like an insurmountable number of issues within the institution in which they work. Being able to deal with the unique challenges of being a community college faculty begs for a high amount of emotional stability.

Since the CSE theory was first introduced by Judge et al. (1997), it has been used as a predominantly in the study of job-related variables such as satisfaction, motivation, attitudes, performance, and success, making it a valuable higher order construct as an individual difference factor in organizational behavior research (Johnson et al., 2007). Previous research has confirmed that CSE is positively related to job satisfaction and even had influence on the way in which people choose and committed to goals (Bono & Colbert, 2005, Judge et al., 2005, Judge et al., 1998). Judge (2009) indicated that “high scores on CSE, reflecting a positive self-concept, are related to a broad array of work and nonwork criteria, including increased levels of job and life satisfaction, better job performance, higher work motivation and higher income” (p. 59).

While it would appear that CSE is widely applicable across a variety of research and application, there is extremely limited application of this construct pertaining to higher education, specifically community college faculty. Applied in this study, the individual sub traits which, when combined, form the higher-order CSE construct, are used as a lens through which to process the lived experience of the community college faculty.

CSE Measures in Community College Faculty Research

Self-esteem is a core factor in an individual's Core self-evaluation (CSE). Although research about community college faculty and self-esteem is sparse, "society has typically viewed community colleges as inferior to 4-year colleges and universities. Community colleges have long endured being the subject of jokes and community college students and faculty have been cast as inferior to their 4-year counterparts" (Hagedorn, 2015, p. 50). Townsend and LaPaglia (2000) surveyed 311 full-time community college faculty members about how they perceived themselves in comparison to their four-year counterparts. The findings revealed that there was statistical significance supporting the idea that because the respondents were faculty at a two-year institution, as opposed to a four-year institution, they looked at their position as marginal in higher education. Because two-year colleges are marginalized within academe, research on these institutions as well as their faculty are minimal, thus making it unknown how much of these stereotypes are internalized by the two-year faculty themselves (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000).

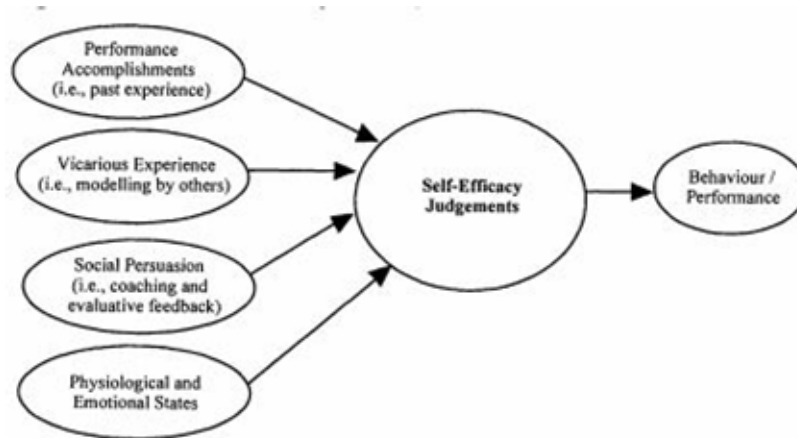
In addition to self-esteem, self-efficacy is also included as a subtrait in the CSE construct. According to Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory, the formation of self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by four sources of information: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and psychological arousal (see Figure 1).

Self-efficacy is a solid construct to use across a wide variety of contexts in research and application. According to Staples et al. (1999),

Perceived self-efficacy helps to account for a wide variety of individual behaviors including: changes in coping behavior produced by different modes of influence, levels of physiological stress reactions, self-regulation, achievement strivings, growth of intrinsic interest and choice of career pursuits. (p. 760).

Figure 1

Self-Efficacy Theory



When it comes to teaching, Self-efficacy is a construct, which “represents teachers’ confidence in their ability to facilitate the development of students’ knowledge, abilities, and values” (Horvitz et al., 2015, p. 306). Horvitz et al (2015) further posits that in higher education, “teaching self-efficacy has been deemed an important factor in the success of professors because it “predicts their willingness to endure and work through the inevitable professional challenges associated with mastering teaching...” (p. 308). In other words, it is a predictor if teachers will persevere if things get difficult for them at work.

A study by Mehdinezhad (2012) examined self-efficacy specifically among professors in relation to factors such as teaching experience, rank, and gender, and found that those professors with more experience had higher levels of self-efficacy in student assessment than those with less experience. In a different study, Chang et al. (2011) found that females have higher levels of self-efficacy in the areas of learning assessment and class management.

Other studies focused on higher education and self-efficacy have focused on specific areas such as delivery method (Robinia & Anderson, 2010; Lee & Tsai, 2010; Horvitz, 2015) and adjunct status (Hardy et al., 2016). Although previous studies have revealed much about self-efficacy in relation to higher education faculty, the focus on the research in this area has centered on four-year institutions and has been almost exclusively quantitative in nature, usually relying on survey responses. While quantitative data collection is effective, it fails to provide any rich context around the results from the faculty themselves.

When it comes to the factor of locus of control, we can reasonably relate this to autonomy and the terms will be used interchangeably. Autonomy in educational research is focused primarily on two areas in the K-12 education system: teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. Teacher autonomy has been defined nearly identically to the definition that Bono & Judge (2003) provided for the CSE subtrait of locus of control, as “teachers’ feelings of whether they control themselves and their work environments” (Wu, 2015, p. 241). Teacher autonomy “may concern the freedom to choose goals, teaching methods, and educational strategies that are concordant with the teacher’s personal educational beliefs and values” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014, p. 69). Teaching autonomy has been gaining popularity as a research topic among educational researchers:

With the advent of education reform, there is a greater emphasis on teacher autonomy. Autonomy seems to be emerging as a key variable when examining educational reform initiatives, with some arguing that granting autonomy and empowering teachers is an appropriate place to begin in solving the problems of today's schools. (Wu, 2015, p. 241)

A study conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014), concluded that a high amount of autonomy among teachers positively predicted job satisfaction and engagement while lowering the possibility of emotional exhaustion. In other words, teachers who perceive they have more control over what they are doing are more likely to be satisfied at their jobs and feel less burnout.

While higher education has not been the setting for most research on autonomy, there have been a few studies conducted that contribute to the body of literature. In previous research about community college faculty, it was found that faculty members often feel they have little control over the courses and students they teach (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Grubb, 1999). Cohen et al. (2014) suggests that faculty who teach at a community college “may feel they have little control over the criteria for determining who enters their classes and deplore the institutional policies that attempt to retain on the roll students who fail to keep up with their coursework” (p. 80).

Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel's (2008) research focused on an important single facet of autonomy, “the authority to make decisions about content and methods in instructional activities,” and found that community college faculty were largely satisfied with the amount of instructional autonomy they had in their work. “More than 95% of the faculty members were satisfied or very satisfied with their instructional autonomy, and the distribution of faculty satisfaction were almost identical for full-time and part-time faculty members” (Kim et al., 2008,

p. 166). However, the researchers also cautioned that they were unable to measure autonomy in other facets of community college faculty work and suggested that “the issue of community college faculty members' autonomy is a complex one that cannot and should not be reduced to simplistic answers (Kim et al., 2008, p. 177).

A later study conducted by Berry (2016) examined three areas of community college faculty autonomy: method, scheduling, and criteria. The results confirmed that by in large, community college faculty were satisfied with the level of their autonomy in the classroom and also when it came to controlling their schedules. Berry (2016) did uncover that criteria autonomy, which focused on the degree of control that faculty had over how they were evaluated, was scored the lowest by respondents which indicated that the community college faculty did not feel that they had control over their overall job objectives or the method in which they were evaluated by administration. Barry (2016) noted that regarding the criteria autonomy, most of the activities of a community college faculty member are instructional; therefore, “it may be difficult for faculty to modify their primary job objectives. As community college faculty members are generally hired to teach their work objectives and administration expectations may tend to remain constant over time” (p. 70). Based on the research, it is reasonable to assume that community college faculty feel they have control mainly in one area, how they teach in the classroom.

The perception of a lack of autonomy when it comes to the students who fill the classrooms may be similar to that of a four-year institution professor. However, at an open-access institution, such as a community college, there are virtually no steps in the admission process to keep students from enrolling in classes for which they are not academically prepared, potentially exacerbating the perception of autonomy in that arena.

Emotional stability, which is the antithesis of neuroticism, is a CSE sub trait, which focuses on a person's ability to maintain emotional equilibrium and is included as one of personality variables of the Big Five model (Digman, 1990). Emotional stability can generally be described as having appropriate reactions to things that happen, especially during stressful events.

In a meta-analysis of 25 studies, Kim et al. (2019) found that emotional stability was positively associated with teacher effectiveness. Teachers need to be able to respond appropriately to stressful and/or emotional situations. Kim et al. (2019) explained,

Teachers are emotional contagions; their emotions displayed in the classroom can be transmitted to students. Students too can become anxious and nervous, when observing an anxious and nervous teacher. In turn, students' perceptions of the school and the teacher and their academic ability may be affected. (p. 169)

In a study conducted by Tan et al., (2018), higher education students reported that neuroticism, or emotional instability, was the least preferred trait of the five the study explored. "Emotional stability is highly prized by students of their lecturers. They want them to be resilient, able to cope with stress and stable as opposed to being moody" (p. 10). This study shows that emotional stability is an important quality in a higher education faculty member and is worth exploration. The limitations of the study were that it had a relatively small pool of participants (264) and was conducted at British universities, which introduce cultural implications.

Summary

The four subtraits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control (autonomy), and emotional stability combine to form the higher order construct of Core Self-Evaluation. Though research on these subtraits has been limited in its inclusion of community college faculty, it has been demonstrated, through previous studies that high marks in the subtraits, which combined would lead to a high indication of CSE, is positively correlated to several educational factors such as job satisfaction, engagement, and teacher effectiveness.

While the existing research focuses on the measurements of these subtraits, what it lacks is the explanation behind what factors and feelings lead to specific measures in these areas. It may be that a community college professor feels a lack of self-esteem, but what are the circumstances around that measurement? Are there more universal factors to these measurements that could be uncovered through qualitative measures? While scores and measurements are important in their own right to capture what is happening, there is a gap in the literature that this study sought to fill which is the human story behind the measurements.

Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the three essential components of teaching, service, and scholarly work through the voices of community college faculty. Additionally, the study seeks to dive deeper into the lives of community college faculty by exploring how faculty feel about the three components of their work will also be explored through the lens of Core Self-Evaluation theory.

In order to understand community college faculty, a broader picture of the community college is provided to understand the context in which the work takes place. The literature review begins with a look at the role of community colleges in the U.S. higher education system. Additionally, the stigma of community colleges as a higher education option is explored. Next, an overview of the history of the American Community College is provided to build an understanding of the foundations from which the modern community college has evolved.

The literature review then provides background for examining the people within community colleges. A robust picture of the community college student is painted through demographic data to provide the context for whom the faculty at these institutions seek to serve. Faculty are the major focal point of this study; thus, the majority of the literature review is dedicated to the literature about community college faculty in general, as well as specifically examining the literature pertaining to the three components of faculty work: teaching, service, and scholarly work.

Lastly, a synthesis of the research is provided along with a critique of the previous research methods used. The literature review concludes with a justification of the research approach taken in this study. A summary of this chapter along with a preview of Chapter 3 concludes the literature review.

The Role of Community Colleges in U.S. Higher Education

Community colleges play a vital role in educating Americans. “The economic and societal role of community colleges has never been more evident. From 1996 – 2012, community colleges have been mentioned in every State of the Union address except one” (Mellow & Heelan, 2015, p. 1). Community colleges will continue to face increased expectations and more

diversity than ever before in the future, and it is imperative to elevate the public perception of the role of community colleges in our society or else these institutions will face increased scrutiny while not being understood as unique institutions with unique challenges.

To elevate the public perception of community colleges more work must be done to understand these institutions. Neumann and Riesman (1980) asserted that “the public perception of community colleges as generally being inferior to four-year intuitions persists” (p. 54), and the stigma surrounding community colleges still exists over 40 years later.

Even as students are considering their higher education options in high school, the community college as an institution faces some stigma. In a recent report from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (2019), only 42% of public high school counselors and a measly 23% of private school counselors strongly agreed that community colleges offered rigorous coursework. Additionally, the high school counselors surveyed were, at best, 63.9%, and at worst, 26.6% likely to have received professional development about the offerings and benefits of attending community college in the last three-years (see Fig 2).

Figure 2

Percentage of High School Counselors Who Received Professional Development on Advising Students for Community College Enrollment

	In Past 12 Months	In Past 3 Years
All Survey Respondents	40.9	55.1
by School Type		
Public	49.8	63.9
Private Parochial	28.2	46.4
Private Non-parochial	16.5	28.5
by Free and Reduced Price Lunch		
0 to 25% of students	34.9	48.8
26 to 50%	48.1	26.6
51 to 75%	46.5	59.0
76 to 100%	52.9	63.9

Additionally, while a high percentage of high school counselors are not convinced of the merits of community colleges, likely through a lack of knowledge about the institutions, the stigma continues even within the high school classroom. In Holland's (2015) study of two diverse high schools in the northeast United States, she observed, "where students went was publicized and took on extreme importance for status-attending a community college, where anyone could get in, was no achievement at all in their eyes" (p. 29).

Stigmas surrounding community colleges is not a recent development and those working within these institutions have a difficult challenge in front of them to change the negative public perceptions.

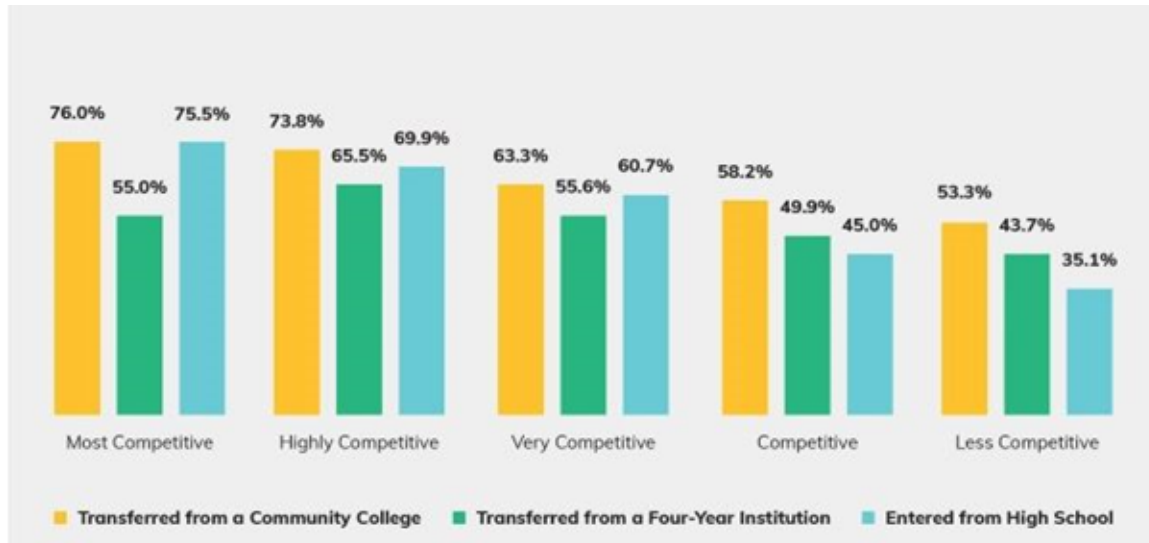
Community college leaders have complained for years about the insults their schools and students endure – from insinuations that two-year colleges are not "real" colleges, to artificial rankings that actually penalize high schools for sending graduates to community colleges rather than four-year institutions. (Shelly, 2019, para. 8)

In a small qualitative study conducted in Texas of 10 students who had transferred from a community college to a four-year university, the “participants perceived community college stigmatization from a variety of different points, including university faculty, staff, and classmates” (Thompson, 2019, p. 108).

Even with the stigma that is attached to community colleges, the fact remains that they are responsible for educating around 33% of all undergraduate students in the country (NCES, 2018). Belfield & Bailey (2011) argued that students who are in a certain socioeconomic or academic achievement group should not be the only students considering community colleges, but rather all students should consider starting their education at this type of institution:

Because the community college is relatively inexpensive, and because many students may be risk averse (i.e., wishing to avoid failing courses more than they value getting high grades), it may make sense for many of them to start at community college. This will give students the opportunity to become surer about their decision, with the option to transfer to a 4-year college if they ultimately decide to do so. (p. 56)

Further, there is evidence that students who begin their education at a community college and transfer to a four-year institution have higher degree completion than other students (see fig. 3). “At all levels of competitive and noncompetitive institutions, community college transfer students were more likely to graduate within six years than students transferring from four-year institutions or enrolling from high school” (AAC&U, 2019).

Figure 3*Six-Year Graduation Rates, By Student Type and Institutional Selectivity*

With increased public pressure to succeed in turning out successful students exacerbated by generally negative perceptions about the education, students, staff and faculty community, it is crucial to form a better understanding of the lived experiences of community college faculty.

Historical Context of the Community College

To understand the unique characteristics of community colleges and those who teach within them, we need to understand how we got here. The history of the formation of community colleges spans more than 12 decades and is complex and nuanced. The purpose of this brief review of the history of community colleges is to provide a broad, but understandably, limited context of how community colleges became the modern institutions they are today. By understanding the past, we can see how these institutions have come to represent access to higher education for so many people in the United States. We can also understand how even in the earliest iterations, community colleges were perhaps born out of the desire by the traditional

university to protect the “elitist approach, which viewed the research university as properly available only to a select few” (Drury, 2003, p. 4).

In 1901, the first junior college, Joliet, was founded in Illinois. This was in response to the first push from large university presidents around the idea that the first two years of college were not part of a university-level education (Cohen, 2014). Several university presidents insisted that, “the universities would not become true research and professional development centers until they relinquished their lower-division preparatory work” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 6). In response, several universities started to shed their first two years of instruction and avoid teaching general education. By 1914, there were 14 public junior colleges and 32 private junior colleges. Religion was often intertwined with the junior college with many being directly affiliated with a specific church denomination (Cohen, 2014).

After the passing of the G.I. Bill of Rights in 1944, the number of students seeking a college education grew exponentially and in 1947, The Truman Commission Report called for “a massive expansion in both the number of community colleges and the activities in which such colleges engaged” (Gillbert & Heller, 2010, p. 7). Also in this report, the term ‘community college’ was first introduced into the national lexicon “because members of the commission felt that the term “junior” did not actually express the purpose these schools were serving” (Gillbert & Heller, 2010, p. 7). According to Cohen, Brawer and Kisker (2014), the community college’s goals were “to serve the people with whatever the people wanted. Standing outside the tradition, they offered access. They had to instruct; they could not offer the excuse that they were advancing the frontiers of scholarship” like the traditional universities could (p. 36).

By the 1960s and 1970s, over half of all students graduating from high school were going on to some form of higher education (Cohen et al., 2014). The increase in students along with other national factors such as the end of the Vietnam War “catalyzed the community college’s development from a few fledging campuses to an explosion of colleges now found across the country” (Mellow & Heelan, 2015). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2020), there are now 1,050 community colleges in the United States.

The Role of Community College Today

From their inception, community colleges have continued to evolve. Modern community colleges are vibrant and lively places in which students come each year to fulfill a wide variety of goals, with many chasing their version of “American Dream”. “Many believe that a college education is the key to success in the 21st century. Community colleges serve a diverse range of students...providing an important pathway to postsecondary education for many who would not attend college otherwise” (Ma & Baum, 2016, p. 21).

More than ever before, community colleges are leaned on as institutions to be everything to everyone, and that impossible task is increasingly taking a toll. While community colleges often pride themselves on being responsive to the greater needs of the community and country, O’Banion (2019), sees a difficult path ahead:

The community college, responsive to its local community and increasingly to the global community, will continue to change rapidly. It will mutate into new forms, grow appendages to respond to special interests and needs, lose energy because of political gridlock, and be attacked because it does not deliver on its promises. (p. 3)

Because two-year colleges largely depend on state and federal funding, they are under ever-increasing scrutiny by the government. Community colleges depend on state, federal and local governments for approximately 76% of revenue sources for public two-year colleges (Dougherty et al., 2017). All who work in such institutions are, at least partially, entwined with forces outside of the institution itself, thus placing faculty at the fulcrum of student needs and administrative pressures (Levin, et al., 2006).

Summarily, as O'Banion (2019) stated, the community college "is still an evolving social experiment that promises a better life for those who accept the invitation to come through the open door" (p. 27). O'Banion (2019) leaves us with a hopeful message regarding the future of community colleges. "In the best-case scenario, the community college will continue to evolve into an "ism free" force that serves all the people with its key goal intact: helping students make a good living and live a good life" (p. 3).

Summary

From the beginning, community colleges were designed to be distinct and separate institutions whose sole job it was to educate the non-elite. Starting from just a handful of institutions, community college as a higher education option has had a massive expansion in the past 120 years. Community colleges now serve 10.5 million undergraduate students who have diverse backgrounds and needs, and they do so while facing ongoing budgetary pressure and stigma in the higher education space (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2018). Even as higher education is still touted as a piece of the "American Dream," the stigma of attending a community college starts early and can be long lasting.

