

ABSTRACT

MARTIN, SARAH ELIZABETH. Part-time Community College Faculty Perceptions of Assessment. (Under the direction of Dr. Susan Barcinas).

This instrumental case study explores how part-time faculty perceive and navigate assessment and the assessment environment within their community college. Part-time faculty comprise 67% community college faculty in an era of accountability, and their engagement with assessment should be understood. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is the theoretical framework for this study as it offers a systems perspective on the ways part-time faculty, perceive and engage with assessment in their environment. CHAT is a learning theory and following these subjects through an assessment environment helps understand how they learn to engage with assessment at their institution. The research questions used to explore this environment are: 1) how do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the assessment environment within their community college? And 2) how do part-time faculty perceive and describe the nature of their engagement with assessment initiatives at their community college? Ten part-time faculty from a large, urban, Southeastern community college were interviewed for this study and their transcripts were coded via the CHAT framework. The framework explored the system from subject (part-time faculty) to object (assessment) by looking at rules/norms (implicit and explicit), community, tools/instruments, and division of labor. The coding process identified themes centered around the CHAT system as well as how part-time faculty define and enact assessment. Participants have multiple grading systems, technologies, and required tasks that impact how they do or do not engage with assessment. The framework also highlights the marginal community interactions that part-time faculty have with their colleagues, departments, and the larger institution. Implications for theory show that CHAT is a useful tool for understanding professional development in a variety of settings and in particular healthcare which has a strong socio-cultural underpinning to all practices.

Implications for research suggest ways to enhance this study by exploring the environment with a focus student learning outcomes assessment as well as how pay structures inform assessment. Finally, implications for practice in the community college are discussed in the areas of professional development, technology, and hiring.

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Part-time Community College Faculty Perceptions of Assessment

by
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DEDICATION

To my husband Philip for supporting me through this process and for always being there to help with my grammar! To my parents – Joy & Bill – for giving me the strength to make this happen. To Ronda – who kept me laughing through the entire thing and to Jennifer B. who gave me the space to finish the work. And to Sue Barcinas – who gave me the opportunity and knowledge to perform this research.

BIOGRAPHY

My career spans many areas – from the design and implementation of routed/switched networks to librarianship to leading a team of educators, process improvement educators, and instructional designers in healthcare. I have worked for non-profits, banks, technology firms, as well as in higher education. The common thread through these positions is a desire to teach, mentor, and learn from my colleagues – something I continue to do in all my endeavors.

I entered higher education as a non-traditional student – I obtained by B.A. in English, my M.A. in Technical Writing, my M.L.I.S, and am working toward the Ph.D. all while working full-time. This educational career path has shaped how I view higher education, how I view learning, and how I approach my research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and History

Assessment in post-secondary education and a strong movement toward accountability are in the forefront of the minds of educators, politicians, and everyday citizens. Research and practice-based publications offer both concern and praise for aspects of demonstrating success such as teacher assessment, student learning outcome assessment, and program assessment (Bailey, Smith Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Banta & Palomba, 2014; Keup & Kilgo, 2014; Kuh et al., 2015; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; McClellan, 2016). State governments as well as accrediting bodies are mandating increasingly complex assessment reports from higher education institutions and the pressure of potential loss of accreditation has a negative impact on prestige, students and funding models (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013; Ewell, 2008; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). The \$1,000,000 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence is awarded every two years to community colleges that show high achievement (“Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence - The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program,” 2019). Schools demonstrate metrics in four critical outcomes as part of the process and the four areas are: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earning and high-levels of access for minority and low-income students (“Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence - The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program,” 2019). Josh Wyner (2014) discusses how the Aspen Institute prize compels educators to look at quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate and improve upon success. Evidence-based and data-driven decision-making are important in all areas of higher education; however, community colleges have many unique aspects that illustrate the nuances involved in implementing institutional assessment. For example, Kuh, et al. in their report found that community colleges – compared to other post-secondary institutions – show the most consistency in using assessment results not just for

accreditation but also for internally motivated reasons such as strategic planning, benchmarking, and curriculum modifications (2014). Despite this trend, community colleges still report that achieving faculty buy-in, a crucial aspect of formative assessment, is difficult for many assessment initiatives (Kuh et al., 2014). In addition, the report found that most institutions are not using their assessment results effectively – especially in the area of student learning outcomes (Kuh et al., 2014) – which illustrates the need to address institutional culture regarding assessment. Institutional support, from faculty and administrators, is key to creating assessment programs that provide data-informed decisions that support the changing needs of higher education.

Community college activities include not just degree transfers to four-year institutions, but also early college high school programs, professional development, personal development, vocational, and career and technical programs that have unique assessment needs that cannot be solely measured through standard persistence and completion metrics (Cohen et al., 2013). Practice-based or apprenticeship environments rely much more on authentic assessments such as portfolios, which are excellent tools for these non-curricular areas of study as they show that the student can accomplish the goals of the practice (Kvale, 2007). Student learning outcomes and other types of classroom assessment are of vital importance to the community college but given that 67% of community college faculty are part-time (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018) they often do not have the capacity to complete a variety of assessments. Part-time faculty often have other jobs or situations that limit the amount of time they can spend on assessment activities (*Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*, 2014; Rogers, 2015). It is important to understand how the process of assessment revolves around multiple subcultures simultaneously driving and reinforcing assessment engagement. The process informs and is also informed by the interactions among administrators, permanent full-time faculty, part-time

faculty, students, and outside interests. This study explores the community college assessment environment through the vantage point of the of part-time community college faculty. It investigates the system or systems that include the actors, institutions, tools, and other cultural aspects that influence assessment initiatives for this particular group.

Statement of the Problem

Assessment is an ever-present reality in higher education and encompasses everything from institutional and student success to classroom pedagogy. While assessment has always been a part of learning, the 1970's brought about a change in assessment discourse that stemmed from a neoliberal economic philosophy (Ambrosio, 2013; Olssen & Peters, 2005). The trend toward a market-driven philosophy gave rise to the accountability movement in higher education which led to a greater emphasis on standardized testing and student learning outcome assessment (Ambrosio, 2013; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

In 2006, then Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, formed a commission to explore higher education and make recommendations for its future. The Spellings commission, as it became known, embraced the accountability movement that was said to “care little about the distinctions that sometimes preoccupy the academic establishment...instead they care – as we do – about results” (“A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education,” 2006, p. xi). The Spellings report references business methods throughout the document with a particular emphasis on job preparation.

The emphasis described by the Spellings Commission is particularly relevant to community colleges because of their focus on occupational fields alongside their offerings for degree-seeking students (Mundhenk, 2004). Further complicating assessment strategies are the varying factors that constitute success in a community college. Success is not narrowly defined by obtaining a degree but through a variety of certifications, one-shot classes, and other forms of

professional development (Mundhenk, 2004). Success also means different things to different students since not all students go to community college to graduate instead they go to “acquire skills relevant to the careers they will pursue either directly out of community college or by way of a four year school” (Wyner, 2014, p. 3). These varying definitions of success are often related to obtaining a job upon completing their courses or how long it takes to obtain a degree.

Organizations such as The Aspen Institute and Achieving the Dream recognizes these different understandings of success. The Aspen Institution awards the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence which rewards, broadly defined, ‘excellence’ in the work of the community college by focusing on student outcomes in four areas: “student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings, and highs levels of access and success for minority and low-income students”(“Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence - The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program,” 2019) . This \$1 million dollar prize is awarded to a school that the institute chooses based on a model “developed using publicly available data from the National Center for Education Statistics’ Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the U.S. Census Bureau” (“Selection Process - The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program,” 2019) combined with intensive campus visits and assessments for semi-finalist schools. The schools are judged based on public assessment data that explores a variety of outcomes – which highlights the importance of obtaining and reporting data about institutional success. The Achieving the Dream (ATD) organization says that “student success means so much more than a personal goal secured – it means improved skills, better employability, and economic growth for families, communities and our nation as whole” (“About Us | Achieving the Dream,” 2019). ATD provides a variety of services to member institutions to help them enact holistic models of support for community colleges.

The importance of accountability data is also addressed through the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The VFA is an initiative developed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to provide an accountability framework for community colleges (“About VFA,” 2019). The VFA framework helps community colleges measure student outcomes, progress, workforce outcomes, and completion and transfer measures – the data can drive benchmarking and strategic planning initiatives (“About VFA,” 2019).

Given the variety of student needs and success measures in a community college it is important to understand assessment and accountability within the specific community college context. The uniqueness of community colleges can be seen in many different areas – the first of which is in their commitment to open access and equity. Bailey et al. (2015) discusses the history of open access in this way - “access was important from two perspectives. The first perspective is the growing economic need for more educated workers – the need to find employment for the millions of returning veterans after World War II and the rise of the Baby Boomer generation” (p. 4). The second perspective is equity “in particular, in 1947 the Truman Commission noted the desirability of severing the strong link between socioeconomic background and education achievement, advocated for increased education for African Americans, and recommended an expansion of community colleges” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 4). Community colleges focus on serving their community – everyone in the community - at an affordable cost. To serve this community the college not only offers associate degrees and two-year college transfer programs, but technical/vocational job training and certificates. There is also a focus on programs that provide life-long learning opportunities, which includes a range from one-shot classes all the way to degree programs.

In addition, community colleges also offer significant remedial, refresher and basic skills education to those under-prepared for various programs - in this way they differ significantly

from other higher education institutions (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Bailey et al., 2015; Mellow & Heelan, 2008). Community colleges also differ from other higher educational institutions in their demographics. For example, Mellow and Heelan state that “on average, community college students are older, poorer, more likely to be part-time and working, and more likely to be the first member of their family in college than students at four-year universities.” (2008, p. xv). North Carolina is one of the states that offers opportunity programs that entice younger college students – such as early college or college promise. These efforts are indicative of the wide ranging needs of community college students and the efforts made to meet those needs (“Career & College Promise | NC Community Colleges,” 2019; “Federal Grants Boost N.C.’s ‘Early College’ High School Push - Education Week,” 2016).