The strength of community colleges lies in the fact that they will continue, as they always have, to evolve to meet the needs of all those who wish to come. With all of the evolution and changes that community colleges have gone through, coupled with the great challenges ahead, it is more important than ever to gain a deeper understanding of the people who fill these institutions, especially the faculty charged with shaping the minds of the diverse students who walk through the classroom doors physically or virtually.

Community College Students

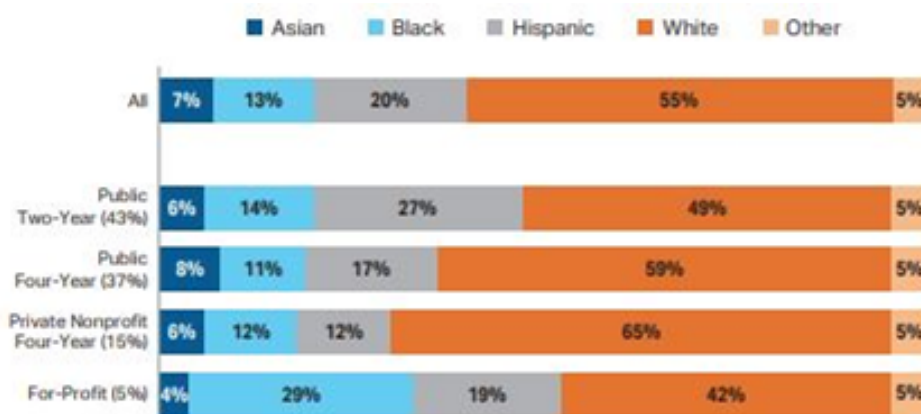
To begin to understand the faculty that teach within community colleges, it is important to have a general idea of who is populating the classroom – the students. Although undergraduate students tend to be lumped together into one entity, there are some distinct differences among community college students when compared to their four-year public and private counterparts. In the fall of 2017, 34% of all undergraduates in the United States attended community colleges (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2018). Students come from varying backgrounds and arrive at community colleges with a wide variety of academic ability. Cohen, Brawer and Kisker (2014) summarize community college students in two words: “number and variety” (p. 45).

The average annual tuition and fees for a public community college in the United States for the 2019-2020 academic year was \$3,730 compared to \$10,440 at a four-year public (in-state) institution. This number rises dramatically to \$36,880 for private four-year institutions (College Board, 2019). Because of the large differential in tuition among these institutions, community colleges see a large number of students who are defined as low-income. “About 55% of dependent students with family incomes below \$30,000 in 2011-2012 started at a community college. For students with family incomes of \$106,000 or more, it was 23%” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2020).

Community colleges serve a diverse student body with the highest number of Hispanic students (27%) choosing to attend these institutions over any other including, private, four-year and for-profit institutions. While the student body at community colleges is still nearly half White (49%), they also educate 14% of all Black students attending a higher education institution in the United States. As a comparison, at public four-year institutions, the student body is comprised of 17% Hispanic students and 11% Black students (College Board, 2019).

Figure 4

Distribution of Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Within Sectors, Fall 2017



Community colleges serve the highest percentage of students who are also parents. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (2018), during the 2015-2016 academic year, 42% of all student parents attending higher education were enrolled at a community college, making up an estimated 26% of the overall student body. In comparison, the number of student parents enrolled at a public four-year institution during that same year was 17%, while making up only 12% of the student body.

Because community colleges are open-access institutions, the success of students can often come up short in measures such as completion and persistence. While “over 80% of entering community college students indicate that they intend to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher, six years after initial enrollment, only 15% have done so” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 6). Persistence is a key measure that community colleges use to gauge student success. According to The Community College Research Center (2020), “among students who started college in the fall of 2018 at a public two-year college, 62.1% were still enrolled at any institution in the fall of 2019. Just under 54% returned to the same college” (para. 5). Full-time college students tend to succeed more in measures of retention and persistence but based on the intersection of demographics and other factors, it is not realistic to expect all students to enroll full-time (Community College Research Center, 2020).

The fact that students that are attending community college, and higher education in general, seem to be less academically prepared than ever would point to a change or failure of the K-12 education system, however that would be too simplistic of an explanation. In fact, students are not performing more poorly in high school than students did in the past, but rather the idea of “college for all” has taken hold and more high-school graduates are attempting college. Baum, Kurose and McPherson (2013) explain:

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data suggest that the academic achievements of seventeen-year-olds stayed nearly consistent from 1971 to 2008. In short, students are not doing more poorly in high school than they did in the past; rather, students in the lower part of the high school achievement distribution are being encouraged more than ever before to acquire more education. (p. 24)

Other demographic data that is significant to note about the community college student body is that 29% of students attending are first-generation college students, 20% are students with disabilities, and five percent are veterans. (American Association of Community Colleges, 2020). As previously stated, Cohen, Brawer and Kisker (2014) summarized community college students in two words: “number and variety,” and based on the data, this is an extremely accurate description.

Community College Faculty

The typical community college class in the United States is taught by a White female who holds a master’s degree and is approximately 50 years old (Cohen et al., 2014). Approximately 77% of the full-time faculty that staff community colleges are White. Full-time faculty have the highest White population of any group in a community college including management, student services, and students (AASC, 2018). In 2021, the California community college system, which is the largest in the country, reported that around 60% of the faculty teaching in these colleges are White while 71% of the student body are from other racial backgrounds. In the Minnesota State System, BIPOC faculty make up just a fraction of the overall unlimited full-time (UFT) faculty. From an email from the Minnesota State System Office, the researcher was able to obtain the following information. The researcher was informed that data suppression did not allow for further breakout of race/ethnicity (Her, K. personal communication, June 6, 2021).

Table 1*Race/Ethnicity of Minnesota State UFT Faculty*

Status	Ethnicity	Percentage
Unlimited Full-Time	BIPOC	8.64%
Unlimited Full-Time	White	90.71%
Unlimited Full-Time	Unknown	0.65%

Hiring practices differ between community college faculty and their four-year counterparts. Community college faculty usually have a distinct probationary period when they are first hired, which usually lasts 3 years. After the three years, community college faculty can be terminated or “non-renewed” or can move into permanent employment. In comparison, the probationary faculty at a four-year college usually have a six-year probationary period before being accepted as permanent faculty status (Mayhall, 2014). A majority of community college faculty hold master’s degrees and are less likely than four-year faculty to have a doctoral degree (Cohen et al., 2014).

In early iterations of the community college, most instructors tended to have prior experience teaching at the high-school level, as high as 80% of the community college faculty had taught at a high-school previously in the 1920s (Cohen et al, 2014). That number has steadily declined as a master’s degree is now seen as the traditional path to teaching at a community college (Cohen et al., 2014). Doctoral degrees have not been seen as necessary or in some cases even desirable to teaching at a community college with the major objections being “that most doctorate holders have been prepared as researchers, not teachers, and that they expect fewer

teaching hours and higher salaries” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 84). The percentage of community college faculty holding a master’s degree has remained relatively steady since 1984 at around 63% (NSOPSF; 2004).

In 2015, there were approximately 351,000 faculty working at US community colleges. By 2018, that number had been reduced to 312,000, and while the number of full-time faculty has grown to 33%, the gains come through a large reduction of part-time faculty. Still, these statistics show that part-time or adjunct faculty remain the majority of the instructional body at community colleges. While much research has been done in the past decade about part-time faculty, some significant differences were found between the two groups. There is evidence to suggest that there are advantages to having more full-time faculty on a campus. Schuetz (2002) found that full-time faculty were more likely than part-time faculty to have revised their syllabus in the past three years, received awards for teaching, taught honors courses, were more likely to read education journals, and reported having better relationships with their colleagues. More recent research examines the mechanisms for such differences including the night and weekend schedule that part-time faculty are often assigned. Rand and Sanders (2020) found in a study of six community colleges that,

Part-time faculty were more likely than their full-time colleagues to lack access to campus resources when teaching outside of regular office hours, especially spaces to meet with students. They also tended to be less knowledgeable about academic and nonacademic supports available to students. A lack of resources and institutional knowledge may prevent part-time faculty from advising and engaging with their students as effectively as their full-time counterparts. (p. 14)

Regardless of reasons, the research points to full-time faculty, even more than part-time faculty, as being an integral part of student success at community colleges.

To build a broader understanding of the community college faculty, a snapshot of demographic data is helpful. When it comes to disciplines, 47% work in academic areas including humanities, social sciences and science while 40% work in professional areas such as business, computing and nursing. Eight percent of faculty work in vocational areas and another 2% are faculty counselors and librarians (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Some state educational systems, such as in Minnesota, label their schools as community colleges, technical colleges, or community and technical colleges depending on what is being taught at the institution.

The motivations for individuals to become faculty at a community college are best described by the idea of a dichotomous push-pull. Brown et al. (2016) explain the push element as faculty who wanted to teach at a four-year institution, but were unable to because a “surplus of college trained instructors and limited faculty positions at universities has made community college teaching a temporary position for some employees” (Mayhall, 2015, p. 21). Brown et al. contend,

If faculty teaching in community colleges do so because it is simply the best job they could get and they view their work as just that—a job—then one could say they were pushed into community college teaching by external factors. (p. 245)

The push mechanism accounts for a significant amount of faculty at a community college. A study conducted by Outcalt (2002) found that 30% of full-time faculty were willing to move to a faculty position at a four-year university if available. However, if faculty were drawn to the work at a community college, they would fall into the pull category. Brown et al. (2016) explain,

If community college faculty view their work as a social justice calling—an opportunity to work for democratic ideals and social equality by educating students who otherwise might not have ready access to higher education—they could be thought of as being pulled into community college teaching through a set of personally meaningful internal motives. (p. 245)

One study that utilized a national sample of sociology community college faculty to study these push-pull factors reported that “despite difficult working conditions, most faculty indicated that they likely would teach at a community college until retirement and would do so again if they could” (Brown, et al., 2016, p. 244).

To gain a deeper understanding of community college faculty and their activities within the institutions, Townsend and Twombly (2007) laid out three role expectations for full-time community college faculty members. These include teaching, service, and research/scholarship. Due to a lack of traditionally defined academic research that is produced by community college faculty, the research/scholarship expectation has been broadened in this study to be more inclusive, this component is simply labeled scholarly work (Rosser & Townsend, 2006).

Summary

Each year, a massive number of students opt to attend community college in the United States. The relatively low-cost of community college in comparison to four-year universities is one of the main drivers for students to attend, many of whom come from low-income households. Students arriving at community colleges often bring a unique set of circumstances with them, such as being first generation college students or being parents themselves. The students who enter community college are racially diverse and increasingly non-White. Even as

the message of college for all is being increasingly echoed throughout society, a large number of students who enter community college with aspirations of eventually earning a four-year degree simply do not persist.

The faculty staffing the classrooms at community colleges are there for several reasons. Some faculty had aspirations of teaching at a four-year college that never came to fruition, and others are called to teaching at a community college as a way to work towards social equity issues. No matter how they came to be faculty at a community college, those who have full-time status are integral to the institutions. Typically armed with master's degrees, the faculty at community colleges are there to fulfill three role expectations: teaching, service, and scholarly work.

Teaching, Service and Scholarly Work

Teaching

Within a community college, “instructors can focus on teaching and typically expend a greater percentage of their work time in or preparing for the classroom” (Boggs, 2011, p. 4). Solidifying the idea that teaching remains the primary focus of this faculty, in the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary faculty (NSOPF, 2004), 89% of community college faculty reported teaching as their principal activity. Although beginning to shift slightly, most community colleges are not baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, thus faculty primarily teach lower-level courses (Martinez, 2019). With an average teaching load consisting of five three-hour courses per semester, full-time faculty are spending roughly half of their working hours physically in a classroom. If you add in all the other components that go into instructional activities such as advising, grading and class preparation, a full-time instructor spends on average 85% of their time on teaching and teaching related activities (Twombly & Townsend,

2007). As Cohen et al. (2014) point out, “instruction is stubbornly labor intensive” (p. 445).

Because of the heavy teaching load and other responsibilities, it is important not to oversimplify the work of community college faculty (Martinez, 2019; Morest 2015). Grubb (1999) asserted, “the most basic fact of instructor’s lives is that, if they are conscientious, they are overloaded” (p. 281).

The variety of the students who fill the classrooms at community colleges often make teaching in such institutions challenging work. “In addition to teaching students whose first higher education experience is in the community college, community college faculty members also teach many students who start at 4-year colleges or students who are still in high school” (Townsend & Twombly, 2008, p. 5). Community colleges are open-access institutions, which means that in most cases all students need to do to enroll is pay the application fee, which is often waived during recruitment events. Because of the open-access nature of these institutions, students often come with a wide variety of motivations and goals (Finley & Kinslow, 2016). Further, “the institution’s students come with varying levels of academic ability, English-language ability, and economic resources” (Townsend & Twombly, 2008, p. 13).

Academic ability of students coming into community colleges is one of the major challenges for community college faculty today. “About 60% of incoming students are referred to at least one developmental course. This is often surprising...since the large majority of community college entrants are high school graduates” (Bailey & Cho, 2010, p. 46). For many faculty, a majority of whom have advanced degrees, they are taken aback entering the faculty ranks in a community college setting. “The faculty whose first job after graduate school is in a community college suddenly are in a milieu where high achieving, dedication to study, and academic goal directedness are not the norm” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 80).

The teaching responsibilities of community college faculty often do not have a clear definition beyond load size and hours spent on the activity. The roles of community college faculty in relation to teaching can often be blurred. Fugate and Amey (2000) found that community college faculty “used descriptors such as *mentor, role model, coach, advocate, student facilitator, and guide* as expressions of their role” (p. 6), demonstrating the complexity of the work of community college faculty.

Service

Service is one of the three main components of faculty work, yet there does not seem to be a widespread agreement or understanding in the literature as to what service entails or how much of it gets done, especially for faculty within a community college. “But what this service means, for whom, and how it is rewarded remains unclear because service roles within higher education are not clearly defined, and because people mean different things when they talk about faculty service” (Ward, 2003, p. 5). Townsend & Twombly (2007), researchers who have published extensively about community colleges, provide a definition for institutional service as “participating in faculty governance, chairing and serving on departmental and division committees, and doing some administrative tasks” (p. 40).

Service can often be a murky component of faculty work, as it is expected, but not uniformly assessed on performance reviews. Unless a faculty member is being compensated or receiving release time to participate in forms of service on the campus, it often is an unspoken expectation with few formal requirements that they are attempting to fulfill. Guarino & Borden (2017) explain:

Individuals who undertake defined administrative roles, such as department chairs, deans, etc., are compensated for their service, but the vast majority of faculty receive no

extra compensation for other internal service activities because contributing as good citizens to the academic community is part of their job. (p. 673)

Faculty service is most often viewed in terms of two broad categories, internal and external. Internal service (or institutional service) is work that takes place within the campus community. External service consists of work that takes place off campus, and at least for four-year faculty, often carries more value and prestige for the individual (Guarino & Borden, 2017).

Nearly all the research conducted about the service component of faculty work was focused on four-year institutions. Research conducted about service in four-year institutions often covered narrow topics such as gender and service. Guarino and Borden (2017) found “strong evidence that, on average, women faculty perform more service than male faculty in academia, and that the service differential is driven particularly by participation in internal rather than external service” (p. 690).

Within the literature that did address Community college faculty and service, there seemed to be two emerging and opposing views: (1) That faculty were involved in a great deal of service outside of their teaching duties, and (2) that faculty spent little time on service outside of their teaching duties. However, as Martinez (2019) uncovered, there may be a large difference in service to the college among faculty at unionized versus non-unionized community colleges. Additionally, scope included in the broad definition of service varies across the literature with some focusing on college-wide committee work and others including department level work.

Especially prevalent in unionized institutions, “the service dimension of faculty work is frequently framed as an opportunity to participate in governance” (Martinez, 2019, p. 115).

Because of that commitment to shared governance, some researchers argue that faculty have

increased their workload by getting involved with extensive committee work including faculty hiring committees, budget committees, and long-range planning committees (Martinez, 2019).

At many community colleges, faculty are required to complete some form of professional development plan and execute the activities outlined. The requirements for professional development for faculty are wide-ranging when it comes to service components. Some community colleges had more formal requirements such as 30-hours per year of professional development for new faculty or a five-year “recertification” process for tenured faculty (Grubb, 1999), while others were less defined (DCTC Faculty Development Plan, 2006). The vast differences in service requirements across community colleges, and sometimes even within the same system demonstrate how faculty are often left to their own devices, with little guidance, to understand and execute an “appropriate” level of service-related activities. Ward (2003) suggests that further research be done to understand several areas of faculty service and this study sets out to provide more information about two of the questions posed: (1) how do faculty define service, and (2) how do faculty talk about service?

Scholarly Work

Community college faculty are not generally required to conduct traditional academic research in order to gain advancement in their careers. In fact, “little institutional support exists for community college faculty members wishing to do research defined in the traditional way as disciplinary scholarship resulting in new knowledge and publication” (Townsend & Twombly, 2006, p. 38). Morest (2015) argues that the heavy emphasis on teaching provides both challenges and opportunities to community college faculty when it comes to scholarly work.

On the one hand, it allows faculty to focus their work on fewer activities, presumably maximizing the amount of time spent working with students. On the other hand, less time

is available to invest in scholarship. An expanded role of community college faculty in scholarship could potentially contribute to stronger teaching and increased legitimacy of community colleges (p. 21).

Morest (2015) also noted, “few structures exist at community colleges to encourage scholarship. Faculty work tends to reflect a classic Weberian bureaucracy, which emphasizes rules and procedures, a lack of personalization, and hierarchical relationships” (p. 26). Because of the lack of encouragement and expectations, community college faculty are not using what precious little time they have left over after they fulfill their teaching responsibilities to engage in traditional scholarly research. Further supporting the claim that there is not wide-spread support for traditional research in community colleges, Tinberg et al., (2007) explain that “since tenure and promotion at two-year colleges are typically linked to teaching excellence and college service, scholarship and research fail to carry the urgency that they do at research-intensive institutions” (p. 29).

Even if community college faculty wanted to partake in traditional academic research, they may find that the resources are minimal. Teaching loads that leave little time left over in the day, let alone time to converse with colleagues, minimal budgets for conference attendance and a lack of adequate release time or graduate assistants all compound to create a struggle to partake in traditional academic research, which, ultimately, is not prioritized by the institution (Tinberg et al., 2007).

With traditional academic research associated with four-year university faculty, there may be varied perceptions around the very idea of it among community college faculty. In fact, some community college faculty may see this activity as frivolous and a way in which students

are ignored by their professors in the name of research. Perhaps through enculturation into the profession of faculty in community colleges where the goal of student success seems to drive all work, scholarly activities outside of teaching are seen as a distraction. Palmer argues the result of this viewpoint is “an organizational culture that best views scholarship as a personal and optional endeavor that faculty members can pursue if they wish and at worst as an abrogation of the institution’s student-focused values” (p. 38).

Data from the National Study of Postsecondary faculty (NSOPF; 2005) indicated that in 2004 community college faculty members had published an average of less than one article in both refereed and non-refereed journals over the previous two-year period. Many researchers argue that the traditional definition of academic research and publishing is limited simply to the scholarship of study and does not include Boyd’s (1990) idea of the need for “a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching” (p. 24). As Townsend and Twombly (2006) assert, “at a minimum it would appear that most if not all community college faculty members participate in the scholarship of teaching” (p. 39).

Braxton and Lyken-Segosebe (2015) argued that the traditional “use of publications as the indicator of research and scholarship underestimates the level of full-time community college faculty members’ level of engagement in scholarship of application and teaching” (p. 12). Taking that idea further, Park et al. (2015) identified three distinct types of faculty members in terms of scholarly work through their research: immersed scholars, scholars of dissemination, and scholars of pedagogical knowledge. Immersed scholars “show more involvement than their peers in such activities such as developing examples to help students learn, trying new instructional practices conducting seminars for lay people and local high schools, as well as

presenting papers at scholarly meetings” (p. 16). Scholars of dissemination, “seek to share their knowledge and research with the broader community. These scholars are involved in such activities as developing a collection of teaching resource materials, lecturing in a colleague’s class, and developing new processes for dealing with practice” (p. 16). Lastly, scholars of pedagogical practice are “more heavily involved in such activities as developing examples to help students learn, experimenting with new teaching methods, and creating new approaches for class management...” (p. 17).

In Park et al.’s (2015) research, they found the highest number of community college faculty fell into the “scholars of dissemination” category, which supports the notion that most community college faculty do, in fact, participate in scholarship, but not the type that is often narrowly defined by four-year scholars. By focusing on traditionally defined academic scholarship when examining the work of community college faculty, researchers have failed to provide a robust view of the faculty work in these unique roles. Morest (2015) summarized the research on community college faculty and scholarly work succinctly:

The heavy emphasis on measuring scholarship in terms of research productivity, which is relatively straight forward, has resulted in an undervaluing of other forms of scholarship, including integration, application, and teaching. Community college faculty are therefore heavily invested in domains of scholarship for which we have little evidence of productivity. As a result, the scholarship of community college faculty remains poorly understood and possibly undervalued. (p. 34)

Summary

Teaching, service, and scholarly work make up the three components of faculty work. Teaching lower-level courses to an extremely diverse group of students is the largest responsibility of a community college faculty member, and many faculty chose to work at a community college because of the time spent in the classroom with students. In support of that instruction, many other teaching related activities also take up a large portion of time including lesson planning, grading, and advising students (Cohen et al., 2014).

Service is the second key component to community college work and the most ambiguous in terms of definition and scope. There is not widespread agreement in the literature about what faculty service means or how much of it is being done, especially in the community college space (Ward, 2003; Martinez, 2019). The ambiguity surrounding expectations for faculty service can be problematic, especially when there is a service requirement written into many faculty job descriptions.

Scholarly work among community college faculty has traditionally been narrowly defined and compared against the scholarly work of four-year faculty. Community college faculty typically do not have scholarship as part of their job descriptions, and often institutional support for these types of activities is lacking. However, if the definition of scholarly work were looked at more broadly instead of confined to the narrow definition given by four-year institutions, it would show that community college faculty are indeed engaged in the scholarship of application and teaching (Braxton & Lyken-Segosebe, 2015; Boyd, 1990).

The literature on teaching, service, and scholarly work is rich in quantitative information, but is lacking in telling the story behind the data. In fact, when it comes to the three areas of

faculty work, there seems to be more disagreement among scholars than agreement, especially around service and scholarly work. These disagreements likely stem from the fact that both service and scholarly work seem to be defined by the researchers rather than through the voices of the faculty actually doing the work. This study seeks to elevate those voices to build a richer understanding of the core components of community college work.

Synthesis of Research Findings

The use of core self-evaluation (CSE) theory as a framework for this study has both benefits and drawbacks. Core self-evaluation theory draws largely upon previous work done around personality traits in the field of psychology. The psychological underpinnings of CSE provide a way in which the study can get to the heart of how community college faculty feel about their work and how it affects them in four areas directly tied to the sub traits of the higher-order CSE construct of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control (autonomy), and emotional stability.

The most notable drawback to using CSE as a theoretical framework is that while the CSE construct has been shown through many previous studies to have effects on several factors including job satisfaction and attitudes, it has not been extended into the qualitative space. Typically, a survey tool is used to measure a CSE score and that is used for analysis in research. As such, this study seeks to expand the theory into the qualitative space as a lens through which to examine community college faculty work.

Because there are four sub-traits that comprise the higher order core self-evaluation construct, the indexing and referencing of previous studies was a large task, but ultimately, previous studies focusing on any aspect of higher education using the CSE measure were

extremely limited. The depth into which any one sub-trait was examined was limited but remained relevant to the scope of the current study.

The literature about community college faculty was sufficient to provide a good idea of the characteristics of the population as well as provide some insight into their teaching, service, and scholarly work, which make up the three main components of their work. However, the definitions of each of the three areas and the activities that fall into each component were vague and often varied. The most ambiguity arose in the categories of service and scholarly work. Many studies referenced faculty service, but the definitions varied widely as to what activities that included. Some studies focused on service as committee work, whereas others included service to the faculty's discipline outside of the community college context. The lack of agreement about what constitutes scholarly work was also on display in the existing literature with some studies focusing on refereed journal publications and others on a more wide-reaching and inclusive definition.

This study aimed quite simply to provide more context around what it is that community college faculty do, focusing on the three core components of faculty work and how they feel about it, using core self-evaluation theory as a lens for exploration. Rather than add another quantitative study to the existing literature, this study provides a more nuanced and intimate look at these unique faculty members and seeks to elevate the voices of the faculty themselves. Qualitative studies such as this are infrequent in the literature, and CSE theory provides a unique framework through which to discuss the findings.

Critique of Research Methods

The literature reviewed for this study was both qualitative and quantitative in methodological approach. Because of the reliance on demographic data collection, there was a heavy reliance on quantitative research particularly in the areas of community college faculty teaching, service, and scholarly work, as well as community college faculty in general.

Most of what we know about community college faculty comes largely from surveys (Townsend & Twombly, 2007) and provides quantitative data. For example, the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), “was conducted in response to a continuing need for data on faculty and instructors – persons who directly affect the quality of education in postsecondary institutions...NSOPF was the most comprehensive study of faculty in postsecondary educational institutions ever undertaken” (NSOPF, 2004). The last time the NSOPF was conducted was in 2004 just as the higher education institutions in the United States fell under increased scrutiny and oversight (TIAA CREF Institute, 2008), which means that a vital source of data about the workforce in these institutions was discontinued at a time when there should have been even more faculty voices being heard.

From the large pool of responses, the data collected on these NSOPF surveys provided an in-depth look at postsecondary faculty in the United States through primarily descriptive data, a percentage of which were employed at a community college. Many of the studies reviewed relied on the NSOPF surveys to provide the data set for specific analysis.

Survey research is an important tool for data collection because it allows researchers to describe the characteristics of a, often large, population (Frenkel et al., 2015). In this literature review, survey data collection was an important element in constructing a picture of community

college faculty, however, it simply did not capture the depth and richness of the hearts of the institution, the faculty. Further, “without qualitative research that captures community college faculty discourse and perspectives directly, quantitative survey-based research may be based on erroneous assumptions about what it means to be a community college faculty member” (Thirolf, 2015, p. 85).

Often, when studies are conducted regarding community colleges and community college faculty, they tend to be limited in scope to a specific community college system often focusing on the 113 colleges of the largest system in the country, California (Zanville, 2017). Since community colleges are not organized at the national level, there are often wide disparities in structure between states especially when it comes to the differences between unionized and non-unionized faculty which make generalizations among this group nearly impossible.

Another limitation in the way research has been conducted on community college faculty focuses on who is doing the research, as is described in Townsend and Twombly’s extensive ASHE Higher Education Report (2007):

Unlike research on four-year college and university faculty members, which is done by faculty members in those settings, it is faculty members in four-year universities who do much of the published research on community college faculty. To be sure, many of these individuals have worked at one time in community colleges, although others have not.

These others are outsiders in the sense that they have not worked at community colleges even if they teach about them. (p. 7)

Not only have the studies about community college faculty been lacking in number, but also a consistently narrowly defined narrative has been offered – the community college faculty

as a comparison group to their four-year counterparts. In most studies reviewed, higher education data was collected and then community college faculty had to be pulled out of the data set as a subgroup for examination. “These comparisons are important, even necessary, to put the community college professoriate in perspective. Given higher education’s tendency to privilege status, however, such comparisons often render the community college, its students, and its instructors as deficient” (Townsend & Twombly, 2008, p. 8).

Based on these limitations of previous research discussed--the over reliance on quantitative survey data, the limited scope, the overreliance on four-year faculty to conduct the research, and the lack of dedicated research focusing solely on community colleges--this study elevates the voices of the community college faculty. By conducting a qualitative study, focusing solely on the work of community college faculty, this study advances the rigor of study of community college faculty. As a community college faculty member, my unique positionality within the institution rather than as a four-year college faculty researcher, also advances the literature in this area.

Chapter Summary

The previous literature makes evident that community colleges, since their inception in the early 1900s, are continually evolving to remain relevant and vibrant institutions. Even while serving a massive amount of higher education students, the institutions themselves are often under immense scrutiny from governing bodies left dealing shrinking budgets a daunting public stigma.

The students who fill the classrooms at community colleges across the country continue to grow more diverse in background, educational preparation, and socioeconomic status. The

faculty who are tasked with teaching this unique student body are nuanced and their roles within the community college are often complex. Research surrounding community college faculty has been informative in terms of characteristics about this population and the work they perform. We know that community college faculty spend most of their time teaching, perform some service to their intuitions and perhaps complete some scholarly work, but lack any depth and exploration into these areas and have little understanding about how they feel about these components of their work.

A qualitative phenomenological study is an effective way to gather data in the form of interviews. The analysis of the data provides insight into areas of the literature about community college faculty where gaps exist. In the next chapter, a detailed discussion of the qualitative methodological approach for this study is outlined, including the setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis methods.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study sought to address the gaps in existing literature by exploring how community college faculty describe their work within the three components of teaching, service and scholarly work while also building a deeper level of understanding about how faculty feel about that work. Core Self-Evaluation theory serves as the theoretical lens in which this phenomenon will be viewed allowing for attitudes around self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability to guide the exploration into the lived experience of community college faculty.

Previous research conducted on community college faculty has been largely quantitative in nature and while this methodology has provided an understanding of the work that community college faculty undertake, there is a lack of depth to this understanding that only qualitative data can provide. The work that is being done in community colleges by the faculty has made real and meaningful differences in the lives of millions of students in the United States. Understanding the work of community college faculty is a powerful tool for the success of the students, the institutions in which they serve, and for the validity of the profession of community college educator.

This chapter provides further explanation about the purpose of this study as well as details the research design and the phenomenological methodology. First, participant selection and the measures taken to protect the participants is explained. Next, data collection procedures including instruments used and analysis as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) is covered. Lastly, ethical considerations surrounding the study are examined.

Purpose of Study

As previously discussed in Chapter One (see page 3), this study explored the lived experiences of community college faculty by focusing on how they describe and experience their work within the three components of teaching, service, and scholarly work. The study also seeks to build a deeper understanding from faculty about how they feel about those three components of their work.

This study fills a gap in the literature in three ways. First, the previous research surrounding community college faculty is largely quantitative in nature, while this study seeks to provide more qualitative insight into the lived experiences of the faculty. Second, a current community college faculty member has conducted the study. This adds to the very limited number of studies conducted by community college faculty in comparison to research performed by four-year faculty researchers. Lastly, the study itself focuses on community college faculty only and does not treat community college faculty as simply a subset in a larger pool of higher education faculty.

Community college faculty work is complex and personal. To advance the scholarship through a deeper understanding of these individuals, this qualitative phenomenological study used semi-structured interviews for data collection to allow the voices of community college faculty members to be elevated and to allow for the richness and essence of their experiences to be captured in a way that is simply not possible through quantitative survey studies. During the interviews, the researcher uncovered data that builds a deeper understanding of how faculty describe their work and how they feel about that work.

Research Questions

The research question that this study explored is:

How do community college faculty describe their lived experiences concerning their work?

Sub Questions:

How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

Research Design

The design of this qualitative phenomenological study was based off Creswell and Poth's (2018) approach to qualitative research generally and more specifically on Moustakas' (1994) procedures of conducting phenomenological research. Creswell and Poth (2018) provide their definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. (p. 8)

Creswell and Poth (2018) also comment on what the final product of a qualitative study should include. "The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the

reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (p. 43).

There are nine specific characteristics found in qualitative research as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 43-45) that inform this study:

- *Research is conducted in a natural setting (the field):* Interviews conducted will not be a lab, but rather in a face-to-face in person or synchronously online meeting.
- *Relies on the researcher as key instrument in data collection*
- *Involves using multiple methods:* multiple interviews as well as field notes and member checking will be utilized.
- *Involves complex reasoning going between inductive and deductive:* Utilizing Creswell and Poth’s (2018) as well as Moustakas’ (1994) data analysis methodology, the researcher will build patterns from the interview data to form the themes and interpretations for the study.
- *Focuses on participants’ multiple perspectives and meanings*
- *Is situated within the context or setting of participant sites:* The researcher will seek to understand contextual factors that may influence the participants.
- *Involves and emergent and evolving design*
- *Is reflective and interpretive of researcher’s background and influences:* Using Moustakas’ (1994) concept of Epoché, the researcher must first seek to understand how their own background may influence the interpretations they will uncover and then must

work to clear the prejudgments and biases to come to the phenomenon with an open consciousness.

- *Presents a holistic and complex picture*

This study relied on qualitative research because of the nature of the issue explored. Based on Creswell and Poth (2018), it is appropriate to use qualitative research under several circumstances, but specifically pertaining to this study, a qualitative approach was used because the issue that is being explored has variables that cannot be easily measured and because we need a complex and detailed understanding of the issue. The level of detail desired in this study “can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or have read in the literature” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45).

This study relies on phenomenology as the method of quantitative research. According to Moustakas (1994), the aim of phenomenological research is to:

Determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essence or structures of the experience. (p. 13)

Summarily, the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (‘a grasp of the very nature of the thing’)) (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). Through phenomenological research, the researcher collects data from individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon to create a description of “what they experienced and how they experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75).

Moustakas (1994) summarizes the validity of using a phenomenological approach to qualitative research. “In accordance with phenomenological principles, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience” (p. 84). Through interviews with the participants, this study explored the descriptions brought forth by those experiencing the phenomenon and sought to extrapolate the essence of the experience of being community college faculty.

Specifically, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used in this study because of the analysis process that involves a thorough examination of both experiences of the individual as well as the context of those experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain the process:

The researcher analyzes data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statement into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textual description of the experiences, a structural description, and a combination of the textual and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience. (p. 78)

Transcendental phenomenology includes the idea of Epoché, often referred to as bracketing, which means that the researchers attempt to, as much as possible, set their own experiences aside while attempting to gain knowledge. Moustakas (1994) provided a rich definition:

Epoché is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things. In the natural attitude we hold knowledge judgmentally; we presuppose that what we perceive in nature is actually there

and remains there as we perceive it. In contrast, Epoché requires a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to *see* what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe. (p. 33)

This study exemplifies both the descriptions and reasons for using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach. The research question for this study focuses on the lived experiences of community college faculty. Through qualitative data collection, community college faculty are able to provide insight into and share their stories about their lived experiences, which is a complex and nuanced area of study. The sub-questions under the umbrella of the research question focus on what the faculty do and how they feel about what they do. By using a transcendental phenomenological approach for the study, the faculty were able to share what their experiences have been and how they have experienced it. The researcher also embraced the ideology of examining this phenomenon using bracketing.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to target participants within the group of unlimited-full time faculty in community colleges in the Minnesota State system, and based on the guidance from Creswell and Poth (2018) that states “researchers can interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (p. 79), eight individuals were selected to interview. Besides fulfilling the criteria of having participants be unlimited full-time community college faculty, three additional inclusion criteria were used to guide the selection of participants: gender, geographic location, and variety of teaching disciplines. The ideal goal for the participant pool was four females and four males across four institutions in the Minnesota State system (one male and one female from each). Community colleges of roughly the same size in student

population that are geographically diverse were targets. The researcher also sought to include faculty from a variety of disciplines in both liberal arts as well as STEM.

The purpose of this study was not to provide mass generalizations or transferable interpretations about community college faculty, but rather add to the understanding and provide fresh insight into the lived experiences of these participants. As Seidman (2019) noted, “the job of an in-depth interviewer is to go to such depth in the interviews that surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual’s experience” (p.57). Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) clarify while referring to the researcher as the naturalist:

The naturalist cannot specify the external validity of the inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

The investigation of this phenomenon provides a lens through which other community college faculty, administration and stakeholders can examine their own experiences. This examination happens in two ways. First, the researcher found patterns and themes among the participants interviewed, and second, “by presenting the stories of participants’ experience, interviewers open for readers the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study” (Seidman, 2019, p. 58). This study also sought to fill gaps in the literature surrounding qualitative data and community college faculty.

Procedures

Participant Selection

Each of the participants in this study was an unlimited full-time (UFT) faculty member at a community college within the Minnesota State System. Four institutions were utilized to ensure geographic diversity, and although one institution had to be eliminated, and another institution used as a substitute, all participants were eligible for the study based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria laid out in Chapter Three.

The four community colleges utilized include one college located in the northern region of the system, two colleges located in the midsection of the region, and a college located in the southern region of the Minnesota State System. The community college size was determined by the number of all undergraduate students enrolled, including both full-time and part-time students, as of Fall 2017. The student enrollment data was obtained through the Minnesota Department of Higher Education. The community colleges selected as pools for the participants were situated in the mid-range of total number of enrollments in the system.

Two recruitment strategies were used to gather participants for the study. An email from the researcher was sent to the MSCF union leadership on the selected campuses with a request that they provide contact information of people who they thought would be good options for the researcher to contact. All MSCF leadership stated that they were not willing to provide specific references but were willing to send an email to their faculty campus community, which they did. From the emails sent to the faculty at the institutions, the researcher was able to gain most of the participants. To ensure that there was a large enough pool of eligible participants, the researcher also asked for assistance with recruitment from a colleague in the form of recommended individuals to reach out to and inquire about their interest and eligibility.

The researcher recognized the potential for bias of union membership in the participant pool by approaching the recruitment through a MSCF union leader; however, in order to protect the participants, the researcher wanted to avoid going through any formal administrator gatekeepers to recruit participants. Because of the relatively small number of participants in the study, it was of utmost importance that the anonymity of the participants be protected, especially from those who directly supervise their work. The researcher did have reservations that the leadership recruitment would result in a pool limited to only faculty who are also union members. However, the fact that over 95% of UFT in the Minnesota State community colleges are union members helped ensure that a large population was not excluded from being recommended for the study (G. Long, personal communication, February 18, 2021).

The pool of interested participants were first emailed a Qualtrics survey where they were provided with a brief introduction to the study, and an estimated time commitment. In turn, the potential participants were asked to provide their names, a non-Minnesota State email address and a toggle choice asking the respondent respond to the following questions:

1. Are you a UFT faculty member at your institution?
2. Gender
3. Department or Discipline

By asking the screening questions, the researcher ensured the final candidate pool was varied by both gender and academic disciplines represented.

Based on the responses, the interested participants were all eligible for the study and were asked to return a signed informed consent document (Appendix A) and once returned, the

participants and researcher scheduled an interview time and date to take place via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All participants were interviewed for approximately one hour at their scheduled time via Zoom. The interviews were recorded, and the researcher utilized the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) as a way of structuring the conversations. If there were other topics that came up and were deemed valuable by the researcher for further exploration, the conversations included those topics. In other words, although a semi-structured interview guide was used, there was still room in the interviews for exploration of topics that arose organically. The researcher felt this necessary to get to the heart of the lived experiences of the participants. While the option of a follow-up interview with the candidates was available, by the end of the initial interviews, a saturation point had been reached with over eight hours of interview time with the participants.

Description of Sample

The eight participants interviewed for this study ranged in age from 30-63. All participants were unlimited full-time faculty (UFT) at two-year colleges within the Minnesota State System. Half of the participants had a master's degree and the other half held doctorate degrees at the time of the interviews. Echoing the lack of diversity in the UFT position within Minnesota State, seven of the eight participants identified as White while there was one participant who identified as Asian. While a more diverse participant pool would have been preferred, having one of eight participants identify as non-White constitutes a higher percentage of representation in this study than is present in the Minnesota State System (12.5% vs. 8.64%) among UFTs. The eight participants are represented in the table below and in the findings included in this study.

Table 2*Key Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Demographic Characteristic	Number
Gender	
Female	5
Male	3
Age Range	30-63
Highest Degree Attained	
Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree	4
Professional Degree	
Doctorate / Terminal Degree	4
Years in Current Position Range	3-31
Ethnicity	
White	7
Black or African American	
American Indian or Alaska Native	
Asian	1
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
Other	
Disciplines Represented	Biology, Chemistry, Dental Assisting, Education, English, Geo Science, History, Nursing

Protection of Participants

As stated, an informed consent document was sent to participants electronically prior to the interviews (Appendix A). The informed consent form outlined the rights of the individuals regarding participation in the study, including the right to withdraw their participation at any time. To protect the identity of participants, each participant was assigned a participant number, which was used to identify that participant throughout the data collection and in the analysis of the individual case record. In addition, to help protect confidentiality of participants, the storage of data and notes was kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher.

Data Collection

The quantitative interview is described as an “attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). In-depth, semi-structured interviews served as the data collection method for this study. Using an interview protocol, all participants were asked the same questions, but the researcher had the freedom to ask follow-up questions to probe the participant about responses or clarify concepts. Moustakas (1994) suggests that while not always necessary, a general interview guide, such as the one used in this study, “may facilitate the obtaining of rich vital, substantive descriptions of the co-research’s (participant’s) experience of the phenomenon” (p. 116).

Once the participants were identified, the informed consent form was sent to them via email for review and signature. The interviewees did not have access to the questions ahead of time, as phenomenological research values exploration over answers. In fact, Seidman (2019) argued that interview guides can be useful; they must be used with caution.

While Seidman (2019) lays out a three-interview process for conducting phenomenological research, others focus on two interviews (Gorgi, 1985). Moustakas (1994) indicates that typically the long interview is the format through which data is collected for phenomenological research but offers little guidance by way of more explanation. The number of interviews seems to be more of a personal choice made by the researcher than an absolute formula. “Relatively little research has been done on the effects of following one procedure over the other...the governing principle in designing interviewing projects might well be to strive for a rational process that is both repeatable and documentable” (Seidman, 2019, p. 25). Seidman (2019) asserts that as long as there is more than one interview conducted, the ultimate goal of

extracting the essence of the phenomenon can be met, maintaining that “interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging one-shot meetings with an ‘interviewee’ whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice” (p. 21).

In this study, while the option of two interviews was available, the researcher did not need a second interview with participants to reach the point of saturation. Peoples (2021) summarized the two-interview method that Girogi (1985) championed here:

A semi structured interview is used for the initial individual interviews to permit the essential methodical spontaneity of phenomenological research. Individual follow-up interviews are used to fill the gaps that exist in the data collected. Gaps consist of either excluded data or areas that are implicit or deficient in any way (perhaps the participant did not finish a narrative for one reason or another). This method of collecting data first allows the lived essence of circumstances to operate spontaneously through the first interview and then are assessed more precisely. (p. 52)

According to Seidman (2019), the interviews should be deliberately spaced apart by a range of three to seven days because “this allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview, but not enough time to lose the connection between the two” (p. 27). Also recommended by Seidman (2019) is that the interviews last 90 minutes, asserting that a 60-minute interview “carries with it the consciousness of a standard unit of time that can have participants ‘watching the clock’” (p. 26). However, Seidman (2019) goes on to note that there is nothing absolute about this time frame for interviews, but what is most important is that the length be determined before the interview process begins in a study. Seidman (2019) seemed to realize that his method for conducting phenomenological interviews would have to be flexible

stressing that ultimately what matters is reaching your research goals, thus, the researcher relied on one 60-minute interview with each participant to conduct the study.