These unique aspects of the community college require a unique set of assessment plans and tools to understand their institutional needs and to understand the growing assessment environment as it is experienced by administrators, faculty, and students. The emphasis on student learning outcomes places faculty at the forefront of campus assessment, as the faculty are the ones who determine if students are meeting the expected outcomes of a specific course or curriculum. Classroom assessment is an integral part of higher education and with the community college emphasis on teaching, it is an imperative. This is, however, not the only type of assessment done at the community college.

In addition to the classroom assessment, large-scale assessment initiatives such as studies on student engagement impact faculty in less obvious ways. These initiatives may lead to significant campus changes that impact faculty duties in performing assessment or in working with policies developed via assessment data analysis. Faculty may be expected to enact assessment activities that they are not prepared for – especially since they are given little information about the assessment project in advance or are not trained or accustomed to

assessment efforts (Boser, 2010). Because of this, faculty should be aware of how to engage in the campus assessment environment – this participation makes them a part of the conversation. However, in practice the conversation often occurs without faculty, and in particular without part-time faculty input. Part-time faculty are often sidelined from the campus conversations due to their limited available time and indefinite institutional status, which can lead to overall faculty reluctance or inability to participate in the conversations (*Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*, 2014; Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013a). Further, there is little sharing of information and what occurs often trickles down through department meetings, emails and website notifications (Kuh et al., 2014). There is a lack of empirical research on this topic as well as a gap in the practice literature on how community colleges navigate the issue of part-time faculty and assessment. Understanding how part-time faculty, who are arguably the largest proportion of community college faculty, navigate their assessment environment will provide community colleges with insight on this particular group and how their interactions within the system may be or potentially could be influencing campus assessment environment and activities.

Approximately 67% of community college faculty are part-time (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018) and it is important to note that community colleges enroll 41% of all undergraduates in the country (“Fast Facts - AACC,” 2018) which suggests that a large number of students are in classes led by part-time faculty. The relationship between part-time faculty and the community college campus cannot be understated, as the majority of faculty members are part-time. In particular, it can be hard for adjunct faculty – who are not invited to faculty sessions and who often teach during the evenings – to participate in any assessment projects (Stumpf, 2013). Part-time and full-time faculty need to be part of the assessment community and given the time to complete assessment activities but they are often removed from any conversations about

assessment – instead they are seen as transient and not invested in the learning process (Haviland, Turley, & Shin, 2011; Wang & Hurley, 2012).

Part-time faculty rarely have the time or institutional support to conduct authentic student assessments such as portfolios so the traditional multiple-choice tests are still the most prevalent choice (Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013a) even when they may not be the most appropriate method. While there is research to show that teaching performance of part-time faculty is similar to that of full-time faculty, the ability to participate in an assessment environment or perform assessment lags behind (Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013a). This gap in the literature, and in the areas of both research and practice, renders the part-time faculty invisible at a time when community colleges are performing significant assessment activities and developing institutional structures and protocol based upon an assessment environment ethos. Given the reliance on part-time faculty in the community college system it is important that community college leaders understand how this large population influences and is influenced by community college assessment practices.

Purpose and Guiding Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand how part-time faculty perceive and navigate assessment and the assessment environment within their community colleges.

The research questions are:

1. How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the assessment environment within their community college?
2. How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the nature of their engagement with assessment initiatives at their community college?

Research Methodology

Qualitative research allows for unique community voices and experiences to be studied, and in this case a study exploring how part-time community college faculty perceive their environment is well suited for qualitative empirical work. There is a lack of qualitative studies that examine the ways in which part-time community college faculty perceive and engage with assessment in terms of attitude or perception and behaviorally. Assessment is an increasingly large part of the community college and as such the attitudes and perceptions that inform the community is an important area to explore. The research uses an instrumental case study approach (Stake, 1995) that allows for in-depth interviews to provide a deeper understanding of the community college context – in this case an urban community college in the Southeast. Instrumental case studies allow researchers to explore questions by focusing on a particular bounded case (Stake, 1995) – such as part-time community college curriculum faculty. This research is considered a bounded case study or a “bounded system that exists independent of the research” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 263); therefore, the research does not purport generalizability, instead the research seeks to provide particular information within a given system. Yin discusses binding the case as a way to manage the scope and keeping the study focused on a real-life situation and not an abstraction. (Yin, 2014, p. 34). Using a bounded study allows the research to maintain focus not just through the theoretical framework but through the study design itself. The study design will be outlined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Historical Activity Theory, known as CHAT, is the theoretical framework for this study because it offers a systems approach to understanding and navigating an organizational culture – in this case the assessment environment at a community college. Based upon the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978), CHAT conceptualizes learning as a systems activity. Thus, an

organizational process and culture can be studied from the differing aspects as the subject navigates through the four CHAT areas of instruments/tools, rules, community, and division of labor to enact the object. Instruments, or tools, are the artifacts actors use to complete activities and reach desired goals. Within CHAT, rules are the cultural norms – both written and unwritten – that guide the actors in a given dynamic or context. These norms may be implicit – embodied in the actors in a subconscious manner or as subtext in a community – or explicit where the actors are conscious of the norms. The community is comprised of actors who work at different points in the system – roles that are exposed by exploring how actions occur within a system. The CHAT framework also allows for socio-cultural theories to be a part of the analysis – theories that impact the evolving social or relational dynamics of an evolving community.

Through CHAT researchers can explore the distributed nature of community knowledge or distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1993), the various communities of practice that are created in situated learning environments (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and how actors engage with the socio-material (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011; Latour, 1987). The CHAT framework allows the researcher to look at multiple systems, where they intersect with other communities, and the various tools at their disposal. CHAT explores and analyzes a community as an activity system with its own particular artifacts, rules, and norms that influence the outcomes desired by the community. Analytical questions revolve around understanding and demonstrating how actors create, perceive, interact with, absorb, ignore, or break the systems rules, tools, labor practices, community norms, and the subsequent impact on the system through these interactions. The researcher can use the framework to gather insight into the way the system areas influence what the community chooses to assess, how they assess, how to use the assessment upon completion, and explore what the artifacts themselves say about the system and the outcomes. The ability to

discern and examines collective human behavior, focusing on members of a system, as a group, in learning a process or program is significant to this research.

CHAT focuses on objects or outcomes, which means a CHAT framework can follow a subject or subjects through to the completion of the outcome (or perceived completion). The choice of CHAT as a theoretical framework will allow an examination of an assessment environment through the entirety of intersecting areas and the practices that shape these systems into a complex assessment environment. Thus, assessment can be conceptualized as a learning process that is influenced by a working set of explicit and implicit rules and norms, shared understandings, strategies by stakeholders for navigation of the 'learning system', and by better understanding how those elements converge into an outcome. The research questions will be addressed by CHAT in two different ways: one by examining the assessment environment as a whole through the perceptions of the faculty, two by examining how faculty engage with assessment in this environment. The environment is explored through the policies, instruments, community, division of labor, and is seen as part-time faculty move through each of these areas as they engage of assessment.

Significance of Study

The Community College assessment environment is evolving and increasing in intensity. Faculty members, as the professionals who interact most directly with community college students, are essential to any meaningful assessment in the community college. Given the predominance of part-time community college faculty members, it is essential to better understand how they discover and engage with assessment in their roles. Understanding how part-time community college faculty perceive and navigate assessment can impact future research as well as provide guidance for community colleges and other types of institutions who experience tensions or challenges associated with involving faculty and other stakeholders in

meaningful ways in the assessment process. The study of part-time faculty involvement in assessment is vital in part because they account for 67% of community college faculty (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018). Part-time faculty engage in a significant portion of classroom work and student interaction which includes a variety of assessment initiatives. The nature of part-time faculty positions; however, means that part-time faculty may be less involved in the institution or professional opportunities. Some of these professional opportunities include attending faculty meetings, receiving institutional announcements, professional development courses, or meaningful participation in college initiatives. Missing these opportunities may lead to a disconnect between how assessment is understood, performed, and used in the institution at large. While there is some very good research on part-time faculty there is little on their place in the assessment environment.

The study shines a light on a previously understudied area in the post-secondary assessment context and provides a window into the assessment roles of part-time faculty by exploring how part-time faculty perceive the assessment environment at their institution. Cultural Historic Activity Theory (CHAT) will provide a framework that explores the policies, instruments, community, and division of labor that allow them to learn and navigate assessment and the assessment environment. Each area highlights a part of the assessment environment and the study will focus on part-time faculty members' perception of that environment. This will also help the institution understand how the areas impact part-time faculty members perception of their engagement with assessment initiatives and highlight how their engagement may benefit or inhibit assessment practices. Because CHAT is a learning framework administrators and department chairs can use this to understand how part-time faculty enact institutional, departmental, and personal objectives.

Federal, state and local agencies as well as stakeholders want to understand how the community college is meeting its obligations to the larger community. Holistic research that looks at what is driving the data implementation and collection– the assessment environment – will help the community college gather the best possible metrics. As assessment continues to be an important factor in community colleges it is essential to understand how those who make assessment happen interact with their larger community as well as within the smaller contexts that comprise the community college environment. A cultural understanding can help everyone see how the community norms may influence assessment in ways both positive and negative. Using this information, assessment communities can then focus their endeavors using the voices of everyone involved in the system and better create assessment programs that do allow for data-informed decision making as opposed to performing assessment for assessment’s sake. This type of study can influence the perceived negative connotation of assessment to one that displays how it can work for all stakeholders and positively influence student, departmental, and institutional outcomes.

There is little empirical research in the literature on part-time community college faculty member’s engagement with assessment practices. Instead, existing research on community college assessment focuses on the general practice of assessment – best practices and how to guides (Alexander, Karvonen, Ulrich, Davis, & Wade, 2012; Andrade, 2011; Banta & Palomba, 2014; Boarer Pitchford, 2014; Bresciani, 2011; Friedlander & Serban, 2004; Haviland et al., 2011; Middaugh, 2010; Nunley et al., 2011). The research that does exist is primarily quantitative and additionally the assessment literature itself is heavily quantitative (Ewell, 2008; Falchikov & Boud, 2007; Middaugh, 2010). Qualitative assessment with its deep descriptions and socio-cultural underpinnings can provide thoughtful information about the way faculty

members perceive, engage with, and understand assessment – it can help situate the part-time faculty in an assessment environment.