Participants in this study were interviewed synchronously over a secure and password protected web-based video conferencing tool, Zoom. While the researcher would have preferred to conduct the interviews in person, the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for that option. Because an online interview was used for interviews with the participants, considerations of the method's strengths and weaknesses were considered.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) provided a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of online interviews with the main strengths being that the researcher is no longer constrained by geographic distance and that the online meeting software allows for recording which may help with review of nonverbal communication. Added to the strengths of the online synchronous interview are that during a global health pandemic, it may be the only safe way to connect with study participants. The weaknesses noted included the inevitable technological issues that arise when electronics are brought into the equation as well as increased security concerns of the participant's data.

All synchronous online interviews were recorded via Zoom (zoom.us). There were several benefits to recording the interviews, including being able to check for accuracy, providing a way for the researcher to study their own techniques, and assuring participants that there is a record of what they said (Seidman, 2019). The researcher also took field notes to document any thoughts, questions, or observations that arose during the interview process.

There is much debate among scholars about the inclusion of validation in qualitative research, from Wolcott (1990) believing that even the idea distracts from the research to Lather's

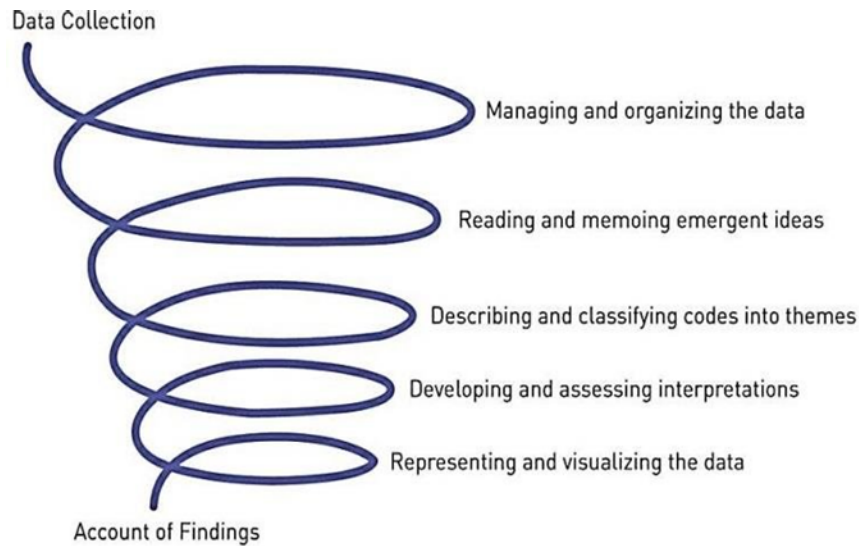
(1993) postmodern reconceptualization of validation, it is up to the individual researcher to choose the type and terms they are comfortable with (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendation that at least two validation strategy are used in a qualitative study, this study will employ the use of clarifying researcher bias and member checking. Through clarifying the biases of the researcher, the Epoché that is necessary for transcendental phenomenology can be more closely achieved. Member checking as a method of validation "involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261).

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was through interviews with community college faculty. "The term data analysis is not completely in line with phenomenological inquiry simply because analysis means to break into parts, whereas phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand the phenomenon as a whole" (Peoples, 2021, p. 57). However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher will use the term data analysis and will follow Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step data analysis spiral (see figure 5) as a general framework and Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, specifically.

Figure 5

Creswell and Poth (2018) Data Analysis Spiral



Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that qualitative analysis be thought of as having two layers, with the first layer consisting of the general data analysis spiral and the second layer being specifically tailored to the researcher's approach in order to avoid generic analysis and to provide a rich and specific set of procedures. Creswell and Poth (2018) offer a simplified five-step version of Moustaks' (1994) method, which is listed here and will be incorporated into each step of the data analysis spiral as discussed below:

1. Describe personal experience with the phenomenon under study.
2. Develop a list of significant statements.
3. Group significant statements into broader units of information.
4. Create a description of the 'what' the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon.

5. Draft a description of 'how' the experience happened.
6. Write a composite description of the phenomenon. (p. 201)

When working with qualitative interview data, the first thing the researcher must do is set up a system to manage and organize the vast amount of data files that will be generated. While considering the organizational elements of this study, the researcher adhered to achieving two goals set out by Seidman (2019), the first being that at any point in the process, the researcher could locate the original source on the audio recordings and second, that the researcher could contact the participants easily. A separate password-protected hard drive was used with the data from the study as well as a password-protected cloud backup system on the researcher's computer. Data collected from this study was clearly labeled and segregated from other files. Information from this study will be kept securely until May 2024, at which point all information will be destroyed.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed through a secure, automated transcription service, Trint. After the automated transcription process was complete, the researcher read the transcript while listening to the audio recording to ensure basic accuracy. Within the transcripts, each line of text was numbered along with each question being numbered to ensure information could be easily returned to during analysis. The last step taken before beginning to memo was to read the interview transcript one time without making any notes. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that "scanning the text allows the researcher to build a sense of the data as a whole before getting caught up in the coding" (p. 188).

As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, "the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process--they are interrelated and often go on

simultaneously in a research project” (p. 185). As the researcher collected data through the interviews, they were transcribed and initially analyzed before the potential second interview was scheduled. By conducting ongoing analysis, the researcher was able to look for any gaps in the data that may have warranted a second interview.

Reading and memoing is the next step in Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral after managing and organizing data. While reading the transcripts several times, the researcher will start to synthesize the data by jotting down phrases, words, ideas, or concepts that come to mind. From these written memos, initial codes will be developed. During the memoing phase of data collection, “the researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text” (Seidman, 2019, p. 126).

In the third step of the data analysis spiral, the researcher moves from reading and memoing into describing and classifying codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the coding stage, Moustakas’ (1994) methodology prescribes that the researcher lists all non-repetitive and nonoverlapping statements, which he calls meaning units of the experience. “Coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Cresswell & Poth, 2018, p. 190). Creswell and Poth’s (2018) recommendation to practice lean coding will be followed which recommends that the researcher begin with just 5-6 initial codes and only add additional codes when necessary. The codes may swell into 25-30 categories, but ultimately the goal is to reduce the codes back down into just a handful of themes at the end of the analysis. Because this process is repeated several times throughout the analysis process, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend the use of a codebook which captures the boundaries for

each code and should contain the name of the code and any shorthand labels used, boundaries for the code, and examples of the code from the study.

As the codes are applied to the data, the researcher should start to classify that data into general themes, which will be refined and revised as more ideas emerge from the transcripts. According to Moustakas (1994), this is an important step in the process because it removes repetition and creates clusters of broader units from which the researcher can begin to regard as themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend grouping the information into five to seven themes in order to work towards the final narrative. When it comes to the coding, there is no one right way to do it other than for the researcher to acknowledge that they are exercising judgement about what is significant. Seidman (2019) reinforces the researcher as the owner of the study stating that “what is of essential interest is embedded in each research topic and will arise from each transcript. Interviewers must affirm their own ability to recognize it” (p. 127). In this study, supporting data from the interviews will be kept grouped by theme for consistency, revision, and ease of retrieval. Seidman (2019) also offers advice for the memoing and coding process to remember the humans behind the words. “When coding or memoing, consistently remember that the words being read were uttered by a human being who lives in a certain context in the world with others” (p. 67).

The next step in the data analysis funnel (Creswell & Poth, 2018) is developing and assessing interpretations. “Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 195). In this stage, the researcher worked to link interpretations to the larger literature surrounding community college faculty and the theoretical framework, where applicable, but with the understanding that these interpretations were seen as “tentative, inconclusive, and questioning”

(Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 195). Moustakas (1994) viewed this step as essential to the analysis process because it ultimately provides the foundation for interpretation to take place.

Lastly, the researcher represented and visualized the data. During this step, in addition to member checking, three things occur in a phenomenological study analysis according to Moustakas (1994):

1. *A textual description is developed- “what happened”*: referred to as textual description, this focuses on what the participants experienced and includes verbatim examples.
2. *A structural description is developed- “how the phenomenon was experienced”*: referred to as structural description, whereas the researcher shares their reflection on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.
3. *Using a composite description, the “essence” is developed*: This includes both textual and structural descriptions and creates a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole.

Seidman (2019) sums up the final interpretation process that a researcher goes through when conducting a phenomenological study:

The last stage of interpretation, then consistent with the interview process itself, asks researchers what meaning they have made of their work. In the course of interviewing, researchers asked the participants what their experience meant to them. Now, they have the opportunity to respond to the same question. (p. 137)

Instruments

Role of the Researcher

One of the defining characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher serves as the key instrument. Peoples (2021) makes the distinction between instrumentation in quantitative versus qualitative research:

One major difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches is that in-depth interviewing, we recognize and affirm the role of the instrument, the human interviewer. Rather than decriing the fact that the instrument is used to gather data affects this process, we say that the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding. (p.28)

Because the researcher serves as the instrument for the study, they must position themselves within the study. Through reflexivity “the researchers convey their background, how it informs their interpretation of the information in a study, and what they have to gain from the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44). This process also helps to identify existing biases to achieve the Epoché necessary for a phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) contends researchers must not simply engage in the process of Epoché on the outset of the study, but instead that it should be a continuous process in which the researcher filters prejudgments and biases.

Previous Knowledge and Bias

To understand others’ experiences, the researcher must explore their own. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state,

Prior to interviewing those who have had direct experience with the phenomenon, the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. (p. 27)

In a phenomenological study, the process of Epoché, or bracketing, is done to attempt to not eliminate, but rather set aside one's own judgements and beliefs and experience to be able to revisit the phenomenon in a fresh and open way (Moutsakas, 1994).

There is debate about the timing of bracketing within a study. Giorgi (1998) advocates for bracketing to take place only in the analysis phase arguing that it is more important to engage with the participant than to hold preconceptions back. Tufford and Newman (2010) argue, and Moustakas (1994) agrees that preconceptions follow the researcher through all phases of the research and may have an effect on the overall study if not addressed:

It is particularly important that initial preconceptions arising from personal experience with the research material are surfaced prior to undertaking the research project; they should also be monitored throughout the research endeavor as both a potential source of insight as well as potential obstacles to engagement. (p. 85).

This study did not limit bracketing to the analysis of the data, but rather, the researcher monitored biases and preconceptions throughout the entire research process to ensure that subjectivity can was achieved.

The researcher brought to the study almost a decade of working in a community college as a UFT faculty member. While in the role, I have taught many classes, provided a wide variety of service to the college, and now, in pursuit of the Educational Doctorate, I am participating in

“traditional” academic scholarship. However, I would argue that I have been participating in the scholarship of teaching and learning since I became a faculty member.

My strongest bias lies in the fact that I come to this study with experience about how difficult and emotionally exhausting the job of community college faculty can be and expect to hear that echoed in the participant interviews, which is why the process of bracketing is so important in this study. When a researcher is close to the subject they are studying it is not only important to the participants for the researcher to maintain objectivity, but for the researcher as well, Tufford and Newman (2010) explain why:

Given the sometimes close relationship between the researcher and the research topic that may both precede and develop during the process of qualitative research, bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material. (p. 81)

While I recognize my biases and strong beliefs regarding the experiences of community college faculty, it is imperative to allow the data collected from the interviews be the voices of the participants. The basis of social constructivism is that multiple realities are constructed through our experiences, and while I have had much experience as faculty in a community college, the researcher can also maintain the necessary objectivity knowing that each individual, including the study participants, experiences and interprets events and meanings differently.

Qualifications

For the data collection in this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted synchronously online, as health precautions allowed, as the data collection period took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher’s formal training and experience with

conducting interviews comes primarily through the courses completed as part of the Doctor of Education program at Minnesota State University Moorhead. Specifically, coursework completed in the ED 705 Qualitative Research Methods course will help guide the interview process in addition to the interviewing processes as outlined by Seidman (2019), and Creswell and Poth (2018). These authors will provide guidance on interview protocol, transcribing, and data analysis including coding and creating themes.

Additionally, the researcher has an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in communication studies, thus bringing a rich understanding of the human dynamics in play during an interview. Picking out meaningful phrases and language and creating themes is a skill that is highly developed when conducting rhetorical analysis in the study of communication. The researcher will rely on that analytical skill as coding takes place and themes emerge in the study.

As a doctoral student, this was the researcher's first formal attempt at using interviews for a full-scale study. As someone who has studied and taught about communication for a large part of her adult life, the researcher has a belief that everyone has story and experiences life in a unique way, and as Seidman states, "at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individual stories because they are of worth" (p. 9).

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Poth (2018) have provided a framework for ethical considerations throughout the different phases of the research process. There are ethical considerations to consider prior to conducting the study such as college approval for the study, as well as issues as the researcher is beginning the study such as consent forms. As the data is collected, the researcher must take into consideration the ethical issues of data storage, respecting any potential

power imbalances and avoiding deception of participants. During the analysis phase, the researcher must be sure to uphold ethical standards by protecting the participant's privacy. Lastly, in the reporting data and publishing phases of a study, many ethical considerations need to be met such as truthfully reporting results and making sure that the report is available for those who were participants.

IRB Approval

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher submitted documentation, including an informed consent document for participants in this study, to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Minnesota State University, Moorhead and received approval for the research (see Appendix A for a copy of the informed consent document). Informed consent is a critical component of any research conducted using human participants and outlines the purpose of the study, the confidentiality measures that will be taken, and the ability for the participants to withdraw at any time during the study without penalty.

While the IRB board exists to protect the welfare of human subjects recruited to participate in research (Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2021), Seidman (2019) provides an important reminder to researchers who have gained IRB approval. "It is essential to point out that the IRB process and informed consent are a beginning and not the end of our ethical responsibilities to our participants" (p. 84).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality in qualitative research is critical and assumed. "The standard assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that participants will remain unidentified. That assumption has implications for the interviewers from the moment they start their research" (Seidman, 2019,

p. 70). Based on the importance of confidentiality of the participants, the researcher must consider and provide documentation in the informed consent as to how privacy will be maintained.

To protect the identity of participants in this study, each participant was assigned a pseudonym used to identify that participant throughout the data collection and in the analysis of the individual case record. The participant identifier/pseudonym document was stored electronically in a file on a password-protected computer (and not on any Minnesota State campus or on any Minnesota State owned computers or storage). After the member checks are completed, the identifier/pseudonym document will be permanently deleted

Member Checks

Often considered the most critical technique in qualitative research, member checking is a validation strategy in which feedback is solicited from the participants regarding the findings and interpretations from the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Seidman, 2019). “This approach, writ large in most qualitative studies, involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). Throughout the member checking process, ethical issues may arise. There may be things included in the interviews that participants later ask to delete that inform part of an analysis by the researcher they thought was valuable. When working with participants that play a role in the research, the most important thing is to be explicit about participant’s rights and provide a clear framework in which to work (Seidman, 2019).

In this study, member checks were used in the transcription process only. According to Seidman (2019), participants may not always agree with the results of the interpretation, but that

does not mean that they are inaccurate, thus he advises that member checks be employed only in the transcription process. The participants will be emailed copies of their transcribed interviews to provide the opportunity to ensure the accuracy of the interviews by the researcher.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of community college faculty by focusing on how they describe and experience their work within three components of teaching, service, and scholarly work. The study also sought to build a deeper understanding from faculty about how they feel about those three components of their work.

In order to capture the essence of the lived experiences of community college faculty, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection in this qualitative phenomenological study. Semi-structured interviews provided the richest data from the interviews by allowing the researcher to “construct interview questions relevant to the research question so that key aspects of the research study are sure to be covered while allowing for participants to discuss information that may end up being relevant to the study” (Seidman, 2019, p. 52).

A purposive sampling design was used as the primary way in which to identify and recruit participants for the study. The process of purposive sampling was used in this study because it meant that “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon to be studied” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). Specifically, a combination of criterion and convenience type of purposeful design was used. This means that participants who are easily accessible to the researcher are used if they meet the criteria set forth in the study for participants

(Plinkas, et al., 2016). Based on the guidance from Creswell and Poth (2018) that states, “researchers can interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (p. 79), eight individuals were selected to interview for the study.

The data analysis process was guided by Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral. The analysis process happened in concert with the data collection process, so the researcher was able to address any gaps in the data. Member checking by the participants took place after the initial transcription of interviews. The researcher engaged in memoing and classifying codes and developing a code book. From the codes, the researcher detailed themes that emerged, and lastly, the data was interpreted and represented by the researcher.

Participants in the study were provided an informed consent form outlining their rights and the procedures for the research. Seidman (2019) states that while qualitative interviews may not be life and death, they do pose some risk that needs to be outlined to participants.

In the process of interviewing, a measure of intimacy may develop between interviewers and participants. That intimacy may lead participants to share aspects of their lives that may cause discomfort and even some degree of emotional distress during the interview process. (p. 66)

In addition to providing the participants with an informed consent document, which was included in Minnesota State’s IRB approval that the study received, Creswell and Poth’s (2018) framework for ethical considerations throughout the different phases of the research process was followed by the researcher. Additionally, biases were held in check through the process of bracketing to allow for the voices of the participants to come through in the research and not be influenced by the researcher’s preconceptions.

Chapter Four focuses on findings and provides details regarding the obtained sample for the study. It also details the research methodology applied to the data analysis and presents the data and results of the analysis in detail.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of community college faculty by focusing on how they describe and experience their work within three components of teaching, service, and scholarly work. Chapters one through three introduced the study, provided the literature review, covered the methodological assumptions and approach, and outlined the overall research design. Chapter Four describes the role of the researcher, the sample of research participants, and then discusses how the research methodology was used, and how the data analysis was conducted. A presentation of the data and the results of the analysis are provided utilizing the phenomenological approach.

Researcher's Role

Understanding the work one undertakes and how one fits into the larger picture of their profession is a natural desire for most individuals. When the researcher first started teaching at a community college as an adjunct fifteen years ago there was a lack of preparation and understanding about what this type of teaching would entail. Having attended small private colleges for both undergraduate and graduate degrees, suddenly being placed in the classroom at a community college was a wake-up call on many levels including student academic preparation, socioeconomic factors, and complicated dynamics rather than mere presence to teach a college course. The learning curve was steep, but the work proved to be addicting. Six years after that first foray into a community college classroom as an adjunct, the researcher moved into a full-time teaching role at a community college. Even with the plethora of challenges that educators face in these two-year institutions, the researcher noticed that most of her colleagues, whether they had been on the job for three years or 30 years, were passionate, energized, and engaged in

their teaching. The researcher's experience as a community college faculty member shaped this study. During the study, the researcher worked diligently to stay objective and practice Epoché to bracket out her own experiences.

Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis

Following Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral as a general framework and Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, specifically, the researcher is called upon to first set aside judgement of the phenomenon and to "abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). To do this, the researcher must employ Epoché, or bracketing, to set aside one's own judgements, beliefs, and experiences to be able to revisit the phenomenon in a new way. The process of Epoché needs to happen throughout the study and a thorough description of the researcher's role was provided earlier in the chapter.

Using Trint, a cloud-based transcription service, the video recordings from the Zoom interviews were transcribed. Once the automated transcription process was completed, the researcher read the transcript while listening to the audio recording to ensure basic accuracy and authenticity. After the initial proofing for accuracy by the researcher, the transcripts were then sent to the participant to ensure accuracy and validity through member checking. The participants were given the opportunity to omit, change or add additional comments. No changes were made to the transcripts through the member checking process, as all participants approved the transcripts as provided.

Before the researcher began the process of memoing and eventually coding, the proofed and member checked transcripts were read one at a time without taking any notes as

recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018). This allowed the researcher to become immersed in the stories and accounts from the participants without getting caught up in coding during the initial readings.

The next step in data analysis, as described by Moustakas (1994) was to group significant statements into broader units of information. Through the utilization of open coding, the researcher developed several dozen emergent codes. The memoing and coding processes were done by hand on paper copies of the transcripts using a color coded and notes system. Those notes were then transferred into Trint for organizational purposes. The researcher was deliberate in the decision to hand code versus using a computer program for analysis. As Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that “some researchers note concerns with positioning a computer between the researcher and the actual data to producing an uncomfortable distance or hindering the creative process of analysis” (p. 209). The researcher believes that qualitative data is personal, complex, and nuanced and that the use of computer analysis programs creates a barrier between the researcher and the participants. The researcher followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) suggestion to use a hybrid approach with the data and use computers for the management of the data, not the actual analysis. While this process proved to be labor intensive, it also allowed the researcher to be personally immersed and connected to the data, and thus feel a deep and genuine connection to the participant’s stories.