There are also a number of studies that explore faculty involvement with assessment practices but, again, with little emphasis on part-time faculty. The available studies explore how part-time faculty are (or are not) assessed at their institutions, how they view the act of assessment, or how they do or do not participate in assessment. There is no research on the ways that part-time faculty perceive and actually engage with the assessment environment at a community college – this is a crucial part of understanding and working to refine assessment environment and practice.

Higher education is being directed to provide data-informed reasons to show their return on investment – market forces and policies are pushing higher education into a neoliberal understanding of their place in our society (“A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education,” 2006; Ambrosio, 2013). Full-time faculty worry that the accountability movement may impact their academic freedom as well as require their work on items that are not in their purview. Policy makers express concerns that there are not enough educated graduates entering the workforce and not enough coherence or guided pathways that lead a student efficiently from ‘entry’ to ‘employed’ (Bailey et al., 2015; Banta & Palomba, 2014; Boser, 2010; Ewell, 2008; Jin, Li, & Jian Chang, 2004; Shepard, 2000); however, part-time faculty are a minimal presence in the conversation.

The research contributes to helping community college faculty and administrators work together more effectively to create an assessment environment that has a positive impact on the institution and its stakeholders. Given the importance of assessment –it is critical to understand the perspectives of part-time faculty members who are integral members of the community college. CHAT, as a guiding theoretical framework offers others a mechanism and model for

better understanding their unique institutional culture and to enact meaningful changes to the assessment process. An assessment environment is dynamic and comprised of many moving parts and therefore must be explored as a living system. CHAT provides a holistic and realistic understanding of how actors participate in and navigate through an assessment environment by looking at the instruments, rules (implicit and explicit), community, and division of labor of the system.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study it is important to define some key terms.

- Activity system – a bounded system that is comprised of community, rules, instruments, and division of labor all acting with and against each other to reach a desired outcome. (Engestrom, 1987; Engestrom & Mietinen, 1999)
- Authentic assessment – assessment techniques that require students to demonstrate understanding through the application of course content. These types of assessment include papers, presentations, and portfolios to name a few. (Boarer Pitchford, 2014)
- Objective or traditional assessment – assessment technique used to evaluate students factual knowledge about course content. A multiple choice exam is indicative of this type of assessment. (Boarer Pitchford, 2014)
- Part-time faculty – faculty hired to teach at the community college without benefits and academic protections. This group is limited to the number of classes they can teach and are paid per class.

Summary

In summary, the study explores the ways that part-time community college faculty perceive and navigate assessment. Further, the study uses Cultural Historical Activity Theory

(CHAT) as a framework to explore and analyze the research problem. CHAT provides a framework to explore the system – in this case the assessment environment - through the lens of part-time faculty. In particular how part-time faculty react to the rules and norms, artifacts, tools, and division of labor at work in the system. This research explores part-time faculty at a large, urban, Southeastern community college, and how they perceive, engage with, and understand the assessment environment.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature including a brief history of higher education assessment and, in particular, assessment on community colleges. In addition, it will provide an overview of community college history as well as contemporary contexts. Next, the literature review presents a discussion on part time faculty in community colleges. Finally, Chapter Two provides an overview and explains the theory of CHAT, as well as, its strengths and weaknesses as a tool to understand activity systems and learning communities. Chapter Three describes the case study methodology used in this study and why it is appropriate for this project. The chapter also provides an account of the interview process, transcription process, coding, and analysis of the interviews. Chapter Four describes the participant stories as well as thematic findings based on the CHAT model. The thematic findings are based on off of the CHAT and free coding process. Chapter Five answers the research questions based on the findings in Chapter 4 and then provides a discussion of the questions as it relates to the literature. Finally, Chapter 5 gives recommendations for future research and a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The term community college is imbued with multiple meanings that reflect the varied nature, history, and philosophy of this particular type of educational institution. Terms such as junior college, technical college, and technical institution are all terms used to describe the community college. In this one type of institution community members can attend programs that prepare them to transfer to four-year institutions, allow them to gain a particular skill that may help them in the job market or take a class that fulfills an intrinsic need. The goal of a community college is to meet the varied needs of the community it serves.

A Brief History

In the latter 19th and early 20th century educators at prominent universities decided to leave the teaching of freshman and sophomore students to new institutions known as junior colleges (Cohen et al., 2013; Ratcliff, 1994). This shift allowed the traditional universities to emphasize research and theory as opposed to the “lower-division preparatory work” (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 6). During this same time period other educators envisioned a system where universities would offer “higher-order scholarship, while the lower schools would provide general and vocational education to students through age nineteen or twenty” (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 7). The mix of two-year college preparatory work and vocational education are evident in today’s community college institutions.

Another important aspect of community college history is its commitment to open access or education for all community members, which makes it the “centerpiece in the nation’s plan for providing universal access to higher education” (Vaughn, 1995, p. 4). Open access became even more important as local communities changed – in fact – “it was the newly arrived immigrant, the working adult, the mother reentering the work force and the military veteran who swelled and diversified enrollments” (Ratcliff, 1994, p. 13). Community colleges filled a void for the

pragmatic and specific educational needs of people entering the workforce precisely because they could admit anyone into the school (Cohen et al., 2013; Gleazer Jr., 1994; Ratcliff, 1994). The mission to accept all community members shaped the curriculum to cover general academic education as well as vocational programs that would provide skills-based learning for the work place.

Community needs keep changing; however, and some contemporary community colleges have started granting baccalaureate degrees all-the-while offering high school completion and remedial classes. This “vertical expansion – the stretching of the community college curriculum down towards grades 11 and 12 and up toward the baccalaureate” (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 24) is an example of the ever-changing role of post-secondary education. Discussions on this vertical stretch center around the historical functions of community colleges versus their possible new role in the community (Cohen et al., 2013; McKinney, Scicchitano, & Johns, 2014). Teacher education is an excellent example of this aspect of the community college in that it can open up teaching programs to historically underrepresented groups (Park, Tandberg, Shim, Hu, & Herrington, 2018) which is in line with the community college meeting community needs. Proponents of the expansion say that community colleges are meeting community needs by offering affordable baccalaureate degrees that are otherwise not available to their community members while opponents hold concerns that this expansion will limit funding to the core curriculum and marginalize many community members (Cohen et al., 2013).

A mainstay of community college history shows a deep commitment of educators and community members to localize education to specific contexts. Community colleges forge partnerships and customize their efforts as best as possible to ensure that the lifelong learning needs of adults and the evolving needs of communities are addressed. Continuing and adult education, college preparatory, and high school completion all play a role in our communities

and the community college is in a unique position to fill this role. The mission to provide open access to all community members also gives the community college an important place in the education system.

Community Colleges: Mission and Vision

A significant part of the community college is their commitment to open access – the opportunity for anyone who desires an education to attend. The American Association of Community Colleges derives the community college mission from George B. Vaughn’s *The Community College Story* (1995), which states that:

The community college’s mission is the fountain from which all of its activities flow. In simplest terms, the mission of the community college is to provide education for individuals, many of who are adults, in its service region. Most community college missions have basic commitments to:

- Serve all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students;
- A comprehensive educational program;
- Serve its community as a community-based institution of higher education;
- Teaching;
- Lifelong learning (p. 3).

George Vaughn’s description allows for community college missions to evolve to meet the changing community needs. The community college focus may include all or the majority of the following: career education, general education, collegiate or transfer education, remedial education, and community education (Lorenzo, 1994). The mission has to accommodate the various, and at times competing, needs of the community college; for example, some institutions are forced to weigh the emphasis on college transfer with the emphasis on adult and continuing

education (Lorenzo, 1994; Townsend & Dougherty, 2006). These competing agendas may cause the organization to appear schizophrenic at times as leaders must ensure that the needs of various constituencies are met.

North Carolina has a strong history of community college activity starting with the person known as the founder of the North Carolina community college system Dr. W. Dallas Herring. Dr. Herring - a twenty-year North Carolina State Board of Education chair and creator of the first plan for industrial education - was from rural North Carolina and had a strong belief in education. In the book *What Has Happened to the Golden Door*, Dr. Herring noted that North Carolina needed educational institutions that provided alternatives to the University system, diverse institutions that were available at a reasonable price for the community (Herring, 1992, p. 11). This belief helped him recognize a need for vocational education for North Carolina citizens – something that was lacking in the early 1950's ("Oral History Interview with William Dallas Herring: Interview C-0034," 1987). The governor during this time was bringing in more industry but there were still a preponderance of agricultural workers who would need training – and learn to work within a very different culture ("Oral History Interview with William Dallas Herring: Interview C-0034," 1987). He believed that everyone should have access to an education and worked with educators and politicians across the state to open Industrial Education Centers (IEC) many of which are now community colleges. Herring worked from the ground with a citizens perspective of what people needed and wanted from their education – he traveled across the country to see how other institutions as well as to Washington, D.C. to lobby for funds ("Oral History Interview with William Dallas Herring: Interview C-0034," 1987). He worked with Governor Terry Sanford to create the Governor's Commission on Education Beyond High School also known as the Carlyle commission which recommended that North Carolina combine junior colleges with IEC's to create a "comprehensive community college system" (*History of*

the North Carolina Community College System, 2011). Herring wanted educators to understand that “power, prestige, and quality” (“Oral History Interview with William Dallas Herring: Interview C-0034,” 1987) are no substitute for meeting student and community needs.