After several readings and coding passes took place of each transcript, the significant statements from the participants were reorganized based on theme so all the data could be housed together in each of the thematic areas. Once the data were organized, the researcher created tables (Appendices C-F) to allow for visualization of the data as well as to show alignment at each step of analysis from the raw data to evidence to emergent code to theme. This also allowed

the researcher to group the themes in accordance with the appropriate research question. Based on the themes and subthemes that emerged in the analysis process, the researcher was able to create textual descriptions of the participants experiences (the what) as well as structural descriptions (the how) to form a composite description of the phenomenon under study (the essence) (Moustakas, 1994).

The analysis of the data lead to 16 themes and seven subthemes which were derived from nearly 100 pages of transcribed interviews and are discussed in the following section. While subthemes are used sparingly in this analysis, they are present to further describe different dimensions that emerged under the umbrella of a theme. The researcher made the decision to include subthemes as part of the analysis to highlight often mentioned and salient topics that emerged through conversations with the participants. For instance, while faculty expressed student challenges, the sheer number of different challenges that were discussed in the interviews warranted the development of subthemes to capture the complexity of the overall theme. Although findings from this study are not generalizable because of the deeply personal experiences of the participants, through direct quotes by the participants themselves, a story emerges of the three components of faculty work (teaching, service, and scholarly work) from which the researcher created a composite description of the lived experience of community college faculty was made.

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The themes that emerged from the data are provided in this section. Direct quotes from participants are used to highlight the themes that emerged through the research and provide answers and context for the research question and sub questions explored in this study (see appendices C-F).

Research Question

How do community college faculty describe their lived experiences concerning their work?

Sub Questions:

How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

As Frechette et al. (2020) stated, “generally, the research question(s) will flow from the objective and break down the phenomenon to be examined into smaller parcels” (p. 6). Because of the multifaceted nature of the research sub questions, the findings will be broken out into smaller parcels representing each of the three areas explored consisting of teaching, service, and scholarly work. The main research question will be answered last in this section because of the overarching nature of the response. Since the overall objective of this study was to examine the lived experiences of community college faculty, or what Moustakas (1994) refers to as the *essence* of the experience, this is best captured at the conclusion of the sub questions findings to provide rich context for the reader.

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the teaching component of their job?

In analyzing the data, four main themes emerged regarding the teaching component of faculty work. Five subthemes also emerged around the theme of student diversity which were included in the analysis because of the extensive way faculty discussed the students. Based on the interviews, it would be an oversimplification to simply group all the dimensions of diversity of students into one large theme. Instead, the researcher created subthemes to provide richer context around the areas of student diversity that were most often discussed by participants.

Theme One: Challenges of student diversity. Since being a faculty member at a community college means that teaching is the primary work component, it was likely that students would come up in the interviews. Most of the participants in the study commented on the diversity of the students coming into their classrooms and the many challenges that it presented. Diversity included areas such as first-generation college students, students coming back for a career change, and a spectrum of abilities. Within the theme of challenges of student diversity, five subthemes emerged including student attitudes towards learning, diversity of academic ability, competing demands, accommodations, and PSEO.

Subtheme 1. Attitudes towards learning. Participants described the challenges they faced in the classroom given the diverse attitudes about learning from the students. Participant One simply stated, “*my biggest challenge is the diversity of attitudes towards learning in the classroom.*” The participants lamented the fact that often it feels as though students are simply going through the motions instead of engaging in genuine learning. Participant Four summed up the attitude of many of the participants stating, “*I feel like they don’t understand they are getting an education and not [just] a degree. They’re so focused on checking the boxes and getting to the piece of paper that they don’t learn the information as they go.*” Participants expressed displeasure in the idea that students don’t put in the work to engage in the material. When referring to the student effort for a class quiz, Participant Three recalled:

I said, guess what? More than 50% of you didn’t even look at my prerecorded lectures.

I don’t know what else to tell you. I’m leading you. I’m showing you the way. I’m leading in the right direction. You need to do the work!

Subtheme 2. Academic ability. While some participants in the study noted that some students are exceptional, for the most part, the interviewees expressed the challenge of having student who were lacking in academic ability. Participant One noted that there were students in the class that they suspected were “illiterate” and Participant Four explained “*I have watched students pull out calculators to take one times five in my classroom.*”

Participants even noted that the academic inability of some of their students was so severe and they were starting from such a deficit that they were not sure if there was anything they could do. Participant six reflected, “*there is a limit to how far you can bring a student’s skill level. You’ve got 16 weeks to turn them into a college level reader and writer.*”

Subtheme 3. Competing demands. Community college students are often non-traditional and face many competing demands. As Participant Seven stated:

They have so many other things going on in their lives. I tell them all the time; school should not be your number one priority when you have all these things. I’m not saying it shouldn’t be a priority, but I understand it’s not your number one when you have kids, they’re your number one. Even a job comes before school.

While the participants understood that there were many competing demands, they wanted to be realistic with the students and share that often with all the competing demands, students simply cannot succeed unless they dedicate themselves to the pursuit of their education. Participant Three shared what she tells students at the beginning of their studies. “*It’s hardly possible to pass this program if you’re working full time and you’re a mom. You have to work; you have to dedicate yourself and you have to prioritize.*”

Subtheme 4. Accommodations. Faculty expressed concern with meeting student accommodations citing a lack of support, lack of resources, and their own limitations as factors that created difficulty meeting those accommodations. For some, the sheer number of students with accommodations in their classes felt overwhelming. Participant Three stated “*this year was my first time experiencing accommodation, accessibility services, and we had that for six students, which was almost a quarter of my class.*”

Many participants expressed concerns that there was a lack of support at the institutional level to help them manage student accommodations. Participant Three summarized many frustrations brought forth by the participants. “*If you’re going to say they need accommodations, this office of accessibility services needs to have the tools and the personnel to assist with that.*” The pressure that the participants felt to enact student accommodations was noted throughout the discussions on teaching. Participant Four stated that when dealing with meeting a student accommodation, “*I got the feeling like he expected me to change my entire teaching style just for him.*”

Subtheme 5. PSEO. Some participants discussed Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) students as being capable learners. Participant Eight noted “*I’ve seen some students who were really like the top, really good. They adapt really well to college.*” However, for most of the participants, PSEO students were cited as a challenge in the teaching component of their jobs. Participant Six revealed that “*by far, the most difficult part of the student part of the equation is PSEO.*” Most participants cited lack of preparation when discussing PSEO students. Participant Six also stated:

There are, unfortunately, PSEO students who are ill prepared for college level coursework, whether it's being able to read and comprehend the material or write about it, particularly writing skills. If it were up to me, we'd have much stricter limits on who would be eligible as a PSEO student.

Participant Four added that community colleges already face a stigma, and part of that is because of PSEO students, positing *"I hate to say it, I think some of it's because of the PSEO, because we have high school students coming in and taking college classes."*

Theme Two: More than teaching content. Several participants felt that teaching encompassed more than just the delivery of content. In fact, discipline specific content was rarely mentioned in the interviews outside of providing examples in other areas of discussion. Instead, the participants spoke in-depth about their charge as community college faculty to help students realize their full potential rather than memorize content. Participant One simply stated, *"I work on people."* While Participant Eight commented on the relational nature of teaching expressing *"education is relational to me. People to ideas, people to each other, people to the big questions, people to themselves."*

With the notion that teaching was so much more than just delivering content, many participants expressed that they were becoming, as Participant Eight put it, *"less convinced that success is defined by grades."* In fact, many interviewees held that grades stifle creativity and that students can become overly concerned with a letter grade rather than the learning.

Participant Seven verbalized that she must communicate these thoughts to her students stating, *"I always tell my students, I know you think it, but a grade doesn't define you."* Expressing frustration, Participant Eight stated:

I have students sometimes say, what do I need to get an A? I want to say never ask that question, because if you ask that question, you're not an excellent student because you're just trying to do what someone else tells you to do.

Many participants expressed that there was simply too much content in their subject areas to teach with any sort of impact, and so instead, they focused on what they deemed was important and slowed down the pace. Participant One explains:

There's always way too much material to expect anyone to commit to any kind of memory besides short-term regurgitation memory, which is useless over time. Nobody will ever sit in a job interview where a potential employer says, 'are you good at taking tests?' No student will ever get asked that and so I deemphasize the need for committing to short term memory.

Theme Three: Evaluation. For many participants, the process of being formally evaluated in the classroom by an administrator was discussed with sarcasm. The frequency of teaching evaluations seemed to flummox many of the participants with Participant Two stating that “*someone does a formal evaluation of teaching every three years*” to the opposite end of the spectrum with Participant Six commenting “*out of my 30-year career, [I've had] three formal observations and evaluations.*” Most participants knew there was some language around formal teaching observations in their contracts but were not certain what that document stipulated.

When formal evaluations were performed, usually by the participant's dean, the experience was primarily described in lackluster terms and negative examples from the participants. Participant Two described their experience with formal teaching evaluations. “*They give me all of these, it was great, people were engaged, and blah, blah, blah. I do not really rely*

on that professional feedback to determine if I'm doing a good job." Participant Five stated similar a sentiment about formal teaching evaluations describing their last experience:

She [the dean] sat through the entire course and just said wonderful things and didn't offer any kind of advice, criticism, etc. She just said that you're exceptional and I checked all of the boxes. So, I have never had in my entire career anything that I would have said was incredibly useful feedback in a formalized setting.

Likewise, Participant Seven described their most recent teaching evaluation. "I didn't find it valuable at all because they'd be like, 'you're doing a fine job' and I was like thanks for wasting my time." Participant One summed up the participant's general attitudes about formal teaching evaluations stating, "Faculty in general take that with a grain of salt, and I think even the dean takes it with a grain of salt because they are so far removed from teaching."

Instead of relying on formal teaching evaluations, participants overwhelmingly noted that they rely on student feedback, both on course evaluations and verbally, to tell if they are doing a good job. Participant Seven explained, "to really know if I'm doing a good job, is do the students know how to get help if they need it? In those evaluations when they're asked, is the instructor approachable, what are they responding with?" Participant Four further added:

I know that I'm doing a good job when I have students come to my office and ask me questions, and I know that seems silly, but they wouldn't come ask me questions if they didn't think that I was approachable and that I could give them an answer that would be helpful to them. I know I'm going a good job when I have a student email me and say I was really scared to take this kind of class in high school and thank you so much because now I'm not afraid. I know I'm a success when I see students around town who don't

hide. It's because of the feedback I get from my students that I know I've been successful.

Theme Four: “Confidence comes from experience” – Participant Two. Lack of confidence and the transition into being confident teachers was discussed by many of the respondents as an evolutionary process. Participants recalled being overwhelmed and lacking confidence in the beginning of their careers. Participant Three stated “*my first year was, I don't know if I can make my family life and my work life ever work.*” Participant Seven recalled tough days as they started teaching at a community college. “*The first couple of weeks were the hardest weeks. The confidence isn't there.*” Participant Seven further explained:

At the beginning there was really no confidence at all. You're like, I have this degree, I have the background knowledge and the minimum qualifications, and I know more than the students do, but as far as confidence in the classroom, it's pretty minimal.

Multiple themes and subthemes emerged when analyzing the teaching component of community college faculty work. The participants discussed challenges they face with students at length during their interviews. They also revealed that teaching, to them, meant more than just content delivery. The participants also shared how students play the main role in letting them know if they are doing a good job teaching. And lastly, the participants shared that confidence in teaching was primarily something that came with experience on the job.

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the service component of their job?

Theme One: No shared definition. The participants' definitions of service within their jobs varied greatly from one person to the next. Some participants defined categories within service, as was the case with Participant One. “*Just the term service, I see that breaking down*

into a number of subcategories. Service within the institution, and there's service outside of the institution, that's one way that those branch apart." Participant Five similarly defined service at their institution in the following way. *"At my institution, there is service to the college, there is service to the community, and there is service to the system."* Others provided a broader view of service. Participant Two noted, *"I'm taking it [service] to mean things that I don't have to do, that I don't get paid to do, but I do anyway."* Likewise, Participant Three articulated *"I suppose it wouldn't be service if we were getting paid."* Participant Eight took a more philosophical approach to defining service by stating, *"the goal of service is to help an institution, be it your department, your college or the whole MinnState be better, not rest on our laurels."*

Theme Two: Motivational variety. The motivation to perform or not perform service emerged as bipolar. For some participants, willingness, and desire to perform service was present. For others, service was seen as a necessary evil or even something to be avoided all together. Within the theme of motivational variety, the two subthemes of interfaculty and administrative tension emerged, which help to further paint the picture about the participant's motivations around service.

For those few participants who felt compelled to service, most often it was because they wanted to be a part of change. Participant Eight shared their reasoning for participating in service:

When stuff is sort of shitty, I'm like OK, I'm going to get on the technology committee because our technology is so shitty and I'm going to say this has to change, that has to change. Why is this happening? Why is that happening? Rather than just complaining in the background.

Other participants believed that nothing came out of providing service. Participant Five shared their attitude about being asked to perform service as *“I’m not going to do any of the committee stuff, don’t even ask me because I don’t want to do that anymore.”*

Subtheme 1. Interfaculty tension. When discussing the motivation to perform service, many of the participants turned their focus to other colleagues. Through comparison of their own contributions, some faculty felt that their faculty colleagues just were not doing enough, or at least as much as they were and that the same people continued to participate in service over and over again. Participant two shared that they *“often wish others just gave a bit more.”* Echoing that sentiment Participant Seven noted that *“the same people continue to do it, so it really puts a lot on those people’s plates.”* Participant Three shared that through her experience, the service work was not always evenly distributed. *“I found it’s very hard to co-advise when one does all the work and one doesn’t do any. It creates resentment.”* Participant Eight felt that applying pressure to colleagues who they deem do not do enough service was a good strategy citing *“I feel a little bit of an obligation to peer pressure some of my colleagues and say, ‘you would be really good here!’.”* On the flip side of the service equation, Participant Five and Participant Seven shared their thoughts. Participant Five contended, *“I think service is absolutely critical. It’s very important to do. For someone else.”* While Participant Seven, when discussing her feelings when approached for a committee mused, *“Why do you guys keep asking me? Go ask someone else.”*

Subtheme 2. Administrative tension. Most of the participants described some level of tension with administration around the service component of their jobs. The faculty participants felt that service expectations shifted depending on who was serving as their administrative leader and that there was very little acknowledgement or reward for participating in any type of service. In terms of expectations, Participant Five described their experience. *“As soon as administration*

catches wind that maybe things aren't going so well, they need more people to participate in committees, then they'll say that's what service means and therefore, you must do that."

Participant Five echoed the idea that there are unclear expectations surrounding service for faculty members stating, *"there's never an expectation until they [administration] deem you're not doing anything. Then there is an expectation."* In terms of acknowledgement of service from administration, Participant Seven noted, *"I don't get a thank you for my dean that says I noticed you were on all of these committees, thank you for your service. Let me give you a little bonus or even just a verbal thank you."* Participant Seven continued:

There have been times when I didn't serve on any committees and I still got a 'great, looks like you're meeting all of your professional development goals, awesome, all right' So really, there is no guidance with that [amount of service required].

Lack of support was also cited as a point of tension between faculty and administration. Participants cited that they felt that there was a lack of support for ideas that the faculty championed in the area of service. Participant Six stated that *"the key is an administration allowing a faculty member to be a champion for his or her idea. To say, 'OK what do you need? How can we support this? Administration too often misses the boat on opportunity."*

Theme Three: Time. Even when faculty had the desire to provide service, they often felt that they simply could not engage in a meaningful way because they could not find the time in their loaded teaching schedules. Participant One stated, *"I limit my service on committees because it's easy to overreach and spread yourself too thin."* Participant Three commented that service had the potential to cause resentment due to the addition of responsibilities beyond teaching stating, *"asking me to do something above and beyond my overstretched schedule is*

going to create some resentment and some burnout.” Because of the limited time that the participants felt they had to give to service, many felt they had to be selective on when and how they could participate in service. Participant Seven outlined their process:

It has come down to, OK, I have a 40-hour workweek. How many of those hours are devoted to classrooms, for us, it's twenty-seven contact hours, and then you have two office hours and how many hours are we given to prep for classes, so that's kind of where I went. It was like, OK, I have two hours to serve on a committee.

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their job?

Theme One: No shared definition. Scholarly work was another area where there was much variation in terms of how faculty described this component of their work. The respondents had named a wide variety of activities that they felt qualified as scholarly work. For some, scholarly work was defined as research and publishing. For others, the definition was more elusive such as professional development generally, or development of new materials. Participant Five stated that the definition for community college faculty's scholarly work component of the job was “*not clearly defined,*” and went on to say that of all of the job components, the meaning of service is most “*ambiguous.*”

Other respondents had a more inclusive view of what encompassed scholarly work noting that the development of classroom materials fit their definition. Participant Four shared that as far as scholarly work, they looked at it as “*doing research to develop new projects and materials for students in my classes.*” Participant Four continued to explain that “*developing those pieces that tie the classroom to the real world and help the students explore beyond the textbook and*

beyond a classroom lecture” is well within the scope of scholarly work. Other participants echoed the idea that development of new materials for use in teaching fit into their definitions of scholarly work. Participant Five noted that both the development of new coursework as well as the development of a new program fit into the scholarly work category. Participant Two summed up the ambiguous work component of scholarly work with the most all-encompassing view of the participants stating, *“I think all learning can be scholarly, so anytime I’m reading something new or listening to podcasts [it can be scholarly work].”*

Theme Two: Lacking resources. Within the theme of lacking resources to perform scholarly work, time and administrative support emerged as the biggest hinderances to carrying out work in this area. General comments from participants around this theme included feeling that there are a lot of barriers for those faculty who want to participant in scholarly work. Participant Four remarked that when it came to wanting to perform scholarly work, *“there is very little support. There’s a lot of red tape.”*

Participants were very concerned with the amount of time that engaging in scholarly work took. While faculty reported feeling stretched thin from just their teaching activities, scholarly work felt like something extra that the participants just did not have the time for. Participant One lamented, *“If you choose to do scholarship, you just have to kind of fit it into your own schedule.”* Participant Three advanced this by stating, *“I would like to publish, but it takes time, and I just haven’t had it.”* Participant Five further noted:

There’s just not enough time for most of us at community colleges with our course load and the number of students we have, and that’s always the first priority. If you have any gas left in the tank, then maybe you can do some research and writing.

Summarily, Participant Six declared, regarding performing scholarly work, *“it’s time, that’s all it is.”*

When it came to administrative support for scholarly work, participants largely cited a lack of support for the types of activities in which they wanted to engage. Participant Four commented, *“administration talks about wanting professional development, but then they don’t want to account for the time to do that kind of work, and that can be really hard.”* They went on to note:

Within our system, if you want to travel somewhere and get reimbursed for it, it would be easier for me to gnaw my own arm off than to get through that red tape, and there’s very little support for faculty to do it.

Theme Three: Split attitudes. The participants held dichotomous views about performing scholarly work as part of their job. While some expressed a desire to partake in more, others were adamant that the lack of required traditional scholarly work was something that they enjoyed and for some, drove them to work at a community college. Participant one wanted to be able to participate more in scholarly work through his job noting, *“that’s one of my gripes about two-year colleges in general, that there is so little scholarship because there is so much professional development that goes with the scholarship.”* Participant Six affirmed this view when thinking about scholarly work stating, *“I sometimes get a little wistful about not being able to do more of that.”*

While a few participants desired more scholarly work, the majority felt that the lack of required scholarly work was not only a good fit for them but had influenced their decision to work at a community college. Participant Three recalls their feelings when weighing teaching

choices stating “*I didn’t want to work in a big university because I saw spouses who were always competing for the next big grant. What a life. Always looking for money.*” Maintaining focus on teaching instead of scholarly work emerged as a driver for those participants who did not necessarily want to partake in scholarly work. Participant Four stated:

I don’t want my focus to be that I have to publish papers to advance. I want it to be, how am I making things better for my students? How am I making meaningful educational experiences for them so that I see the end result is having successful students coming out of my class.

Participant Eight further explained, “*it’s not a big driver for me in terms of the wider academic conversation, and it’s the reason why I chose a community college job over a university job.*”

Scholarly work was described as having definitional ambiguity during most of the interviews. While some faculty wanted to partake in more scholarly work, others expressed relief and satisfaction that it was not a large focus of their jobs as community college faculty. When faculty did want to participate in more scholarly work, they often felt that there were barriers that impeded their ability to do so.

Research Question: How do faculty describe their lived experience concerning their work?

The following six themes explore the main research question regarding the lived experience of community college faculty. While each work component was broken down into individual themes, the following seeks to build an overarching view of the lived experiences of community college faculty that emerged during the interviews with the eight study participants.

Theme One: Autonomy. Autonomy was brought up again and again in each of the three areas of faculty work: teaching, service, and scholarly work. The overall message that

participants shared was that autonomy was not only present in all three work components, but a necessary and appreciated piece of working at a community college.

The concept of autonomy was perhaps the single most important element to their teaching that the participants brought up during the interviews. Interviewees noted having complete autonomy in the classroom citing it as an academic freedom issue. Participant Six echoed the sentiment of many others stating, *“our autonomy has always been respected in the classroom and so that academic freedom is extraordinarily valuable and valued.”*

In addition to stating the importance of autonomy in teaching, respondents felt as though the autonomy they were afforded in the classroom made other aspects of their job more bearable. Participant Five commented:

Our teachers have a high, high tolerance for pain outside of the classroom. But as long as you leave that sanctimonious place in the classroom, if you leave that unmolested, teachers will tolerate great pain outside of that classroom.

Participant Six reinforced that sentiment stating, *“all of the other bullshit we that we have to put up with, I can deal with that because the classroom is such a great place to be.”*

When it came to autonomy in service, again, the importance of that freedom was echoed by participants. Not only did the participants express that they have not felt pressure to perform certain kinds of service, but they expressed what they would feel if that freedom were not there. Participant 4 stated, *“I do much better if I get to choose and buy in [to service] than if I’m told this is what you have to do.”*

When it came to discussing autonomy in scholarly work, most participants cited the ability they had to choose if they wanted to do it at all. Some participants included professional development into their definitions of scholarly work in which case they were satisfied that they got to decide how and what to engage in. Participant Six discussed autonomy as such:

That seems to be a running theme is that I have had the benefit of having a great deal of autonomy, whether it's in the classroom or service or scholarship. There have been no limitations placed on us to engage in whatever kind of scholarship interests us, or no pressure to do something related to your discipline. Complete autonomy.

Theme Two: Leadership matters. For the participants of this study, the difference that administrative leadership had on their work was profound. Some participants were pleased with their leadership, and that permeated through nearly all aspects of their work, while others felt at odds with their administrative leadership, and again, that also permeated through nearly all aspects of their work.

Participants Two talked about how the President of the campus has a significant impact on the culture of the campus.

Culture is important to me. Everyone is happier when the culture of the whole building is good and when more people are invested in the culture. In the past couple of years, we've had really good leadership. Our president is interested in our culture. The minute she showed up, she was like 'It's going to be the best culture ever' and I really buy into that.

Participant Three also shared their experience with administrative leadership. *“I have had a dean who is very supportive and so she’s able to share some pearls of wisdom and gems that I’m very receptive to, and I like to incorporate those things.”*

However, for most of the participants, there was an expressed discord with administration cited by a lack of support, lack of listening, and a lack of follow-up or feedback. Participant Four shared her frustrations about a program review that they had just completed:

It’s hard to get administration to listen sometimes. I just completed the end of my program review and I literally copied and pasted one of the issues that I pointed out from the last one and put it back in this one. It’s issues with administration that I’m really experiencing now. They don’t listen. I’m seeing things that we were saying three years ago come up again and it’s ignored again. I’ve been here almost 10 years and I’m seeing repetition of the same stuff over and over and over again. Which makes me think, did anybody actually listen in the first place?

Participant Six detailed an experience with administrative leadership where they solicited ideas from faculty ten years ago. *“They said, we want your ideas, so I took a couple of days over our semester break and cranked out some ideas”* they continued:

The frustrating part was that it wasn’t even acknowledged, that this is a good idea or, we can’t do that, that’s not a very good idea. It wasn’t even acknowledged. It is still incredibly frustrating because I even gave it [the list of ideas] again to my latest dean and said, ‘here’s some ideas that I’ve had and I’m willing to champion these.’ I haven’t even gotten an acknowledgement. If these ideas are crappy, then just tell me that and that’ll be fine. I never heard from her.

Theme Three: Caring. Throughout the interviews, students were often referred to as being the first priority of the participants. Students continually emerged in discussion as not just a challenge but as people that the faculty cared deeply about. Participant Two shared some thoughts:

People should know that there are a lot of great teachers at community college. It's what they do. They teach the first two years of college. They are not focused on research. They are not focused on publishing stuff. They are really focused on the first two years. A lot of students don't have any experience, they are first time college students who need a lot of guidance. There are just a lot of people on our campus who care about students succeeding. Even though they haven't had the perfect build up to succeeding in college, and even though they show up late or they are trying to raise kids and work and go to school.

Participant Seven asserted that it was because the faculty cared so much about the students that they wanted to work at a community college.

I feel very strongly that the faculty who teach in community college are there solely for the students. That they teach in community colleges because they care about the students, and they want to have relationships with the students.

Some of the faculty discussed their thoughts about how they searched each day for little victories with their students. The participants discussed the influence that they can have on students as well as the idea that they were focused on small changes rather than being everything to everyone they taught. Participant Two shared, *"I'm always looking for THE one student or the couples of students who I'm going to have an interaction with them that's positive today, or*

they're going to appreciate something or I'm going to learn something from them today." They went on to explain:

That idea of changing one small person at a time or just impacting, not even changing, but impacting one person at a time, that gets my heart pumped up. I don't need for everyone to get it. I know I'm not going to reach everyone every day and so I can get excited about small successes or little impacts.

The prospect of being able to positively impact just a few students through the work they were doing gave participants excitement and changed their body language during interviews. Participant Five mused, *"you have no idea how far your influence will reach. You are truly changing lives."* The idea of small successes and influencing students beyond the classroom in a meaningful way was shared by many participants.

Theme Four: Real college. For many participants, the stigma of a two-year college was something they felt they were constantly battling. Participant Two argued *"Just because we are the little community college down the road, it doesn't mean that great things aren't happening here."* Participant Three explained their feelings about the stigma that she felt surrounded community college, and how unreliable that narrative was:

What I think is amazing is that we offer opportunities for the people that may not believe in themselves and so at a community college, I think we are more accessible, more approachable and what keeps me going is just thinking that it provides a better future for a part of the population. I think underestimating a community college is the biggest disservice a community can do to itself.

Some participants added that they experienced frustration with the stigma attached to two-year community college and must battle the mindset even from their own students about it. Participant Eight talked about one such time:

One of my students said to me, 'everybody knows we wouldn't be here unless we had to be. If we could get in somewhere else, we'd go to a real college.' It's like wait a sec, we are real college. Let me tell you about this.

Participant Four echoed these sentiments:

We are not college lite. This is not high school. No. It's not! It is college. You might not have 200 people in a lecture class like you do at the U, but I still expect you to be able to do the same things that they teach in the classes there.

Theme Five: Social Justice. Being a faculty member in a community college, for many of the study participants, meant that social justice was part of the work. Some faculty mentioned it outright as an extremely important part of their job and others, through examples, demonstrated that they brought the theme of social justice to their work in other ways.

Participant One explained, "*the two-year college institution IS social justice. Whether you agree with social justice or not, that's part of the two-year college mission.*" They went on to explain:

I feel very strongly that we have an obligation towards equality and social justice. We have an obligation to try to erase or at least reduce the inequalities in society. That's part of our job even if it isn't written into our mission...I firmly believe that it is part of

the mission and I'll argue that any day of the week with anyone who wants to argue with me.

Open access of the two-year institution, while at time providing challenges, was a point of pride for the participants. Participant Seven offered the following:

We get to assist in the social mobility of our students, and that makes a big impact, again, not just for them, but for generations to come and their family members and friends who they can also help impact after they have received a degree.

Social justice through open access was even a driver for some participants to work at a two-year institution. Participant Eight offered, “*to me, a community college is the place to teach because it's college for everyone. Everyone is welcome to come in and I want to help everyone have access to a college education wherever they start.*”

Theme Six: “It’s a good life.” – Participant One. When discussing overall thoughts about their work experience, faculty emphasized two things, being grateful and the fulfillment it brought to their lives. Participant Six discussed the fulfillment the work had brought to their life:

We are in a position of having a fulfilling work experience in our lives and that is such a big part of who we are. To have that fulfillment is pretty amazing and something I don't take for granted and for which I am extremely grateful.

Faculty also seemed to internalize the importance and impact of the work. Participant Eight shared the following thoughts:

It's the most important job in the world. It is the most important, most satisfying, and most worthy way of spending a life. We are in the hope business, the future business, we're in the shaping the world business.... There is a lot of public discourse that disparages educators, and we cannot fall into that despair. We cannot because our work is the future.

Summary

In Chapter Four, the findings of this study, which provided insight into the lived experiences of community college faculty, were provided. The extensive findings provided insight through a total of sixteen themes and seven subthemes in response to the research question and sub questions. Eight community college faculty members shared their experiences as with their work at these unique higher education institutions. The participants shared their experience with teaching, scholarly work and service as well as providing rich details about the overall lived experience of being a community college faculty member.

In Chapter Five, the final chapter, the researcher will provide a summary of results, a discussion of those results and final conclusions based on the study. Additionally, comparisons of the findings with the framework and previous literature will be explored. Lastly, limitations and implications of the study and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of community college faculty by focusing on how they described and experienced their work within three components of teaching, service, and scholarly work. Eight community college faculty members from four community colleges in the Minnesota State System served as the participants for this study.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the results and a comparison to the previous literature explored in Chapter Two. Conclusions based on the results of the study followed by reflections on the limitations of the study are also included. Lastly, the implications of this study are discussed, followed by recommendations for action steps and further research.

Summary of Results

The data collected through this study sought to answer the following research question and sub questions:

Research Question:

How do community college faculty describe their lived experiences concerning their work?

Sub Questions:

How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

The results of this study expose that community college faculty participants have complex and multifaceted lived experiences in their work. From the interviews, 16 themes and seven subthemes emerged through analysis, which ultimately served to provide the essence of the lived experience of community college faculty participants.

Findings revealed that the community college faculty participants faced a plethora of challenges when it came to the diversity of students filling the classrooms. They shared how the spectrum of student attitudes and academic ability contributed to those challenges. Participants also cited the students having competing demands made up of priorities such as family and work. Accommodations for students were often mentioned by participants as a place where the faculty felt little support and limitations on how much they could manage on their own without proper support in place. The challenges that PSEO students brought to their teaching was also discussed by participants.

The participants in the study mostly perceived their roles in the classroom as going beyond teaching. They reported focusing less on grades and more on forging connections with the students while keeping the big picture of successful human development in mind. When evaluation was discussed, the participants often commented that they relied more on feedback they received directly from students rather than the sometimes sporadic and unhelpful formal teaching evaluations performed by their deans. The participants mostly felt confident in their teaching presently but remarked about how difficult it was at the beginning of their careers. A lack of teaching experience and support were perceived as barriers to feeling confident when they were first starting out in the profession.

Participants reported widely differing definitions of the service component of their job while revealing both positive and negative motivating factors for performing service at their institutions. Being a part of change was a motivating factor for some, while others participated minimally due to lack of rewards and desire. Both faculty and administrative tension emerged as subthemes related to motivation to participate in service. Some felt that there were uneven contributions from their colleagues and others felt that administration often shifted their expectations while offering little support for service. Almost all participants remarked that a barrier to participating in more service was time.

Participants mostly expressed feelings of ambiguity around the definition of the scholarly work component of their jobs. A lack of resources including support and time were cited as barriers to completing more scholarly work. However, participants also reported split attitudes regarding scholarly work. While some participants wished they could do more, others expressed that they worked at a community college, at least in part, because they did not feel the pressure to perform traditional scholarly work.

The faculty participants shared that autonomy in all areas of their jobs was highly valued and helped balance out other unpleasant areas of their jobs. Academic freedom was also cited as a major contributing factor towards the autonomy that faculty enjoyed. Leadership was brought up several times throughout the interviews and a bipolar view emerged about the faculty feelings towards the leadership on their campus. When the leadership was deemed “good” the faculty participants were quick to offer praise. Conversely, when there was a perceived lack of leadership, most often cited by lack of follow-up from administration, the faculty felt that had a negative impact on their work.

Comparisons of the Findings

Theoretical Framework

The researcher utilized Judge, Lock, and Durham's (1997) Core Self-Evaluation Theory (CSE) in this study as a theoretical lens to examine the phenomenon of the lived experience of community college faculty, specifically focusing on three areas of their jobs: teaching, service, and scholarly work. The subtraits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability make up the higher-level construct of CSE. Using an interview protocol (Appendix B), the researcher explored all of the five CSE subtraits with the participants. Through the exploration of these sub traits, the researcher was able to not only explore the areas of interest of the study (teaching, service, and scholarly work), but construct a composite description of the overall essence of the lived experience of community college faculty.

The study was able to take CSE, which has been used primarily as a quantitative measurement and extend it into the qualitative space successfully to deepen the understanding of community college faculty. The researcher found that through the lens of CSE, the essence of the participants' work could be explored in a deep and meaningful way to produce rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study. While CSE worked well as a theoretical lens, one of the biggest strengths of the approach may have been the breadth it provided to explore areas of work in a unique and wide-ranging manner allowing the researcher to probe into many different areas of faculty work during the interviews. The researcher recommends the use of CSE in further qualitative studies but cautions that the broad constructs of the theoretical framework allowed for the scope of the interviews to be very wide, which may prove challenging for future researchers who wish to maintain a tighter focus on their study.

Previous Literature

Current literature on community college faculty is scarce, particularly concerning qualitative research done around full-time faculty. What does exist is typically quantitative in nature and often treats community college faculty as a subset of a larger four-year faculty focused study. Through this study, the researcher presents a unique perspective by focusing on unlimited full-time (UFT) community college faculty members. While the results of this study largely proved to be in corroboration with what previous research exists, the study also provided a much richer and deeper understanding of the complex lived experiences of community college faculty. Previous research has laid out much of the ‘what’ around community college faculty, and this study extends our understanding of the ‘why’ behind the quantitative data. The following discussion focuses on each sub question of the study and the overall research question to allow for comparison to the previous empirical research findings as outlined in Chapter Two.

Sub question: How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

Consistent with previous research, the faculty respondents in this study repeatedly mentioned challenges that came with the diversity of students that entered their classrooms (Townsend & Twombly, 2008; Cohen et al., 2014). Study participants discussed this area of teaching so in-depth that the five subthemes of attitudes towards learning, academic ability, competing demands, accommodations, and PSEO emerged to help define and depict the first theme.

As Finley & Kinslow (2016) pointed out, students come to community college with a wide variety of motivations and goals. Concordantly, the motivation of the students was captured in the subtheme of attitudes towards learning, with several participants commenting on student’s perceived motivations to be to jump through hoops to collect a degree.

When students are students because they're jumping through hoops that other people have set up for them, it's a challenge to motivate them and educate them when they aren't really that interested in learning.

Academic ability of community college students has been explored in previous research and the topic loomed large in this study for the participants. Bailey and Cho (2010) found that 60% of incoming students are referred to at least one developmental course in community college. The spectrum of academic abilities that the respondents felt they had to address in the classroom was daunting and sometimes unachievable. *"I wonder if some of them are starting at such a deficit that I don't think they are getting to that point [of being able to succeed]."*

The competing demands on community college students are well documented in terms of demographic data. Community colleges serve the highest percentage of students who are parents, an estimated 26% of the overall student make-up at community colleges nation-wide. (Institute for Women's Policy, 2018). Because of the lower tuition cost of community colleges, low-income students make up about 55% of total enrollments, which means that these students are more likely to have the need to work while attending school (American Association of Community Colleges, 2020). For many participants in this study, they understood those competing demands on their students, but ultimately cited them as a challenge to teaching. *"The biggest struggle is that they have so many other things going on in their lives."*

Hanson and Dawson (2020) found that community college faculty felt underprepared for the task of teaching students with learning disabilities while also commenting that they had concerns about the higher number of students with learning disabilities in their classes while having limited resources. In alignment with these findings, for many instructors in this study,

accommodations for students with physical and/or learning disabilities proved to be challenging to navigate. Most faculty participants responded with frustration, not towards the students for needing accommodations, but rather towards the lack of support they felt they had when trying to navigate the accommodations necessary. *“You’ve documented that they have accommodations, and it’s great that we have it, but now you’re giving me a burden that I don’t know how to deal with.”*

The number of post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) students in Minnesota has grown exponentially. For those study participants who were teaching in 2000, they witnessed a 25% jump in the number of PSEO student participants by the year 2015 (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2017). PSEO students were brought up by participants as adding to the challenges of teaching often citing a lack of academic preparation and a lack of maturity. In Minnesota, students as young as sophomores in high school may enroll in college courses through PSEO (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2017). The rapid growth of the overall program coupled with the admittance of sophomores who are only 15-16 years old, likely contribute to the challenges the faculty participants expressed in the study.

One, way too many students are taking classes that should never be allowed to take classes. Two, they are taking more classes than they can handle. I think there are some students who can handle the full-time PSEO as a junior or senior, but most of them can’t.

Fugate and Amy (2000) found that the roles of community college faculty can sometimes be blurred and suggested that in addition to teaching content, the faculty often used words such as “mentor, role model, coach, advocate, student facilitator, and guide” to describe their work (p.

6). The participants' responses were consistent with this research. Study participants expressed that what they perceived as important in education often had minimal relation with grades. Instead, faculty participants saw their role as connecting with people and keeping the "big picture" of success for the students in mind. *"It isn't just about memorizing stagnant facts and things like that. It has to do a lot with people developing their own thinking and their own practice."*

Previous research by Barry (2016) uncovered that community college faculty felt that they did not have control over the method in which their teaching was evaluated by administration. Concordant with Barry's (2016) findings, participants in the study felt that there was not a consistent frequency or method in which they were evaluated by administration and when they were evaluated, it did not prove useful. Instead, the faculty in the study reported that they looked to students to provide feedback and valued that above other forms of evaluation. *"You get feedback from your students. They let you know if you are doing a good job or not."*

Community college faculty have often been cast as less confident than their four-year counterparts (Hagedorn, 2015; LaPaglia, 2011). Other studies have shown that self-efficacy and confidence are higher in those who have more experience (Mehdinezhad, 2012). Consistent with those findings, the respondents in this study reported having a lack of confidence when they first started teaching and early in their careers. *"At the beginning there was really no confidence at all."* Cohen et al. (2014) proposed that for those new faculty members entering a community college setting, it can be surprising just how diverse the achievement level and dedication to academics is from students. This study, while not directly supporting Cohen et al.'s (2014) claim, seems to at least allude to some of the challenges that were laid out in his research for beginning faculty.

Sub question: How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

Faculty participants in the study had widely differing ideas about how service was defined and what it entails. Ward (2003) suggested that more research be done to understand how faculty define and talk about service. This study set out to do just that, however, the results are in agreement with Ward's (2003) original research that asserted "what service means, for whom, and how it is rewarded remains unclear because service roles within higher education are not clearly defined and because people mean different things when they talk about faculty service" (p. 5). It seems that the one constant with the service component of community college faculty work is that there is no constant in terms of a definition or activities that fall within the boundaries of the term. Some faculty were moved by intrinsic motivation and others were left wanting some form of extrinsic reward for their participation in service which created some interfaculty tension about how the work is divided.

Faculty participants cited a lack of administrative clarity around expectations for service. While Guarino and Borden (2017) asserted that the majority of faculty contributed some sort of service to the community because it is part of their job, the faculty in this study often cited the amount of participation, if any, was administrator dependent. Some faculty felt their deans expected them to participate in service and others saw their dean as ambivalent about it. Martinez (2019) argued that within unionized community colleges, service offered an opportunity for faculty to participate in governance. What the current study uncovered was that for those faculty who felt that they wanted to participate in governance, they thought service was a good path.

I want to work at a joint that I want to work. So, I have to make it that, you know? So, I have to jump in when there are task forces or committee work or something, even when it's not compensated.

On the other side of the equation, those faculty who did not want to participate in service often thought of service as someone else's problem.

Twombly and Townsend (2007) found that community college faculty spent 85% of their time on teaching and teaching related activities, with half of their working hours spent physically in a classroom. While this number has likely shifted a great deal due to the COVID-19 pandemic across the 2020-2021 academic year, it offers reinforcement that teaching is the primary focus of community college faculty. It makes sense that as with most activities outside of actual teaching, faculty participants reported that time served as a barrier for their participation in service.

I don't have trouble finding places to provide service. I guess it is focusing on which is the best area to put my time and energy. One of my weaknesses is that I can take on way more than I can actually do, but when I do that, I become very ineffective, and I hate that. Trying to figure out where to put my energy is the hardest thing for me."

Sub question: How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

Outside of teaching, faculty work remains somewhat ambiguous. Scholarly work lacked a shared definition among participants. Some participants cited "traditional" definitions of scholarly work such as research and publishing, while others asserted that developing material for use in the classroom and to share with their students would fall under the definition. Braxton and Lyken-Segosebe (2015) argued that the traditional definition of scholarship as publishing was too limiting and often excluded the type of scholarship that community college faculty were undertaking. Instead, they argued that most community college faculty were, in fact, participating in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Park et al. (2015) defined most community college faculty as "scholars of dissemination" where they were not researching and

publishing, but instead creating new materials or synthesizing information and sharing it with students or peers. This study supports the previous research around the often too narrowly defined idea of scholarship. When participants spoke about what they did as the scholarly work component of their job, for most it was the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Morest (2015) recognized that while teaching was the primary focus for community college faculty, which let the focus remain on working with the students, those who wanted to participate in scholarly work were left with little time to participate in scholarship that felt would make them better educators. Further, Tinberg et al. (2007) pointed out that heavy teaching loads that community college faculty are assigned often leave little time to participate in any scholarly work, especially when it is not prioritized or supported by the institution. The data from this study supports the above assertions and further extends the knowledge around scholarly work to note that the lack of traditional scholarship that is required of the faculty in community colleges was also cited as a factor in choosing to work at a community college for the study participants.

Research Question: How do faculty describe their lived experience concerning their work?

Autonomy was a topic that the participants brought up often. Not only did they feel like they had a lot of it in all areas of their work, but they also felt that it was necessary to the successful education of the students. Faculty participants valued feeling as though they had some agency over their work. Reinforcing Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2014) findings that a high amount of autonomy positively predicted both job satisfaction and engagement, faculty participants felt that they were fortunate to have high levels of autonomy, which included academic freedom, within all aspects of their work. Echoing previous studies (Kim, 2008; Berry, 2016), faculty

participants in this study felt satisfaction with the level of autonomy they had, particularly in the teaching component of their work.