Open access: Who attends Community College

The American Association of Community Colleges 2018 fact sheet reports 12 million students are enrolled in community colleges (“Fast Facts - AACC,” 2018). The enrollment numbers display the diverse characteristics of community college students. The American Association of Community Colleges using data gathered from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) provides current information about the enrollment in community colleges. The 2018 data shows that 37% of community college attendees are full-time, 56% are female, 47% are White, 13% are Black, and 24% are Hispanic (“Fast Facts - AACC,” 2018) The remaining percentages are divided among Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Non-resident Alien, Other/Unknown, or 2 or more races (“Fast Facts - AACC,” 2018). North Carolina community colleges align with national data showing that 37% of attendees are enrolled full-time, 59% of attendees are female, 56% of attendees are White, 21% percent of attendees are Black, and 10% are Hispanic (“IPEDS Data Center,” 2017).

However, the numbers do not tell the complete story, as Cohen et al. (2013) state: the community colleges reached out to attract those who were not being served by traditional higher education: those who could not afford the tuition; who could not take the time to attend a college full time; whose racial or ethnic background had constrained them from participating; who had inadequate preparation in the lower schools (p. 35)

The students are very different from other post-secondary institutions in that they may be in certificate programs, non-credit classes, or vocational classes, among other learning opportunities. Many more students study part-time than any other type of post-secondary

institution. Community colleges offer degrees, licensure, certificates, and the one-off classes that are a part of ongoing professional development. In essence, the students who enroll in a community college are as varied as the community itself.

A dominant theme that addresses the difference between traditional college students and those who attend community colleges is that of “citizen” (Vaughn, 1995, p. 17). Traditional students give their role as a student a priority over other roles which Vaughn describes as “student-as-citizen” (1995, p. 17). The student-as-citizen role places scholarship and completing an education as the center of their life at that given time. Community college students are described as citizens first or “citizen-as-student” (Vaughn, 1995, p. 17) which suggests that the role of student is secondary to other responsibilities such as work and family. Current information from the American Association of Community colleges also show that 62% of full-time and 72% of part-time community college students work which has an impact on the institution (“Fast Facts - AACC,” 2018). These differing roles have an impact on a number of factors such as when and what classes are taught as well as what student services and extra-curricular activities are offered.

The modern community college is facing even more change, in 2015 “President Obama set two national goals: by 2020, American will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world, and community colleges will produce an additional 5 million graduate” (“Building American Skills Through Community Colleges | The White House,” 2015). The proposal “will help community colleges and other institutions develop, improve, and provide education and training” - it is important to note that this initiative is housed in the Department of Labor working in cooperation with the Department of Education (“Building American Skills Through Community Colleges | The White House,” 2015). The focus is on building skills and credentials that will help people enter or re-enter the workforce, which is underscored by the

projects location in Labor as opposed to Education. The emphasis is on education as a way to encourage job growth through skill development as much as through traditional curricular activities.

While workforce development is a large part of the community college mandate there is also a large demand for opportunities to transfer to four-year institutions. Some community colleges are looking at a reverse view of the transfer system – students will earn an associates in a specific area then transfer to a four year school to complete their studies (Mellow & Heelan, 2008, p. 188). This helps students because while many institutions will transfer in community college credits they are often counted as electives which means that transfer students may take longer to graduate than students who began at the four-year institution (Mellow & Heelan, 2008, p. 188). Another aspect of reverse transfer is used in North Carolina – students can credits from their four-year institution with those credits already earned at a community college – if the appropriate requirements are met then the students are given an associate’s degree (“Reverse Transfer | NC Community Colleges,” 2016). Community colleges are also creating guided pathways – a way for students to create, maintain, and complete a plan to lead them to the appropriate outcome. Guided pathways focus on “career and transfer outcomes” determined by the student and the institution (AACC, 2016). North Carolina also updated the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) that governs the credit transfer between NC community colleges and NC public universities (“Comprehensive Articulation Agreement | NC Community Colleges,” 2016). These types of agreements and initiatives help students minimize lost time (by focusing their coursework where it is needed) and in lost funding (students may not pay for classes that do not benefit their program). In addition, the relationship between the NC community colleges and NC public universities is streamlined and helps remove barriers for everyone involved.

Bailey et al in their 2015 book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* discusses the current state of community college and suggests ways to improve various aspects of their current organizational structure. The authors describe the current model as a “cafeteria or self-service college because students are left to navigate often complex and ill-defined pathways mostly on their own” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 13). This cafeteria style of education does not lend itself to in depth learning as students are jumping from course to course “unbundled” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 19) without a lot of guidance from the institution. While the unbundled model may be more cost effective the authors suggest using a guided pathway approach as it is “likely to result in lower cost per successful completion” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 19) per student. A guided pathway is an approach that will:

Engage faculty and student services professionals in creating more clearly structured, educationally coherent program pathways that lead to students’ end goals, and in rethinking instruction and student support services in ways that facilitate students’ learning and success as they progress along these paths (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 3).

Crisp and Taggart (2013) discuss organizational programs that are designed to improve student success but found that there is not much “empirical evidence that demonstrates best practices or how to effectively implement these programs “ (p. 124). Other organizational “practices exist in a variety of forms and include learning communities, student success courses, and supplemental instruction” (Crisp & Taggart, 2013, p. 115) and these changing practices are rippling through community colleges.

North Carolina has a Guided Pathways initiative with a goal “to improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market – and to achieve equity in these outcomes” (“Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation,” 2017). In 2015 the North Carolina community college focused primarily on the labor market and

defined high-demand classes as though that the business community thinks are appropriate (“Transforming Education | NC Governor McCrory,” 2015). The GPS or Guided Pathways plan takes a more nuanced view by using a networked improvement community (NIC) that is focused on a variety of aspects of student needs such as completion and transfer as well as employment (*NC Student Success Center: NC GPS Network Overview*, 2018). Dr. R. Scott Ralls, former President of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and current President of Wake Technical Community College reported that “more than 40 percent of the wage earners in our state have been a student at one of our 58 community colleges in the past ten years” (2015, p. 1). This shows the impact the community college has on the state as well as offers some influence on the future of the North Carolina community college curriculum.

Governance

George Vaughn defines governance as “the process through which institutional decisions are made” (1995, p. 23) and those involved in governance explore the rules, regulations, policies, and other structures that govern the community college. Essentially community colleges consist of a president, vice-presidents, deans, department chairs, and other administrators while faculty serve on committees and councils (Vaughn, 1995). However, governance may be distributed or divided in a variety of ways including by department, support services, teaching faculty, administrators with limited communication among the groups (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 145).

Community colleges were not initially formed with shared governance in mind, instead they were “administered by leaders with seemingly unlimited authority reinforced by a board of trustees” (Alfred, 1994, p. 247). The community college president is historically tasked with administrative issues while the board of trustees influence institutional policy (Carlsen & Burdick, 1994) but this situation can be fluid. As with any institution the context and community needs play a large role in how the president and board operate at any given institution – some

boards are more involved than others and their choice of president reflect the board's role and power (Carlsen & Burdick, 1994; Vaughn, 1995). Boards can be appointed or elected depending on the state and appointed officials are often chosen by governors or other political leaders (Vaughn, 1995). There are also community colleges with state-level governing boards who are appointed by the governor although there is some concern that state-level control will marginalize the differing needs of the disparate communities across the region (Vaughn, 1995).

Over time more stakeholders became involved with community colleges such as state agencies, community members, and the faculty and staff. Changes in the community college system required faculty to take on more than teaching roles as they tackle assessment and planning in their institutions and these changes indicate a need for greater faculty governance (Alfred, 1994). In the 1990's "students and stakeholders became more vocal in making their expectations for service and quality known" (Alfred, 2008, p. 81) while faculty and administrators were in conflict over decision making responsibilities in the institution (Alfred, 1994, 2008). While faculty, staff, and students still push for inclusion in decision making there is still a "reliance on informal networks to interpret and communicate the why and how of decisions continues to be strong" (Alfred, 2008, p. 82) because many decisions are still made at the executive level. As community colleges grow and attempt to address the expanding and ever-changing needs of their communities "leaders will need to find ways to prevent size and complexity from turning institutions into educational bureaucracies and dispirited workplaces" (Alfred, 2008, p. 88). In addition it is important for governing bodies to be allowed to be proactive instead of reactive and encourage a "more collaborative approach to governance" (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 149) to better serve the institution and its stakeholders.

North Carolina community colleges are governed by the State Board of Community Colleges and they have authority over the following: establishing service areas; establishing

military service areas; establishing and closing colleges; providing individual Board of Trustees the laws and procedure they need to govern over program accountability, fiscal accountability and satisfaction of state priorities; establishing pay rates (“State Board of Community Colleges Code | NC Community Colleges,” 2018). Local boards have authority over personnel policies, educational guarantee, evaluation of presidents, and ensuring faculty meet the standards of the accrediting body among other duties (“State Board of Community Colleges Code | NC Community Colleges,” 2018). While each community college in North Carolina does have its own governing body, they are answerable to the state board and work under the auspices of the state. North Carolina, now through the State Board, determines the path of the community college system as a whole and has had this role since 1963 (“Mission & History | NC Community Colleges,” 2019). There are 58 colleges in the North Carolina system and it is the third largest community college network in the nation (“Mission & History | NC Community Colleges,” 2019) – their prominence both local and nationally is indicative of the strong state support and governance for community colleges.

Community College Pay and Tenure

The American Association of University Professors discussed faculty salaries in the 2017-2018 Annual Report (*The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2017-2018*, 2018). The report states that the average salaries at Associate Degree granting institutions are as follows:

Table 1: Community College Faculty Average Salaries.

Category	Average Salary
Professor	85,233
Associate	70,403
Assistant	60,728
Instructor	56,008
Lecturer	51,724
No Rank (institutions without ranks)	67,694

The same study found that the average pay per part-time faculty members is \$16,215 at institutions with ranks and \$12,863 at institutions without ranks (*The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2017-2018*, 2018).

North Carolina determines pay based on the following education levels of faculty: vocational diploma, certificate or less; associate degree or equivalent; bachelor's degree; master's degree or education specialist; doctoral degree ("NC Community College FY 2018-19 state aid allocations and budget," 2018). Part-time faculty are paid based on educational levels as well, but their pay is designated as hourly or the "contact hour" – the contact hour is supposed to recognize work done outside of the classroom ("NC Community College FY 2018-19 state aid allocations and budget," 2018). In March of 2015 the President of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges stated that our community college instructors "are among the worst paid in the country...and rank among the bottom third of states in the Southeast" which is also the lowest paid region (Ralls, 2015, p. 2). Table 2 shows the minimum salary faculty for North Carolina FY 2018-19.

Table 2: North Carolina Faculty Salary by Educational Level.

Education Level	Full-Time Faculty (9-month contract)	Part-time faculty (hourly rate)
Vocational Diploma, Certificate or Less	\$37,581	\$27.70
Associate Degree or Equivalent	\$38,103	\$28.09
Bachelor's Degree	\$40,371	\$29.76
Master's Degree or Education Specialist	\$42,382	\$31.24
Doctoral Degree	\$45,282	\$33.38

Tenure or tenure track positions are desired but hard to come by in any institution; but in community colleges it is even more difficult. The American Association of University Professors states that "students at US colleges and universities are more likely to be taught by non-tenured faculty members working in full or part-time contingent positions" (*Part-Time and Graduate Teachers*, 2018). The data shows that a little more than 10% of community college

faculty are tenured and approximately 5% are tenure track (*Part-Time and Graduate Teachers*, 2018). This places the majority of community college faculty in the part-time or adjunct status. North Carolina does not offer tenure to its community college instructors – they may work under one-year contracts for the first three years of service; however, this can vary by location given that governance is decentralized across the system. After three years some faculty members may receive longer contracts while others have their contracts terminated. This allows the college to hire more faculty with one-year contracts who have minimal job security – in addition some schools only offer one-year contracts to their faculty and that has significant consequences for institutional/departmental planning.

While tenure diminishes across community colleges so does the impact of unions. Ivan Greenberg notes that “the priorities of the NEA, AFT, and AAUP are geared overwhelmingly toward full-time workers” (2013, p. 12) which suggests that even powerful organizations may marginalize adjunct faculty. His suggestion was that adjunct faculty should organize outside of teachers unions – in essence he calls for a national adjunct union that will provide a voice to their specific group (Greenberg, 2013). Greenberg’s argument addresses the idea of faculty gaining control over their environment through unions, but unions also serve other purposes. For example, unions can play a role in faculty governance, wages, and academic freedom - all areas under threat to many community college faculty (Greenberg, 2013; Henson, Krieg, Wassell, & Hedrick, 2011; Linville, Antony, & Hayden, 2011; “The Casualties of the Twenty-First-Century Community College | AAUP,” 2010). It is important to recognize some of the differences between some national norms and the state of North Carolina. For example, North Carolina is a right to work state which means that employees work at will and are not required to join a union even if one is available. In addition, North Carolina does not offer tenure to community college faculty instead they work off of one-year contracts that, at some colleges, can go up to three

years over time. This means that faculty may not have the same protections in North Carolina as they would in states that favor unions.

Academic freedom in particular is hard to come by in the community college – even for full-time faculty members. Wake Technical Community College brought in industry representatives to discuss what they expected their employees to learn and the college then built a curriculum around their needs; however, this was seen in part by faculty as diminishing their role as teachers and removing their freedom from the classroom (“The Casualties of the Twenty-First-Century Community College | AAUP,” 2010). Another aspect of this diminished role is seen in the lack of tenure offered to community college professors in most institutions. Job stability is lessened without tenure and it impacts a faculty members ability to pursue controversial topics since academic freedom is not ensured. David Ayers (2010) suggested that community colleges have a greater emphasis on vocational education and job training – so much so that a community college initiative recommended by President George W. Bush was to be administered by the Department of Labor instead of the Department of Education. The mix of educational objectives – vocational and college transfer – causes competing demands between the ideals of higher education faculty, the business community, and the needs of the community as a whole.

Professional Development

Professional or Faculty development is a way for institutions to provide ongoing training in areas such as policy, procedure, teaching and learning, and assessment methods. Desimone (2009) describes professional development this way, “these experiences can range from formal, structured topic-specific seminars given on in-service days, to everyday, informal ‘hallway’ discussions with other teachers about instruction techniques, embedded in teachers’ everyday work lives” (p. 182). Other types of faculty development can be seen in Faculty Learning

Communities (FLC) and mentoring programs both of which provide faculty a person or group to help them navigate their roles (Banasik & Dean, 2016; Diegel, 2013; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). Professional Development is important for all faculty and in terms of part-time faculty “it is incumbent upon it (the institution) to provide the support structures and evaluation processes to ensure contingent faculty effectiveness” (Umbach, 2007, p. 111). Bailey et al. builds on Umbach by stating that “if colleges want to improve teaching and learning, they cannot afford to exclude adjuncts from the process” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 169). Given the mission of community colleges as primarily teaching institutions then “the quality, preparation, and pedagogical skills of the faculty have to be central” (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, p. 20). Bailey et al (2015) identified three critical areas for community college professional development: team facilitation; advising skills, and designing assessments (pp. 159–160). Designing assessments will help them “measure complex learning outcomes (such as critical thinking), and that will help them think through how to use the results of learning assessments to improve instruction” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 160).

Research shows that faculty motivation for professional development is “framed in perceptions of the relevance, utility, and other job-related characteristics of the professional development opportunities” (Hardré, 2012, p. 554). In addition faculty feel a pull between development that meets the needs of their profession and that meet the needs of the institution – this pull can create negative feelings and a resistance toward professional development (Hardré, 2012, p. 554). One community college implemented a professional development program where faculty members were taught some basic components of teaching and participants noted that in addition to learning about some best practices they also received “important social and cultural benefits” to the training (Williams-McMillan & Hauser, 2014, p. 624).

Faculty may also have different professional development needs based on where they are in their career. Some faculty may need more classroom development where others may need to learn about growth opportunities – this means that any professional development opportunity should take into account faculty diversity (Williams-McMillan & Hauser, 2014, p. 625). The differing needs of instructors is also highlighted in Bickerstaff and Cormier’s (2015) research that shows “it may be difficult to meet the needs” (p. 79) of various faculty. Another study found that a key aspect to professional development is both formal and informal communication while stating that:

informal gatherings can be powerful for adjunct faculty. Participants enjoyed sharing teaching ideas and asking advice because these exchanges gave them more confidence to teach, established collegiality, and offered adjunct faculty an opportunity to feel like an important part of the department (Diegel, 2013).

Another aspect of informal learning is seen in the way faculty members share artifacts such as syllabi and other course materials (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015, p. 78). Sharing artifacts is another way to learn the expectations of an institution and to have models to use when developing their own materials. Informal communication via hallway interactions and institutional events can help faculty members get to know each other as well as learn about the institution.

Professional development is a key component to job satisfaction as well - one study found that “campus administrators need to provide ongoing professional development or other types of activities that support faculty’s higher-level needs such as self-esteem, growth, and self-actualization” (Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015, p. 474). Professional development also brings part- and full-time faculty members together which may enhance their feeling of connection to the institution. Levin and Hernandez (2014) found that the “sense of exclusion that part-time

faculty experienced was connected to their lack of participation in institutional service activities through which they could learn about the institution, their program, and academic practice” (p. 548).

In the cafeteria model system professional development initiatives “are often top-down, designed and offered by the college’s administration with little input or feedback from the faculty themselves” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 89) which may not meet the needs of faculty. This top down approach also feeds the isolated nature of faculty which doesn’t lead to job satisfaction. Instead a learning facilitation model may be more helpful to faculty just as it is for students. Learning facilitation allows them to “build and organize their conceptual understanding” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 87) through discussions and activities.

Faculty

The demographics of community college faculty show that approximately two-thirds of all community college instructional faculty 54% are female and 79% are white (*Gender, Race, and Ethnicity of Instructional Faculty Members, by Rank - The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2017). In addition only 2.7% of full-time and 2% of part-time faculty have a multi-year contract, while 18.1% of full time and 6.3% of part-time faculty have an annual contract (“Contract Lengths of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members - The Chronicle of Higher Education,” 2015). The Chronicle Data also shows that North Carolina ranks 41 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in faculty pay at two-year public institutions (“Compare the States - The Chronicle of Higher Education,” 2017). The data also shows that North Carolina is not investing in faculty in the same way as other states (“Compare the States - The Chronicle of Higher Education,” 2017).

Teaching at a community college comes with different expectations and a different culture – a culture that is often seen as marginal to the traditional path of the Ph.D. For example,

one academic career coach told a new Ph.D. who wanted a research job but was considering a community college job that she may end up “ ‘trapped’ at the community college because of the workload” then the author goes on to state that “many people have had fulfilling careers in those environs – once they adjusted their own expectations, of course” (“The Professor Is In: Can a Community-College Gig Be a Launch Pad? | Vitae,” 2014). Popular culture, higher education magazines and websites, and career sites tend to marginalize the community college as something you do as a last resort. Susan Twombly and Barbara Townsend (2008) echoed this sentiment in their research on community college faculty and why they receive little attention in the literature. They found that “not only do some 4-year college and university faculty members typically question the quality of community college courses and therefore the faculty members who teach them, they also tend to hold a general sense of arrogance about the status of 2-year college faculties relative to the status of university faculties” (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, p. 7). It is important to understand what it is like being a community college faculty member and in particular how reality, perception, and expectations impact their work. Community college faculty are not only faced with marginalization from their higher-education colleagues; many must also contend with their further marginalization as part-time faculty.

Part-time faculty

Community colleges are at their heart teaching institutions; however part-time faculty may be new to teaching or have considerably less experience in the classroom than their full-time counterparts; part-time faculty have lower ranks (instructor or lecturer) compared to full time faculty and they are less likely to have tenure; and part-time faculty are more likely to teach developmental education (*Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*, 2014). Part-time faculty members often have less time to provide student feedback, prepare for class and advise students and they are less likely to be involved in campus activities such as

orientation, learning communities or the first-year experience (*Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*, 2014). At least half of part-time faculty work more than 50 hours a week (Jacobs, 2004) and they have limited access to professional development and rarely attend their faculty meetings (*Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*, 2014; Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2013).