Participants in this study often directly or indirectly commented on their campus leadership, usually in the form of a direct supervisor – their dean. While leadership was not a focus of this study, the emergence of the importance of it to the participants was explored. The overarching influence on all areas of faculty work by their administration was notable. Previous research about the relationship of academic deans and faculty has been done, notably Yamamura’s (2020) study of deans in the California State System in which deans cited faculty as their “greatest challenge.” Especially in a system such as Minnesota State where collective bargaining is present, there is room for more exploration as it seems that faculty and administration often perceived themselves at odds with one another. Cohen et al. (2014) argued that under collective bargaining the relationships between deans and faculty went from informal to formal and shifted the power dynamic so that faculty were near equals to their deans. This shifting power dynamic may account for some of the discord that was reported from the faculty participants in this study. Two participants did express support and approval for their leadership, but the other six generally regarded leadership as something to be dealt with or overcome rather than a partnership.

Specifically in the teaching area of their work, the faculty participants provided great expressions of caring. Most realized that they were up against significant challenges within the student body, but they were driven by the opportunity make a difference for their students.

There are people who are excellent, excellent teachers who are creating little cultures of excellence, who are holding people accountable, which some students need, and who are making accommodations for people who have all of these things in life that could keep them from being successful at school.

Negative perceptions of community college are nothing new. Less than half of high school counselors believe that community colleges offer rigorous coursework and the leaders at community colleges across the country have attempted (somewhat unsuccessfully) to improve the public perception of their institutions (National Association of College Counselors, 2019; Shelly, 2019; Hagedorn, 2015). Townsend and LaPaglia (2000) found that even among community college faculty themselves, there was a tendency to marginalize their roles within academe when compared to their four-year counterparts. In agreement with these findings, the perception of community college being stigmatized was on the mind of the faculty respondents in this study demonstrated by comments that reinforced that community colleges were “real” colleges and that they had academic rigor. *“There’s all these comparisons [to four-year colleges] that we are striving to say we are real, we are legit, we are worthy.”*

The participants expressed alignment with Brown et al.’s (2016) limited research focusing on sociology faculty which posited that for some faculty, the pull of community college work as a social justice calling brought them to the institution. In Brown et al.’s study (2016), faculty reported teaching at a community college due to factors such as empowerment and as a response to inequalities that exist. Some of the faculty participants in this study expressed the community college mission as encompassing social justice, and thus as a draw for working in these institutions.

Even with all the challenges and constraints that the faculty described in these interviews, each one remarked on the fulfillment being a community college faculty member afforded them. They were thankful for the work they got to engage in each day. In Brown, et al. (2016), a high percentage of faculty participants indicated that they would choose a career at a community college again. Sheridan (2016) found that some community college faculty felt a great deal of value in teaching and the quality of education they could provide to students. Faculty participants in this study supported those findings and expressed that the profession has brought them a great deal of personal fulfillment. *“If you want to have really fulfilling and life enhancing work, community college teaching is where it happens.”*

Interpretations of the Findings

The extensive results of this study offer rich opportunities for reflection. This study echoes and reinforces much of the previous research about community college faculty. However, unlike previous quantitative data, this study personalizes the research through firsthand accounts from the faculty participants and provides rich descriptions of the work. Through the participant’s voices, meaning has been added to the existing literature about their collective experiences as community college faculty, specifically in the areas of teaching, service, and scholarly work.

Teaching is hard work, and perhaps more so in the community college where the open access nature of the institution allows for students with a multitude of backgrounds and abilities to enroll in classes. While the study’s faculty participants discussed a myriad of challenges around teaching students with varying academic ability and motivations, the discussions about student accommodations were especially notable. Academic accommodations serve as supports for removing barriers for students who have disabilities. These disabilities range from physical

disabilities such as deafness or blindness to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. Reasonable accommodations for students are often made through an office of accessibility or disability services at the community college. Once the accommodations are made, the participants felt that much of the implementation fell to them to figure out in their classes. The National Center for Education Statistics (2021) reported that in 2015-2016, 19% of all undergraduates reported having a disability which eye opening, especially when considering that it only includes students who reported having a disability. Conceivably there are many more students who have a disability that do not report it. While not every student with a disability requires accommodations, many do, and that can leave faculty in a precarious place trying to balance all the student accommodations across the typical 4-5 course teaching load each semester. It is important to note that the faculty in the study expressed frustration not at the fact that the students needed academic accommodations, but rather that they felt they lacked support to implement and manage the accommodations themselves. Managing different assignments, deadlines and testing requirements felt daunting without any additional support.

The results of this study should serve as a catalyst for administrators to take a closer examination of how effective their current evaluation practices are for all parties involved. The idea that faculty spend most of their time teaching students yet lack a meaningful evaluation mechanism for that practice is untenable. Participants took great pride in the teaching component of their work and a collaborative evaluation process that produced meaningful results would be beneficial for everyone. Ultimately, better teaching practices lead to better student outcomes. By creating a meaningful evaluation process, administrators and faculty could work collaboratively instead of faculty feeling as though administration is just going through a series of motions to complete the necessary paperwork.

It is likely all college faculty regardless of institutional type, face some challenges with students. However, community college faculty seem to face a compounding effect with the student body who enters their open access institutions. It is not just that there is a variety of academic ability in the student body or that many students need accommodations in their classes it is ALL the challenges that emerged in the study coming at the community college faculty simultaneously. Since teaching constitutes the largest component of their jobs, it is no wonder that community college faculty continually look to their students for validation. If faculty feel a lack of instructional and/or administrative support, the immediate gratification they can get from a student “getting it” is critical to boosting their psyche.

Through the discussions about service that faculty engaged in during this study, many issues came to light. At a system level, the term “service” needs to be further defined for faculty. If contractually, the language around service remains vague, it is up to each individual institution to define and set expectations around what service entails. The problem may not be that a shared definition of service is lacking for faculty, but rather that it is so varied even between faculty deans in the same institution that it has become a nebulous concept for faculty. Having strict service requirements may not be the answer but having some guidelines around what constitutes service and who should be doing it (everyone) could help ease some of the faculty/administrative tension and the interfaculty tension that came to the surface during the study. When a faculty member does a great job participating in service to the college, they need to have some level of acknowledgement that their contributions are valued and important. Without that affirmation, faculty are left feeling unsupported and without any extrinsic motivation to provide service to the college, it may lead to a lack of motivation to participate at the detriment to the institution.

When it comes to the area of scholarly work, four-year institutions have long shaped the idea of what a professorate should look like in all of academia. Community college faculty are unique in the landscape of higher education and expecting the work that they engage in to be parallel to that of a four-year professor is unrealistic. The mission of the community college differs greatly from a research university, and the transfer of the hierarchical structures that serve to support a tight power structure in four-year institutions simply should not apply to the community college. Particularly around scholarly work, we must heed to Boyer's (1990) call for the reconsideration of scholarship. While four-year institutions have relied on the scholarship of discovery as a pathway for their faculty to advance, community college faculty typically have not had the time, means, or often, interest to partake in this form of scholarship. Instead, participants in this study discussed many ways in which they were developing new course materials, consolidating and disseminating information, and experimenting with their teaching. According to Boyer (1990), all the activities that the participants reported participating in are scholarship in their own right, even though the participants didn't always see them as such. Widening out the definition of "traditional" scholarship that has driven the publish or perish mentality in four-year institutions and placing value around the scholarship of application, integration, and teaching is essential to valuing the work that community college faculty contribute to their professions. If the mission is to serve all students who come through the doors to the best of their ability, one could argue that the faculty at community colleges are directly involved in scholarship which benefits their students in real-time, and thus proves more practical and beneficial for their institutions than traditional scholarship of discovery.

The tension that was expressed by the participants in this study with administration was not surprising, but instead might offer insight into the role of a faculty dean. Faculty are on the

front lines of teaching in the classroom and want to look to their deans for support, reinforcement, and advocacy when needed. The role of a faculty dean needs to be revisited from an institutional standpoint, as it is clear from this study, that when the dean is there to offer support and guidance to the faculty, the faculty notice and likely have more institutional buy-in. When support and guidance is not present from a faculty dean, resentment and animosity can blossom among faculty. Narrowing the focus of faculty deans to allow for more time and energy to be directed towards not providing quality and timely feedback to faculty would be invaluable. With increased time, deans might also be able to focus more on providing clear expectations and definitions for faculty in areas of service and scholarly work. If faculty deans are not available through partnership with the faculty, the faculty may be left wondering, “who has my back?” This mentality, however warranted, fuels the us/them divide that was reported on by many participants and ultimately hurts the students if the faculty feel that they are not getting the support that they need. So much of what the faculty in this study expressed was a desire to be acknowledged, feel heard and valued for the work they do. Freeing up the dean role to deal primarily with faculty matters, instead of many bureaucratic tasks, and placing talented leaders in those positions would go a long way for faculty to feel supported, and in turn better able to support their students.

Relationship such as those between faculty and academic deans are an important part of understanding faculty in the community college. For community college faculty, the primary activity is teaching, and because so much time is dedicated to this endeavor, the students have a massive influence on the faculty as evidenced in this study. The interdependent nature of the relationship between community college faculty was highlighted in this study. The idea that their institutions were not doing enough to support the students weighed heavily on the participants, as

did the acknowledgement that sometimes they felt they could not do enough for their students to succeed. In many ways, faculty expressed contradictory feelings about the students they serve, as frustration was often expressed in the same statement as gratification. The symbiotic relationship between students and faculty was especially visible when faculty expressed that they relied on their students to gauge if they were being successful at their jobs. Institutions need to acknowledge and foster the relationships between the students and faculty and clear any unnecessary hurdles in the faculty's way to building these relationships. Not only do students who forge a connection with an instructor do better academically, they also tend to be less likely to withdraw from college. Student simply feel more satisfaction when faculty members are an integral part of their academic lives. (Nagda, et al., 1998; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Morris & Finnegan, 2008).

Despite all the compounding challenges discussed, the participants felt fulfillment in their work. How can that be? To answer that question, the researcher must go back to something that stated in an interview that captured the reverence that community college faculty hold for their work: "*We are in the hope business, in the future business, in the shaping the world business.*" The value that faculty place on the social justice aspect of teaching which is supported by the mission of the community college and the feeling that they are truly changing the future, even if just for some, is the most valued factor for community college faculty.

Limitations

As with all qualitative research, objectivity is one of the goals when approaching the data. Even as Moustakas urges that the researcher practice Epoché, there is still interpretation taking place on the part of the researcher. Saldana (2016) offers a more refreshing view of the qualitative process.

For the individual researcher, assigning symbolic meanings to data is an act of personal signature. And since we each most likely perceive the social world differently, we will therefore experience it differently, interpret it differently, document it differently, code it differently, analyze it differently, and write about it differently. Objectivity has always been an ideal yet contrived and virtually impossible goal to achieve in qualitative research. (p. 41)

Aside from the researcher's role in the interpretation, there were additional limitations to the study. First, the sample size, although deemed acceptable by Creswell and Poth (2018), was limited to eight participants. For a fuller picture of the lived experiences of the community college faculty within the Minnesota State System, a larger participant pool would provide a more in-depth exploration. Second, the study was limited to one system in the United States, which has unique characteristics when compared to many counterparts across the country, namely a unionized faculty body, which undoubtedly influences the lived experiences of those who work within the system. Third, the diversity of participants, while echoing the lack of diversity present in the community college faculty in the Minnesota State System, primarily consisted of White participants and this undoubtedly shaped the experiences of the faculty participating. Lastly, the study took place during a global pandemic, which made it necessary for the data collection to be completed fully online via Zoom, which likely made the interactions feel less personal in nature, thus potentially influencing the level of candor the participants exhibited.

Implications of the Study

Through many previous quantitative studies, understanding community college faculty through descriptive data has been the norm, and thus has been limited. This study helped build a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of community college faculty, especially in the

areas of teaching, service, and scholarly work to fill the gaps that exist in this area of research. The study did not set out to prove or disprove any theories, but rather to build a more complete and nuanced understanding of the experience of community college faculty by elevating the voices of those individuals. The faculty participants revealed many challenges and perspectives that were expected and others that were not. Through the sixteen themes and seven subthemes that emerged in this study, it is clear that the lived experience of community college faculty is complex and worthy of exploration.

In 2021, President Biden proposed a \$3.5 trillion dollar spending plan that would essentially make community college free for two years. If the legislation passes, there would be a projected 18% increase in community college students making understanding the work of community college faculty even more urgent and necessary (CNBC, 2021). The influx of new community college students would likely exacerbate many of the challenges that the faculty described in this study. The practical implications of the findings from the study can be used to develop more effective support for community college faculty, which will ultimately contribute to more student and institutional success. Many of the findings of the study revolve around creating a culture where faculty feel pride in the institution and its mission and valued for the work they do. The fact that participants felt the need to stress the value of their institutions in these interviews lays claim to the idea that community colleges need to do a better job communicating both internally and externally the value and academic rigor that the institutions bring to the higher education community and the students. While celebrating the value of the institutions is important, it is also important to celebrate the value of the faculty who staff the institutions. Referred to in one interview as “*boots on the ground*,” faculty are the faces of the institution. Throughout the interviews, participants often made it clear that they did not feel

acknowledged or rewarded for a lot of the work that they were undertaking. Building an institutional culture where people are valued, feel heard, and acknowledged for a job well done should be a goal that each community college reaches towards.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the interviews and themes that emerged, the researcher recommends the following actions for community colleges to further support faculty under each of the research sub questions and overall question:

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the teaching component of their jobs?

- Work to ensure that students have academic supports in place both institutionally (proper placement, solid advising) and create ways for students to easily access academic support outside of the classroom.
- Create or strengthen support for faculty in situations where student accommodations are present.
- Reimagine ways to complete successful and meaningful faculty teaching evaluations. Offer more peer-to-peer evaluation options as well as more opportunities for faculty to reflect on student evaluations.
- Create a culture where there is pride in the institution, faculty, staff, and students to stress that community college is not just about “jumping through hoops.”
- Support faculty in their endeavors to have meaningful interactions and relationships with students.

- Study the impact of PSEO students at individual institutions. Make sure minimum qualifications for students to participate in PSEO are appropriate. Consider limiting the PSEO enrollment per section.
- Implement or strengthen new faculty support.

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the service component of their jobs?

- Provide clear definitions about what service administrators are looking for from faculty. Apply guidelines uniformly so that the same faculty are not being overly taxed.
- Acknowledgement of those who are participating in service to the institution. This could be as small as verbal recognition.
- Create common hours to allow for service participation.

Research Sub Question: How do faculty describe the scholarly work component of their jobs?

- Recognize the contributions of faculty in the scholarship application, integration, and teaching - not just “traditional” forms of research and publishing.
- Provide support for faculty who wish to partake in more scholarly work.

Research Question: How do community college faculty describe their lived experiences concerning their work?

- Emphasize, at every opportunity, that community college is a “real” college and a great option for education.
- Revisit the position of the faculty dean to ensure faculty support can be achieved.
- Recognize and honor the fact that faculty care deeply about their students both personally and academically.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the literature and the findings from this study, the researcher provides the following recommendations for further study:

Although not specifically related to this study, it is important to note that one of the participants who identified as non-White made it a point to mention that there are not a lot of BIPOC faculty in the Minnesota State community colleges. The participant described their experience as the target of several micro aggressions where they were often assumed to be a student or staff, not a faculty member. Although this information is extremely valuable, because of the participant pool, the experience cannot be generalized through this study, but is worthy and necessary to explore in its own right.

Each member that participated in the interviews was part of a collective bargaining unit, MSCF, and while not a primary focus of the interview, the topic of the union did come up on several occasions throughout the interview process. Particularly of note was that when questions about autonomy were discussed in the interviews, several participants pointed to the union as the reason that they were afforded so much autonomy in the areas of teaching, service, and scholarly work. The influence of the faculty union is part of the landscape of the work that community college faculty undertake in the Minnesota State System. A replication of this study would be of great interest within a non-unionized faculty body in a different community college system.

While the researcher focused primarily on community college faculty, the two-year system also includes technical colleges, which are supposed to lead to direct employment after graduation, often focusing on very specific skills and occupational areas (Cohen et al., 2014). Technical colleges, while a large part of the two-year educational landscape, are unique and

distinctly different institutions than a community college, and more research like this study should be done to build a deeper understanding of the faculty that serve within. This may be of particular interest to researchers because of the increase in mergers among two-year institutions which are often bringing together a technical college and a community college to form a singular entity called a community and technical college.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of community college faculty by focusing on how they describe and experience their work within three components of teaching, service, and scholarly work. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to explore the research question and sub questions. The results of this study highlight the highly complex and nuanced experiences of community college faculty. Much can be learned from the lived experiences of the participants and their frustrations, passion, and dedication in their pursuit to work and thrive at the community college. The qualitative phenomenological approach and Core Self-Evaluation Theory utilized in the study provided valuable frameworks to gather authentic accounts of the lived experiences of community college faculty. While this study largely corroborates the previous research, it also takes the understanding of community college faculty further in understanding the areas of teaching, service, and scholarly work.

The results of this study can be used to inform and guide administrators who wish to understand the complexities surrounding the work that the faculty do in community colleges. This in turn will help administrators better support faculty, and a better supported faculty will undoubtedly lead to better student outcomes. This study is also useful to community college faculty themselves in gaining a broader view of their profession and seeing that they share some

of the same frustrations, triumphs, and passion for the work they undertake each day. Finally, this study is only a small part of the vast amount of data that can be gained by elevating community college faculty voices. It is the researcher's hope that the results of this study have informed and inspired others to undertake further research into the area of community college faculty in order keep furthering the understanding of the complex work lives of these individuals.

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APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT

Agreement to Participate in Research

Project Title: Elevating the voices of community college faculty: a phenomenological study of community college work.

Investigators: Patria Lawton, Doctoral Student, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Dr. Michael Coquyt, Advisor, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided to you to decide if you wish to participate in the present study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study. If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relationship with me, your department, or with Minnesota State University Moorhead.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of community college faculty. Particularly, the researcher is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of teaching, service, and scholarly work. The phenomenological qualitative research design will consist of interviews with faculty who have experienced this phenomenon.

Your participation in this study will require a one-hour interview and an additional 30-minute interview if a follow-up is deemed necessary. Once transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript. The interviews will be conducted in person (as health and safety guidelines allow) or virtually.

To protect the identity of participants, each participant will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be used to identify that participant throughout the data collection and in the analysis of the individual case record. The participant identifier/pseudonym document will be stored electronically in a file on a password-protected personal computer and housed in a password protected folder within that computer (and not on any Minnesota State campus or on any Minnesota State owned computers or storage). After the member checks are completed, the identifier/pseudonym document will be permanently deleted.

Further, to help protect your confidentiality, the storage of data and notes will be kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher (and not on any Minnesota State campus or on any Minnesota State owned computers or storage). This project will involve making an audio recording of your interview conversation. The digital audio recording, accompanying notes and transcriptions will be kept on a password-protected computer (again, not owned by Minnesota State). Information from this study will be kept until May 2024, at which point all information will be destroyed.

This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than your daily life encounters. Risks may include emotional discomfort interview questions. The benefits associated with your participation are the information about your experience, and the opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study.

Please get in touch at any time with questions about this study. You may contact Pat Lawton, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 651-334-9668 or Dr. Michael Coquyt, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 218-477-2019. Any questions about your rights may be directed to Dr. Lisa Karch, Chair of the MSUM Institutional Review Board, at 218-477-2699 or by email at irb@mnstate.edu.

Acceptance to Participate: Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, and you have given consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Thank you for your time and consideration.

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Can you tell me about the teaching component of your job? What does that look like for you?

Optional prompts:

- Are you confident in your ability to teach within the constructs of your job?
- Do you have control over your teaching?
- Talk a little bit about when tough situations happen in the teaching area of your job.
- Are you confident in your ability to solve problems that arise?
- What is the biggest challenge when it comes to teaching for you?

2. Can you tell me about the service component of your job? What does that look like for you?

Optional prompts:

- Are you confident in your ability to perform service within the constructs of your job?
- Do you have control over what kind of service you perform?
- Talk a little bit about when tough situations happen in the service area of your job.
- Are you confident in your ability to solve problems that arise when it comes to service?
- What is the biggest challenge when it comes to service for you?

3. Can you tell me about the scholarly work component of your job? What does that look like for you?

Optional prompts:

- Are you confident in your ability to perform scholarly work within the constructs of your job?
- Do you have control over what kind of scholarly work you perform?
- Talk a little bit about when tough situations happen in the scholarly work area of your job.
- Are you confident in your ability to solve problems that arise when it comes to scholarly work?
- What is the biggest challenge when it comes to scholarly work for you?

TIME PERMITTING

4. What do you want people to know about being a community college instructor?
5. What do you want people to know about being a community college instructor?