Full-time faculty have greater access to mentors, colleagues and administrators than their part-time counterparts – these relationships allow for engagement with an institution something that part-time faculty are missing (Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013a; Jolley et al., 2013; Thirolf, 2013). One study found that part-time faculty recognize the importance of the student's education and success but feel that they are overlooked as playing a part in student success (Jolley et al., 2013). Part-time faculty are often hired at the last minute and cannot plan on teaching future classes – it is a semester by semester existence (Jolley et al., 2013). Part-time faculty who complain about last minute decisions – or many other decisions – often find themselves pushed out as there are others who need the work (Jolley et al., 2013; “The Casualties of the Twenty-First-Century Community College | AAUP,” 2010). These faculty members report feelings of isolation and marginalization – they feel they are separate from the full-time faculty (Jolley et al., 2013; Thirolf, 2013). In addition they are rarely evaluated in the classroom so they receive little support for the pedagogical practices – they are also at a disadvantage in student evaluations as they are often hard to reach outside of class due to their situation (Jolley et al., 2013).

Part-time faculty members also display an unraveling in their professional identities – they are worn down by the situation and lose their desire to teach (Thirolf, 2013). These faculty members feel distanced from their students and feel that they cannot give their best given the situation because they just are not as available as full-time faculty (Thirolf, 2013). This lack of

accessibility impacts student success as well, as one study found that “a 10% increase in overall exposure to part-time faculty members resulted in a 1% reduction in the students likelihood of earning an associate degree” (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009, p. 186). Long hours, little job stability and little interaction with the institution all impact the part-time community college faculty member.

The lack of job stability and interaction may have an impact on student learning. Bailey et al (2015) describes the impact of part-time faculty on student learning in this way:

If colleges want to improve teaching and learning, they cannot afford to exclude adjuncts from the process...if the larger institution wants to be inclusive and respectful of adjunct faculty, the college’s leadership needs to work with departmental chairs to develop policies for part-time faculty employment. These might indicate the resources to which adjunct faculty are entitled (including office space, administrative support staff, and professional development) (p. 169).

The authors also found the inclusive spaces create a better workplace for part-time faculty which in turn enhances the student experience.

The community college faculty have a large impact on student success no matter the program area but given the large percentage of community college faculty that are part-time their input may be hard to acquire. However, the renewed emphasis on data-informed decisions at the community college require a renewed emphasis on assessment in these institutions, which makes the input of part-time faculty even more relevant given their large numbers in the institutions.

Assessment in Higher Education

Assessment is intimately tied to higher education as it can display a “transformation in educational goals, educational processes, and educational planning” (Karpiak, 2000, p. 29). However, the link between assessment and education is not always considered to be positive – instead it can be seen as intrusive and counter toward educational ideals.

History

Assessment is a broad category that encompasses not just student learning and development but the “entire process of evaluating institutional effectiveness” (Banta & Palomba, 2014, p. 2). The earliest work on assessment is documented in the early 1930s and focuses on student learning as well as student maturation (Ewell, 2002). Program evaluation is another key moment in the assessment tradition with applications for “strategic planning, program review, and budgeting” (Ewell, 2002, p. 3). A significant part of the assessment history is in the area of mastery learning which is learning “based on agreed upon outcomes, assessing and certifying individual student achievement” (Ewell, 2002, p. 4). Mastery learning was useful in adult and professional education and gave rise to the idea of prior learning assessment (Ewell, 2002, p. 4). Mastery learning paved the way for Alverno College which implemented a student learning outcome survey for their alumni that would explore how their alumni were performing after graduation (“Assessment at Alverno College,,” 1978; Banta & Palomba, 2014). The “assessment as learning” (Banta & Palomba, 2014, p. 4) that Alverno created is driven by their mission statement in that they want to ensure that they stay on track with their desired goals.

Peter Gray (2002) discussed the philosophies behind assessment that includes rationalist, positivist, scientific, objectivist, and subjectivist models that influence the way assessment is performed. He continues by discussing how these models influence student learning, educational practice and experiences, evaluation and decision making (Gray, 2002). Historically assessment has changed as these philosophies change which takes us up through the accountability movement. Peter Gray encompasses program evaluation in his work, and it is an important part of assessment to discuss. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) discussed program evaluation since 1800 and in particular the rise of the educational testing movement in the early 1900’s. This rise in educational testing meant that “educators regarded measurement and evaluation as nearly

synonymous, with the latter usually thought of as summarizing student test performance and assigning grades” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 41). It was in the 1950’s and 1960’s that education saw “considerable efforts...by teaching educators how to state objectives in explicit, measurable terms” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p. 42). Evaluation essentially became a career in the 1970’s and 1980’s with more research and implementation which leads to the present where it is now embedded in education (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

Post-secondary education and Voluntary Systems of Accountability

Assessment in post-secondary education takes many forms from the macro (instructional) level to the micro (classroom) level (Anderson, 2004). At the macro level assessment is designed to drive decisions on enrollment practices, engagement, productivity, retention, and benchmarking to name a few (Anderson, 2004; Banta & Palomba, 2014; Ewell, 2002). Micro level assessment can be seen in student learning outcomes and teacher evaluations – assessment that can impact classroom practices and student performance (Banta & Palomba, 2014; Boarer Pitchford, 2014; Ewell, 2002). Assessment is an incredibly helpful formative tool for community colleges; however, assessment in post-secondary institutions is driven by outside factors such as accreditation and performance funding. These macro and micro level considerations all impact how assessment is performed throughout the community college.

The Council for Adult Education and Experiential Learning (CAEL) focuses on the needs of adult learners and as a group they have strong voices in the national conversation (“CAEL - About Us,” 2015). They work with businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies to “align education with employment opportunities...and to affect public policy” (“CAEL - Convening,” 2015). CAEL does extensive work in creating paths toward degree completion with prior learning assessments, and competency-based education both of which focus on various types of authentic assessments and skill based assessments (“CAEL - What We

Do,” 2015). Prior learning assessments allow students to earn college credit for “college-level learning acquired from other sources, such as work experience, professional training, military training, or open source learning from the web” (“CAEL - Prior Learning Assessment,” 2015) while competency based education is based on the demonstration of learned skills (“CAEL - Competency-Based Education,” 2015). The focus of these programs is adult education and a recognition of lifelong learning focused on the workplace – something that aligns with many views of post-secondary education.

Foundations often work and help support community colleges with programs such as Achieving the Dream (ATD) – a national initiative put together by the Lumina Foundation in 2004 (“History | Achieving the Dream,” 2019). ATD has a strong focus on data-driven decision making, teaching and learning, and pathways coaching that is designed to “accelerate and advance your student success agenda” (“Our Services | Achieving the Dream,” 2019). In North Carolina, Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC), Davidson County Community College, Gaston College, and Stanly Community College among several others are or were members of the “Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count! Initiative designed to identify new strategies to improve student success, close achievement gaps, and increase retention rates” (“What is Achieving the Dream? (ATD) — Central Piedmont Community College,” 2015). Davidson County Community College won the 2018 Community College Financial Empowerment Award from ATD worth \$25,000 to “help students increase their financial capability so they can persist and complete their studies” (“Davidson County Community College Wins National Award For Success in Financial Empowerment for Students | Achieving the Dream,” 2019). The ATD website highlights the fact that 42 ATD schools were awarded a Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant (“Culture of Evidence & Inquiry | Achieving the Dream,” 2015) – a grant that allowed them to create

competency-based instruction in a particular program and provide data on its success (“ETA News Release: Vice President Biden announces recipients of \$450M of job-driven training grants,” 2013). ATD and other foundations offer significant awards to community colleges, but these awards and others are often based on institutional assessment and accountability data.

Accountability data is an important part of institutional assessment and the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) is an initiative developed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) to provide accountability framework for community colleges (“About VFA,” 2019). The VFA framework helps community colleges measure student outcomes, progress, workforce outcomes, and completion and transfer measures – in addition, the data is shared and can drive benchmarking and strategic planning initiatives (“About VFA,” 2019). The Aspen Institute, which offers a \$1 million dollar prize to community colleges based on their publicly available data, models their data definitions after the VFA (“Selection Process - The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program,” 2019). The impact of measurable assessment data cannot be overstated for the success of community colleges; however, assessment environment and attitudes can often be a hurdle for institutions.

This data is also imperative for accreditation purposes as accrediting bodies depend on assessment to certify an institution. The Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requires institutions to provide a compliance certification that includes institutional self-assessments as well as a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes assessment (*The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, 2017). The QEP in particular must have

A topic identified through its ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation processes;
(b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to

initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement (*The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, 2017, p. 19).

This means that institutions must also show that they designed, implemented and acted upon assessment initiatives that impact student learning.

Post-secondary institutions use assessment in different ways – for example regional or specialized programs drive some types of assessment while accreditation is a driver across institutions (Kuh et al., 2014). Studies also found that a variety of assessment are used to evaluate students such as national surveys, rubrics, and employer surveys (Kuh et al., 2014). The variety and implementations of assessment have an impact on how faculty address the issue in their institution.

Culture and Faculty

Faculty often consider assessment from an instrumentalist point of view – they fear that the assessment is performed with little to no regard for those being assessed and the goal is to complete the assessment, not to actually impact learning or to make day to day work life easier (Falchikov & Boud, 2007). There are also contradictions in what assessment means for higher education and what it means for vocations, which has a large impact on how community colleges assess their classroom practices as well as assessing their learners (Kvale, 2007). Assessment is often viewed as a top-down initiative something that is much more desired by administrators and funders than faculty (Anderson, 2004; Banta & Palomba, 2014).

Assessment and accountability are seen as removing a faculty members ability to determine what is needed in their classroom (Falchikov & Boud, 2007; Friedlander & Serban, 2004). In community colleges as economic interests begin to determine the curriculum and funders are looking at data to determine grant recipients it seems at times that learning takes a back seat to grading (Falchikov & Boud, 2007). The overall perception is that the socio-cultural

aspects from the macro to the micro level are ignored in the accountability movement – aspects that impact every part of the institution (Billett, 2004; Boser, 2010; Fenwick, 2009; Shepard, 2000).