APPENDIX C. TEACHING SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

Theme	Emergent Codes	Evidence	P
Theme One: Challenges of Student diversity	Variety	They are coming to a community college because they're first gen students, they don't have a lot of support and cost, location, all those things are pushing them to community college.	7
		They're not our traditional students. They're students who are returning for a different career because their first one didn't pan out.	7
		We have students that are straight out of high school and then we have adults who are in their 50s and then we have those in between.	3
<i>Subtheme: Attitudes Towards Learning</i>	Student attitudes	My biggest challenge is the diversity of attitudes toward learning in the classroom.	1
		Sometimes you run into these students that just... It's their way or the highway, and they're not they're not interested in working with you.	4
		The self-motivation is sometimes lacking.	3
	Jumping through hoops	When students are students because they're jumping through hoops that other people have set up for them, it's a challenge to motivate them and to educate them when they're not really that interested in learning.	2
They're so focused on checking the boxes and getting to the piece of paper that they don't learn the information as they go.		4	
They are focused on turning in assignments and not learning the material. And that is really hard to see.		3	

	Putting in the work	<p>I said, guess what? More than 50 percent of you didn't even look at my prerecorded lectures. I don't know what else to tell you. I'm leading you. I'm showing you the way. I'm leading in the right direction. You need to do the work.</p> <p>I tell them you have to take the reins of your education, if I'm covering a topic and it is not clear to you, you're adults and you need to dive into this more deeply.</p>	3 3
Subtheme: <i>Academic Ability</i>	Spectrum of Abilities	<p>But I have students in my classroom that are way ahead of the game. They are highly literate. They are very well read. I have had students that could teach my class more knowledgeably than I am already teaching it.</p> <p>There are students who are barely literate. Maybe they are illiterate.</p> <p>I mean, there is this spectrum that we're constantly dealing with.</p> <p>Sometimes people don't all get it at the same pace or at the same rate.</p> <p>We also have a lot of students that come in unprepared. I have watched students pull out a calculator to take one times five in my classroom.</p>	1 1 1 2 4
	There's only so much I can do	<p>And I wonder if some of them are some of them are starting at such a deficit that I don't think they're getting to that point.</p> <p>There is a limit to how far you can bring student skill levels. You've got 16 weeks to turn them into a college level reader and writer.</p>	4 6
Subtheme: <i>Competing Demands</i>	Priorities	<p>It's hardly possible to actually pass this program if you're working full time and you're a mom. So you have to work, you have to dedicate yourself and prioritize.</p> <p>They have so many other things going on in their lives. And I tell them all the time, school should not be your number one priority when you have all these things. And I'm not saying that it shouldn't be a priority, but I understand it's not your number one when you have kids, they're</p>	3 7

		<p>your number one. Even a job comes before school.</p> <p>There's a lot of managing of mental health, student motivation, family and work stresses and pressures.</p> <p>The biggest struggle is that they have so many other things going on in their lives.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7</p>
<p><i>Subtheme:</i> <i>Accommodations</i></p>	<p>Faculty limitations</p>	<p>I can't have three different assignments and different deadlines for everyone.</p> <p>Accommodations has been a challenge because then I'm expected as a faculty member to find a room for them to go into.</p> <p>I got the feeling like he expected me to change my entire teaching style just for him.</p> <p>We had that for six students, which was almost a quarter of my class.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p>
	<p>Lack of support</p>	<p>You've documented that they have accommodations, that's your job, and you say it's great that we have it, but now you're giving me a burden that I don't know how to deal with.</p> <p>If you're going to say they need accommodations, this office of accessibility services needs to have the tools and the personnel to assist with that.</p> <p>In the overarching theme of support for students, it's not where it should be.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>5</p>
<p><i>Subtheme:</i> <i>PSEO</i></p>	<p>Challenges</p>	<p>There are unfortunately PSEO students are ill prepared for college level coursework, whether it's being able to read and comprehend the</p>	<p>6</p>

		<p>material or write about it, particularly writing skills.</p> <p>One, way too many students are taking classes that should never be allowed to take classes. Two, they are taking more classes than they can handle. I think there are some students who can handle the full-time PSEO as a junior or senior, but most of them can't.</p> <p>I've seen some students who are really like the top, really good. They adapt really well to college and then some who really, they really struggle</p> <p>They are probably ill prepared for that and then they fail and return to the school system [K-12]</p> <p>If it was up to me, we'd have much stricter limits on who would be eligible as a PSEO student.</p> <p>The most difficult and challenging part of the student part of the equation is PSEO.</p> <p>One of my colleagues ends up with more than 50% of her students being PSEO, which is really a problem.</p> <p>There is still a stigma [around community colleges]. I think some of it's because of the PSEO, because we have high school students coming in and taking college classes.</p> <p>Lots of times it's because 'I need this credit' and some of them are PSEO students that need it to graduate from high school.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>8</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p> <p>8</p> <p>6</p> <p>2</p>
Theme Two: More Than Teaching Content	People	<p>It isn't just about memorizing stagnant facts and things like that, it has to do a lot with people developing their own thinking and their own practice.</p> <p>I work on people.</p> <p>Education is relational to me.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>8</p>

	Grades	<p>I always tell the students, I know you think it, but a grade doesn't define you.</p> <p>I am less convinced that success is defined by grades students earn.</p> <p>I have students sometimes say, what do I need to get an A? And I want to say never ask that question, because if you ask that question, you're not an excellent student because you're just trying to do what someone else tells you to do.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p>
	Big picture	<p>Nobody will ever sit in a job interview where the potential employer says are you good at taking tests? You will never get asked that. No student will ever get asked. I deemphasize that need for committing to short term memory, rather, it's practice.</p> <p>A light bulb that goes off where people say, I never thought about it like that before. Oh my gosh. Or they might say right in a class. I see what you love about this, and I get it.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>8</p>
Theme Three: Evaluation	Administrative evaluation	<p>An administrator, usually a dean, comes in every few years and does this analysis or evaluation of my teaching.</p> <p>Once every three years, someone comes to evaluate my teaching.</p> <p>I've had that [formal teaching evaluation] a couple of times and one time I was at my behest because I needed a letter of recommendation and the dean had never seen me teach. So, it was up to me to initiate that.</p> <p>Out of my near 30-year career, three formal observations and evaluations.</p> <p>During the probationary period, it was every semester one time, and they would come in and watch for maybe like 15 to 30 minutes.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p>

	Perception of administrative evaluation	They give me all these, it was great, people were engaged, and blah, blah, blah. I do not really rely on that professional feedback to determine if I'm doing good.	2
		She sat through the entire course and just said wonderful things and didn't offer any kind of advice, criticism, etc. She just said that you're exceptional, and I checked all the boxes. So, I have never had in my entire career anything that I would have said was incredibly useful feedback in a formalized setting.	5
		I didn't find it valuable at all because they'd be like, you're doing a fine job. And I was like, thanks for wasting my time, you know?	7
		Faculty in general take that with a grain of salt. And I think even the dean takes it with a grain of salt because they are sort of removed from teaching	1
	Student evaluation	I just I rely on the students' feedback.	2
		We need feedback from students to improve our program. So, I look at the feedback.	3
		You get feedback from your students, they let you know if you are doing a good job or not.	5
		I got messages from students from years past saying, you don't remember me, but this happened.	8
		To know if I'm doing a good job, is do the students know how to get help when they need it? In those evaluations when they're asked, is the instructor approachable, what are they responding with?	5
	That relationship aspect is how I measure how good of a job I'm doing is those evaluations that say, is your instructor approachable, not necessarily on grades.	7	
Theme Four: Confidence	Experience	Confidence comes from experience.	2
		I feel like I can be a successful educator. I have about 20 years of experience in educating.	3

Comes from Experience	Beginning of career	I remember my first year of teaching, I was just overwhelmed.	3
		This my first year and I want to see what they're reading and prepare for it. So, I was working way harder than my students.	3
		The first couple of weeks were the hardest weeks. The confidence isn't there.	7
		Not having any teaching experience gives you even less confidence going in.	7
		At the beginning, there was really no confidence at all. You're like, I have this degree, I have the background knowledge and the minimum qualifications, and I know more than the students do, but as far as confidence in the classroom, it's pretty minimal.	7
		I don't think there is a lot of support for new faculty coming in.	7

APPENDIX D. SERVICE SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

Theme	Emergent Codes	Evidence	P
<p>Theme One: No Shared Definition</p>	<p>Definition</p>	<p>Just the term service. I see that breaking down into a number of subcategories. Service within the institution and there's service outside of the institution. That's one way that those branch apart.</p>	<p>1</p>
		<p>I'm taking that [service] to mean, things that I don't have to do that I don't get paid to do, but I do anyway.</p>	<p>2</p>
		<p>I suppose it wouldn't be service if we were getting paid.</p>	<p>3</p>
		<p>At my institution, there is service to the college, there is service to the community, and there is service to the system.</p>	<p>5</p>
		<p>Primarily within the institution, it's service on committees and within our faculty union.</p>	<p>6</p>
		<p>I think a lot about service to the college through committees and task forces and open houses.</p>	<p>7</p>
		<p>The goal of service is to help an institution, be it your department, your division, your college, the whole Minn State, be better, not rest on our laurels.</p> <p>When I consider service, I'm trying to bring a greater visibility to the college in the community and even in the region and maybe statewide.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>6</p>
<p>Theme Two: Motivational Variety</p>	<p>Motivation</p>	<p>I want to work at a joint where I want to work. So I have to make it that, you know, so I have to jump in when there are task forces or committee work or something, even when it's not compensated.</p>	<p>8</p>
		<p>I see it as an opportunity. I feel like I have an opportunity to contribute in many ways. And that seems like a really healthy thing for any institution.</p>	<p>8</p>
		<p>When stuff is sort of shitty, I'm like, OK, I'm going to get on the technology committee because our technology is so shitty and I'm going</p>	<p>8</p>

		<p>to say this has to change, that has to change. Why is this happening? Why is that happening? Rather than kind of just complaining in the background.</p> <p>I know contractually there is somewhat of an expectation, I believe</p>	6
	Participation	<p>I'm not going to do any of the committee stuff, don't even ask me because I don't do that anymore.</p> <p>We have a multitude of committees and all those things, and I have served on all of those dumb committees at this point.</p>	5 5
	Reward	<p>That's really what I've come to do because I'm not giving more than what I'm receiving.</p> <p>What did I get out of it? Did I get like a star next to my name? Even a star next to my name would be great, you know, just like anything saying, wow, you really went above just teaching.</p>	7 7
<i>Subtheme: Interfaculty Tension</i>	Comparisons	<p>It's very hard to co-advise when one does all the work and the other one doesn't do any, and it creates resentment.</p> <p>If everyone would just do a little more, it would be a little easier.</p> <p>I often wish that others just gave a little bit more.</p> <p>The same people continue to do it, and so it really puts a lot on those people's plates.</p>	3 2 2 7
	Someone else's problem	<p>I think services are absolutely critical. It's very important to do. For someone else.</p> <p>Why do you guys keep asking me? Go ask somebody else.</p> <p>I feel a little bit of an obligation to peer pressure some of my colleagues and say, you would be really good here.</p>	5 7 8

	Expectations	<p>As soon as an administration catches wind that maybe things aren't going so well, they need more of those people to participate in committees, then they'll say, well, that's what service means, and so therefore, you must do that. (49)</p> <p>No, there's never an expectation until they deem you're not doing anything. Then there is the expectation. (49)</p> <p>There's an expectation that we need bodies to fill up these committees. And if they don't get them, that's when they usually throw a fit.</p> <p>There have been times when I didn't serve on any committees and I still got a "great, looks like you're meeting your professional development goals. Awesome. All right." So really, there is no guidance with that</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>
<i>Subtheme:</i> <i>Administrative Tension</i>	Administratively dependent	<p>When I disagree with the philosophy of where our administration is going, I no longer do those things.</p> <p>The current administration puts a little more emphasis on doing some things that we're not required to do, but they want us to do.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6</p>
	Support	<p>When the school when stopped supporting that, that's when he stopped doing it.</p> <p>The biggest challenge that I've had is probably getting the administration to support and do more in the community public relations sense.</p> <p>We're not being supported in terms of our ideas for community service and bringing the college into that.</p> <p>Administration doesn't reward that. I don't get a thank you from my dean that says, whoa, I noticed you were on all these committees, thank you for your service. Let me give you a little bonus or even just a verbal thank you.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p>

	Capacity	<p>I limit my service on committees because it's easy to overreach and spread yourself too thin.</p> <p>I just can't do it, you know, I can't do all this stuff.</p> <p>I would say a greater challenge really is just overextending.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
Theme Three: Time	Time	<p>I don't have the time for reaching out to middle schools and high schools, and that is really something I'd like to do.</p> <p>It has come down to, OK, I have a 40-hour work week. How many of those hours are devoted to classrooms, it's twenty-seven contact hours, and then you have two hours of office hours, and then how many hours are we given to prep for classes so then that's kind of where I went. And then it was like, OK, so I have two hours to serve on a committee.</p> <p>Time management.</p> <p>I don't have trouble finding places to provide service. I guess it is focusing on which is the best area to put my time and energy. One of my weaknesses is that I can take on way more than I can actually do, but when I do that, I become very ineffective, and I hate that. Trying to figure out where to put my energy is the hardest thing for me.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>4</p>
	Burnout	<p>Asking me to do something above and beyond my overstretched schedule is going to create some resentment and some burnout.</p> <p>I was so worn out.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7</p>

APPENDIX E. SCHOLARLY WORK SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

Theme	Emergent Codes	Evidence	P
Theme One: No Shared Definition	Definition	Research and publishing.	1
		Publishing in online journals of teaching, where journals that share different that that share teaching practices, especially lab-based activities, and things like that.	1
		I think all learning can be scholarly, so any time I'm reading something new I like to read. I do read. I listen to podcasts.	2
		Things that I could share with others.	2
		Research and dissemination of information.	3
		Doing research to develop new projects and materials for my students in my classes.	4
		Developing those pieces that tie classroom to real world and help the students explore beyond the textbook, beyond a lecture that we do in class.	4
		It's not clearly defined. This one is even more ambiguous about what is supposed to mean.	5
		The development of new coursework, new courses that did not exist before.	5
		We tried to do start a program here, a new program, I would imagine that I would interpret that as scholarly work here.	5
It's just not in the narrow sort of definition of what counts.	8		
Theme Two: Lacking Resources	Resources	There's no compensation. You're not awarded a credit a year or anything like that.	1
		There is very little support. There's a lot of red tape.	4
		There are hurdles to doing some of that professional development.	4

	Time	<p>If you choose to do scholarship, you just have to kind of fit it in on your own schedule.</p> <p>I don't know that I could right now.</p> <p>I would like to publish, but it takes time, and I just haven't had it.</p> <p>I feel like sometimes they don't acknowledge the time it takes to do graduate classes or things like that for professional development.</p> <p>I just didn't have time.</p> <p>If you have any gas left in the tank, then maybe you can do some researching and writing.</p> <p>It's time, that's all it is.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>
	Administrative Support	<p>Administration talks about wanting professional development, but then they don't want to account for the time to do that kind of work and that can be really hard.</p> <p>Within our system, if you want to travel somewhere and get reimbursed for it, it would be easier for me to gnaw my own arm off than to get through that red tape. And there's very little support for faculty to do it.</p> <p>We're not given much support unless it has something to do with teaching and learning.</p> <p>I sometimes get a little wistful about, you know, not being able to do more of that.</p> <p>There's really no support for scholarly work.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>7</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p>
Theme Three: Split attitudes	Desire	<p>That's one of my gripes about two-year colleges in general, that there is so little scholarship because there is so much professional development that goes with the scholarship.</p> <p>We don't have research which I'm good with, because I really want to focus on teaching.</p> <p>I don't want my focus to be that I have to publish papers to advance</p>	<p>1</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>

	Job choice	I didn't want to work in a big university because I saw spouses who were always competing for the next big grant. What a life. Always looking for money.	3
		We don't live in that world. And I chose to not live in that world by going into this job.	5
		It's not a big driver for me in terms of the wider academic conversation, and it's the reason why I chose a community college job over a university job.	8

APPENDIX F. LIVED EXPERIENCE SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

Theme	Emergent Codes	Evidence	P
Theme One: Autonomy	Teaching autonomy	I have absolute autonomy. I have never been told how to go about what I do.	1
		Nobody has ever said anything or has ever had any negative report about how I do what I do, how I how I conduct my classroom activities.	2
		I feel like I have a lot of autonomy in what to teach, how to teach it.	2
		Rarely is someone telling me to do it better or different.	3
		Definitely a lot of autonomy.	4
		I have had complete autonomy for the vast majority of my career.	5
		I think that's probably the most amazing part of the job is the autonomy that we have in the classroom.	6
		Overall, the autonomy is what really draws me.	8
	Service autonomy	I've never been goaded into doing anything from administrators or anything like that.	1
		You're never forced to do anything, that's for sure.	7
Nobody has ever approached me and said, you have to be on this committee. I've always been able to choose that.		4	
Most of that has been left up to me as a faculty member to determine.		5	
Academic freedom	Academic freedom has allowed me to adjust the class to what's going on in the real world to try to meet students' needs financially and try to adjust for things.	5	
	I do think I have a lot of autonomy, fortunately, because we have academic freedom under our union contract.	4	

		Our autonomy has always been respected in the classroom and so that academic freedom is extraordinarily valuable and valued.	6
		As far as autonomy, we have huge academic freedom.	7
	Buy-in	I do much better if I get to choose and buy in than if I'm told this is what you have to do.	4
		If you are telling a teacher what to teach, how to teach and when to teach it, it would be a disaster.	5
	Putting up with other things	Our teachers have a high, high tolerance for pain outside of the classroom. As long as you leave that sanctimonious place in the classroom, if you leave that unmolested, teachers will tolerate great pain outside of that classroom.	5
		They can keep not giving me a raise every year and cutting my benefits and raising my health insurance and I'll take that slow pain as long as they leave me alone.	5
		I've never been in a profession where you had to fight so hard to do your job.	5
Theme Two: Leadership Matters	Positive leadership / support	We've had really good leadership, like our president is interested in culture. The minute she showed up, she was like, it's going to be the best culture ever. And so I really buy into that.	2
		I have a dean who is very supportive	3
		I have to say that my leader is just a really, really good leader. Transformational, relational, and just really able to bring out the best in people.	3
	Follow-up / Feedback	I'm seeing things that we were saying three years ago. Well, then it comes up again and we say it again and it's ignored again.	4
		And part of my frustration is I haven't even gotten acknowledgment. If these ideas are crappy, then just tell me and that'll be fine. And I never heard from her.	6
		You asked for some ideas, and you never acknowledged them, let alone gave me feedback on this is a good one, this is too expensive, this is	6

		horseshit, you know, whatever. And that's all I want. I'm trying to do my part.	
Theme Three: Caring	Little victories	<p>I'm always looking for THE student or the couple of students who I'm going to have an interaction with them that's positive today or they're going to appreciate something or I'm going to learn something from them today.</p> <p>So that idea of like just changing one small person at a time or just impacting, not changing, but impacting one person at a time or just like little, small successes. that gets my heart pumped up.</p> <p>I just want to help students be their best selves and it's a lifelong process, and if I can help them take even a couple steps on the way, then I've been a success.</p>	2 2 4
	Caring	<p>People should know that there are a lot of great teachers at community college. There are just a lot of people on our campus who care about students succeeding.</p> <p>I feel very strongly that the faculty who teach in community colleges are there solely for the students. And really they teach in community colleges because they care about the students.</p>	2 7
Theme Four: Real College	Underestimation	<p>Because we're just the little community college down the road, It doesn't mean that there aren't really, really great things happening here.</p>	2
		<p>I think underestimating a community college is kind of the biggest disservice a community can do to itself.</p>	3
		<p>We are not college lite. This is not high school. It is college. You might not have 200 people in a lecture class like you do at the U, but I still expect you to be able to do the same things that they teach in the classes at the U.</p>	4
		<p>There's all these comparisons [to four-year colleges] that we are striving to say we are real, we are legit, we are worthy.</p>	8

<p>Theme Five: Social Justice</p>	<p>Social justice</p>	<p>I lean towards issues of social justice and environmental justice and racial justice.</p> <p>The two-year college institution IS social justice, whether you agree with social justice or not, that's part of the two-year college mission.</p> <p>What keeps me going is just thinking that it provides a better future for a part of the population.</p> <p>I am an advocate for LGBTQ rights, for anti-racism, anti-white supremacy. (74)</p> <p>I have a really strong commitment to social justice and open access.</p> <p>To me, a community college is the place to teach because it's college for everyone. Everyone is welcome to come in and I want to help everyone have access to a college education wherever they start. (74)</p> <p>We get to assist in the social mobility and economic mobility of our students, and that it makes a big impact, again, not just for them, but generations to come and their family members and their friends who they can also help impact after they've gotten a degree</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>7</p>
<p>Theme Six: It's a Good Life</p>	<p>Fulfillment</p>	<p>It's always challenging and interesting and fun.</p> <p>It's been it's been a good life. It's been always interesting. Always satisfying.</p> <p>It is by far the most rewarding career that one could do.</p> <p>Professional and personal relationships that really make life well, you know fulfilling and, yeah, just so much richer.</p> <p>It's the most important job in the world and it is the most important, most satisfying, most worthy way of spending a life.</p> <p>If you want to have really fulfilling supportive, life enhancing work, community college teaching is where it happens.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p>

	Grateful	I am extremely grateful to have been able to work here.	4
		We're in a position of having a fulfilling work experience in our lives and that's such a big part of who we are to have that fulfillment is pretty amazing and one I don't take for granted and am extremely grateful.	6