Neoliberalism and Accountability

Assessment as an educational necessity was created from a neoliberal economic philosophy that champions policies that requires schools to be subject to the same market-driven forces as business (Ambrosio, 2013; Levin et al., 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Subsequently, they must provide data that shows the schools are meeting the market demand. Administrators started asking higher education institutions to show a measurable impact on student learning and as such created an emphasis on standardized testing and student learning outcome assessment (Ambrosio, 2013; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

The Spellings commission, a 2006 assessment initiative, embraced the discourse of neoliberalism as seen in report passages that state that consumers “care little about the distinctions that sometimes preoccupy the academic establishment...instead they care – as we do – about results” (“A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education,” 2006, p. xi). The Spellings report references business methods throughout the document with an emphasis on job preparation and consumer primacy (“A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education,” 2006). There is an implication in much of the neoliberal discourse that those involved in higher education – teachers and administrators – are not interested in the needs of the consumer but in their own self-interest (Anderson, 2004; Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Haviland et al., 2011). This neo-liberal worldview can be seen in a fairly recent budget proposal from the University of Wisconsin-Madison that would “ban the university system’s Board of Regents from requiring the system president and campus chancellors and vice

chancellors be academics themselves” (Flaherty, 2017) – which is an attempt to bring in someone who can cater to market demands as opposed to educational ones.

The neoliberal perception that faculty are only in higher education for their own self-interest is one that runs counter to an academic culture (Wang & Hurley, 2012). Faculty often feel removed from assessment conversations and burdened with institutional mandates for them to prove their worth – making assessment a hard sell in many institutions. Faculty need to be a part of the discussion and the socio-cultural aspects of the institution, faculty, staff, and students need to be a factor in the assessment model. Assessment provides insight into classroom practices and student performance – assessment can also show if and how an institution is meeting its mission (Mundhenk, 2004; Wang & Hurley, 2012).

The neoliberal views of assessment focus on accountability while marginalizing the role assessment plays in educational improvement – the strong focus on accountability can actually hinder changes in the classroom as those assessments are marginalized (Ewell, 2008). Because assessment is often used as a way to show accountability as opposed to a way to enact meaningful change, few faculty members have yet to buy-in to performing assessment at their institutions and they treat assessment initiatives with suspicion. (Boser, 2010; Ewell, 2008; Wang & Hurley, 2012).

Assessment Activities

Faculty are assessing learners throughout their courses and looking “not only for the bolder signs of learners’ motives and readiness to learn, but also for the subtle signals of curiosity, confusion, wonder and distress” (Karpiak, 2000, p. 39) that can lead to transformative learning experiences. Assessment activities are a type of partnership that requires mutuality or reciprocity from all involved if the assessment is to be fruitful. This mutuality is developed both institutionally and personally through arenas such as professional development, governance, and

an understanding of the goals of the assessment (Andrade, 2011; Schlitz et al., 2008; Shepard, 2000).

Faculty need to be a part of the assessment community and given the time to complete assessment activities – assessment should be seen as a part of a faculty members daily endeavors and not an add-on to an already overburdened workload (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Boser, 2010; Haviland et al., 2011; Schlitz et al., 2008; Wang & Hurley, 2012). Part-time and adjunct faculty are often removed from any conversations about assessment – instead they are seen as transient and not invested in the learning process (Haviland et al., 2011; Wang & Hurley, 2012) which silences their voices and their impact on the campus.

Assessment at the community college focuses on a broad range of activities from institutional to individual information. One major area of study is in student learning outcomes (SLO's) and faculty development in the area of SLO's is a major concern. Danley-Scott and Tompsett Makin (2013a) found that part-time faculty rarely participate in or actively perform SLO assessment in their classrooms which means that a significant number of student work is not being explore through the SLO's. This can be a problem when evaluating the effectiveness of classroom activities and their impact on student learning and success. SLO assessment is often a faculty driven endeavor but the lack of part-time faculty involvement is an ever-present problem for community colleges. Caudle and Hammons (2018) explored the engagement of full-time community college faculty in student learning outcomes assessment using a narrative study. They found the following aspects to improving assessment practices:

leaders need to create a culture of assessment that is focused on improvement in order to generate faculty buy-in; institutional leaders have an opportunity to bring many campus stakeholders together toward the common goal of creating a culture of assessment; publicly sharing success in program and institutional assessments motivates and

encourages faculty to become involved with assessment; institutional leaders need to provide faculty with adequate time to do assessment activities; faculty need to view assessment as an opportunity to create change (Caudle & Hammons, 2018, p. 59).

Jolley et al. (Jolley et al., 2013) in their study about part-time faculty teaching practices and how those practices are assessed by the institution found that “participants clearly linked the manner in which institutions treated adjunct faculty with the presence, or lack thereof, of assessment practices” (p. 228). These assessment practices include student learning outcomes and part-time faculty receive little support in this area.

The North Carolina Community College System has documented performance measures for student success that outline institutional accountability measures for all of our community colleges. These performance measures are based on state and federal guidelines and “help colleges identify institutional strengths and weaknesses by providing access to historical trends and peer comparisons” (“State and Federal Performance Measures | NC Community Colleges,” 2018). These accountability measures began in 1999 as a response to Senate Bill 1366, Section 10.5 (“NC Accountability — CPCC,” 2019) and has been evaluated several times since its inception – the document now has a total of eight measures institutions must evaluate. These 8 measures are: basic skills student progress, GED diploma passing rate, developmental student success rate in college-level English courses, developmental student success rate in college-level Math courses, first-year progression, curriculum student completion, licensure and certification passing rate, and college transfer performance (“NC Accountability — CPCC,” 2019). This requires extensive assessment and data analysis for institutional research departments in community colleges and has an impact on what the government decides about funding and policy decisions around these institutions. In addition, institutions across the state participate in assessment initiatives that include topics like diversity, economic impact, student engagement,

and community needs among many other projects. These are often institutional initiatives that are pushed down to faculty, but the impact is explored across institutions or departments.

Institutionally, community colleges must provide assessment information to maintain their accreditation. In North Carolina the community colleges are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and one of their core requirements is that “the institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes” (*The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*, 2012, p. 18) which is also known as institutional effectiveness. This core requirement states that institution missions, goals, and outcomes are an integral part of the accreditation process that does give the institutions some latitude in determining how this should function.

Institutional research (IR) departments are the areas tasked with these campus-wide assessment initiatives but that can be challenging for many community colleges. Information from Achieving the Dream shows that some IR offices only operate with one person - something that is not recommended for the amount of analysis required (Glover, 2009). There are also institutions without IR offices that rely on people in other positions to take on the assessment role. In addition, many people are learning about assessment and accountability on the job – which the help of organizations such as The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) there are some online courses/webinars that can help IR employees with their professional development.

Assessment and assessment strategies work well when socio-cultural aspects of the institution, the students, and the faculty are part of the discussion – essentially creating communities of assessment at the institution (Boser, 2010; Mundhenk, 2004). Assessment

communities are a learning community – a space for everyone involved in an assessment practice to come together and share ideas.

Performance of Assessment in Post-secondary education

Assessment is a broad category and encompasses many aspects of higher education such as student success and retention, student engagement, accreditation, and student learning outcomes just to name a few. Assessment is also spread across institutions from the individual faculty member to various departments – this dispersion of assessment can make it difficult to define what is happening at a given institution. The North Carolina Community College system collects the data on learning performance, enrollments, demographics, etc. and makes the information available on their website (“North Carolina Community Coll. Syst.,” 2017). This information is useful to see how assessment is seen across institutions and to determine a reference point for schools. One place to explore assessment in community colleges is in the office of institutional effectiveness. When exploring the websites of three systems in North Carolina you can see where priorities are placed at the institutional level. Central Piedmont Community College, for example, states that institutional effectiveness consists of:

a set of ongoing and systematic, institutional processes and practices that include planning, the evaluation of programs and services (including administration and student services, the identification and measurement of outcomes across all institutional units (including learning and program outcomes in instructional programs), and the use of data and assessment results to inform decision-making (culture of evidence). All of these activities are accomplished with the purpose of improving programs and services and increasing student success and institutional quality (Central Piedmont Community College, 2016).

Wake Technical Community College and Rowan Cabarrus Community College offer similar takes on institutional effectiveness that spans from the unit or department to the institution as a whole (Rowan Cabarrus Community College, 2019; Wake Technical Community College, 2019).

In addition, schools also explore student engagement with the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) that “provides information on student engagement, a key indicator of learning and, therefore, of the quality of community colleges” (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2019). CCSSE is used as a benchmarking and diagnostic tool as well as a monitoring device that documents “educational practice and performance by community and technical colleges.” (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2019).

Community College assessment is a sprawling network of systems from the administrative and institutional level down to the individual faculty level – a network whose connections may be hard to see. The distributed network is comprised of socio-cultural systems that are informed by the different aspects of the participants, the tools, the cultural norms, and division of labor that comprises each community. The ability to understand an assessment environment rests in the ability to understand the distributed, socio-cultural underpinnings of the network of systems.

Socio Cultural Systems, Frameworks, and Theories

Culture and Assessment

This study frames assessment from a socio-cultural perspective and an understanding of socio-cultural theories is a first step in conceptualizing assessment environment as a learning, evolving institutional dynamic with system inputs and outputs. For the purposes of this study community college assessment is viewed as a learning process where people, policies, activities

and technologies come together to create a system. This learning system drives the creation, implementation, interpretation, and understanding of assessment at the institution. Socio-cultural learning theories derive from Vygotsky's (1986) work on learning that takes a turn from a behaviorist view into one where culture - the context(s) in which a person resides – impacts how they learn and create knowledge. Mary Alfred (2002) suggests that “learning and knowledge are ...intertwined with the context within which they occur” (p. 5) which means that learning cannot be divorced from the social context where learning happens. To understand the social context of situated learning in adult education Niewolny and Wilson (2006) argue that researchers must recognize the political implications of learning environments “for us to see everyday activity” (p. 276). A learning environment includes all the interactions a person has with their different contexts, their cultural imprints and the particular learning community (Alfred, 2002). In addition, the way a person interacts with the tools in that environment plays a big part in how they learn and create knowledge (Alfred, 2002; Latour, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986). The following theories explore socio-culture in preparation for its importance for assessment.

Distributed Cognition

Advances in cognitive science have found that cognitive processing is not only “spans the embodied brain and central nervous system, but also the environment with its social or technological resources”. This social view of distributed cognition can be seen the work of Edwin Hutchins (1993) who is most often credited with describing distributed cognition in his research on navigation activities aboard naval ships. He found that navigating a large vessel is not up to an individual or a single instrument but includes a multitude of interactions between humans and artifacts – interactions that he describes as cognitive events (Hutchins, 1993). Essentially, he details the cognitive tasks necessary to navigate a ship - tasks that cannot be performed by one entity but by the distribution of knowledge across entities. In later work

Hollan, Hutchins & Kirsh (2000) expanded distributed cognition to include three intersections of cognitive processes: (a) processes are distributed across a social group; (b) processes involve coordination between internal and external structures; and (c) processes may be distributed through time (2000, p. 175). In other words, cognition is distributed across systems through both human and non-human entities working together (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Hollan et al., 2000; Winsor, 2001). Cole and Engestrom (1993) add to Hutchins work by discussing the distribution of culture – the cultural imprints of community norms, roles, and values. It takes a system to successfully navigate a ship – a system that includes a combination of people, processes, and technologies that were developed over time and that work together to reach the desired outcome. These changes or disruptions lead to transformations within the community. Hollan (2000) states that “distributed cognition returns culture, context and history to the picture of cognition” (2000, p. 178). Learning environments are also distributed across the system as different environments produce different learning and understanding (Barnier, Sutton, Harris, & Wilson, 2008, p. 1).

Communities of Practice

Urs Fuhrer (1996) sums up learning and context in this way “learning takes place in real-life settings, under real performance requirements on actual individuals, and is vulnerable there to social influences that may arise at any time” (1996, p. 179). Learning is situated within a context and the ability to create knowledge is a part of that particular context but may not be available in other contexts. Situated learning acknowledges the fact that learning does not occur in a vacuum but is enmeshed in larger cultural contexts. Learning is situated within a space and a time – it is not just taking in transmitted knowledge but also filtering that knowledge through the context (Lave, 1996). For example, a non-traditional student who has been in the workforce for a number of years is going to understand that learning through their lived experiences. A

student who is also a working technical writer may hear a new theory and realize that it explains how writing occurs in their workplace or they may disagree with the knowledge and use an example from their workplace to dispute the assertion. Either way the student is filtering this new knowledge through the lens of their lived experience.

Communities of practice are derived from situated learning environments and are places where actors of varying knowledge levels work together to share and create new knowledge in their particular expertise. Lave and Wenger (1991) focus extensively on communities of practice and the way learners move toward full participation within a community by mastering a particular knowledge. They define community as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Communities of practice also share similarities to Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (1986) in that space and time along with expertise play a part in the learning process.

When a new actor enters a community, they are not full participants – instead they are on the periphery learning to navigate the space and the depth/breadth of their knowledge. This is known as legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) which describes how the new members (apprentices) learn from others in the community to eventually become fully engaged members. The ongoing learning process of taking in new knowledge and externalizing it to the community is expected of all members as well as an essential aspect of community membership (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Actor-Network Theory

Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk (2011) suggest that communities of practice do not offer explorations of the socio-material in their implementation which means that the research does not provide a fine analysis of the materials that impact learning (Fenwick et al., 2011, p. 11).

One area of learning that does explore the socio-material is Actor Network Theory or ANT, which derived from researchers exploring the sociology of science and technology; in particular, the theorists Bruno Latour, Michael Callon, and John Law. Their works discuss how humans interact in a network with non-humans on an equal level – there is no distinguishing between the two actors (Callon & Latour, 1981; Latour, 1987; Law, 1999). It is important to also understand what is meant by actor and network to an ANT theorist. Latour (2005) defines actor as “what is made to act by many others...it is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it” (2005, p. 46). Other entities impose action on the actor – the source of an action is diffused upon the many entities that are demanding an action. Latour (2005) then describes a network as “a concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something not what is being described” (2005, p. 131). Network is often thought to literally mean a technological network, but it is a good fit for describing interactions between human and non-human entities in a variety of situations.

Tara Fenwick takes her interests in the socio-material and uses ANT to investigate education. Fenwick and Edwards (2011) state that ANT analysis makes “visible the rich assortments of mundane things at play in educational events and how they are connected” (2011, p. 13). ANT’s focus on the socio-material opens up new avenues of exploration on interaction with non-human actors as it mobilizes “all of these human and non-human elements into common practices and understandings that begin to resemble a stabilized network” (Fenwick et al., 2011, p. 131). Fenwick (2010) also focuses on how the entities come together – what actions allow one actor to be allowed access and another to be pushed away – exploring a system through ANT provides a way to explore the strongest connections and the ones that are seeking to disrupt the system.

The spaces that surround the linkages are also ripe for analysis as this is where socio-cultural interactions can occur. By exploring why one translation works in a particular system yet does not work in another we can see what is left out or eliminated in a linkage. Fenwick (2011) describes these as spaces of manifest absence where various tools both material and non-material reside. These links can be pedagogical, technical, and cultural to name a few but they all impact the network as a whole.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Activity Theory was originally associated with children's learning in the areas of play, cognition and language acquisition; however, its appeal broadened in the 1980's and 1990's to include workplace and technology settings (Fenwick, 2009). There are now three generations of activity theory that have expanded into Cultural Historical Activity Theory or CHAT and these generations are primarily associated with three scholars: L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leont'ev and Y. Engestrom. Each generation starts from the premise that participants in the activity are working together to reach a desired outcome; however additions to the theory offer a new way to study the socio-cultural aspects that impact participants and outcomes (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

In order to understand how CHAT functions, it is necessary to define activity. Activity has been defined as a series or set of actions or operations that can take actors toward a specific goal or outcome (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). These actions are mediated by a variety of tools, which can be material (i.e. computer) or non-material (i.e. language) and the subject participates in these mediated actions to reach the desired outcome. For example, a project manager may need to show success measures on a specific project but to do this they must work with a variety of tools to analyze and communicate the measures in addition to making the language appropriate for the audience. This is an iterative process where the action is mediated by a number of factors such as software and subject knowledge.

Theory and Theorists: History of CHAT

First Generation

Lev S. Vygotsky was a Russian scholar in the 1920's and 1930's whose work on activity theory was heavily influenced by the work of Karl Marx (Edwards, 2010; Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). Marx first discussed the view that human cognition – understanding, knowing, and learning – is directly related to human practice, in fact, he states that “man must prove truth, activity and power through the universality of his thought through practice (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 13). In other words, humans learn, create and distribute knowledge through their actions and practices.

Vygotsky's research was a response to the psychoanalysis and behaviorism schools of psychology that were prevalent in the 1920's and 30's. He believed that there were false assumptions at work in the psychology research of his peers. Vygotsky's (1978) primary concern was that the separation between and among mental functions was considered immutable by behaviorists, while he believed that these relationships among these functions shape and reshape human consciousness. Consciousness, according to Roth and Lee (2007), is the internalization of these active relationships by the subject who then externalizes the knowledge to the larger community - in other words, the subject takes in new information and then distributes that knowledge to the community. Vygotsky (1986) believed that scientists who ignored the relationship between environment and person would not be able to explore all the factors involved in humans creating knowledge and developing consciousness. He also theorized that there are mediating artifacts that allow for interaction between humans and their environment (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Edwards, 2010; Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999; Vygotsky, 1986).

Based upon his work understanding the impact of stimuli on human consciousness Vygotsky created the action triangle (see Figure 1 below), which shows the relationship between a subject, a mediating artifact (tool), and an object or outcome. The subject is an individual while the mediating artifact can take different forms such as language, writing and technology (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The mediating artifact acts on the subject in the desire to create the desired object or outcome. The tool or mediating artifact is not a temporary or instant phenomenon, instead it is a tool that the culture has given value and it is subsequently used by the subject (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The tools may be provided to the subject directly or indirectly and the subject may go through a variety of tools to reach the desired outcome. This use of tools to impact the object is known as a mediated action. Figure 1 below shows Vygotsky's first-generation action triangle showing the connection between subject, mediating tools and object. Adapted from Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978). Image by CRADLE (2013a).

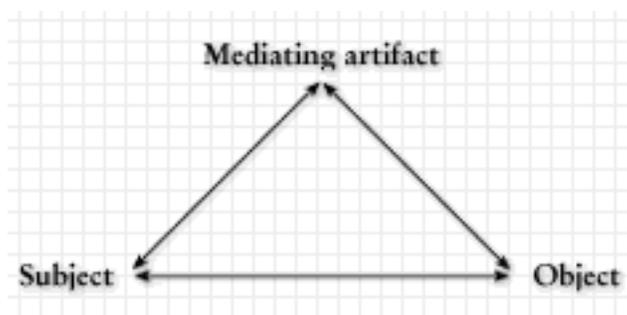


Figure 1: Vygotsky's first-generation action triangle.

Second Generation

Researchers noted, however, that there are limitations to Vygotsky's action triangle; in particular, the unit of analysis, which is focused on the individual subject and not responsive to community interactions (Engestrom, 1987). This individual focus ignores larger community socio-cultural aspects that impact the mediated activity – this criticism led to the second wave of

activity theory created by A.N Leont'ev, a student of Vygotsky, and later expanded by Y. Engestrom (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999; Leont'ev, 1978).

Leont'ev (1978) was the first to introduce the division of labor into activity theory and untangle the idea of activity from action. He focused on the division of labor – a Marxist tenet – that describes how work is split among and between actors. Division of labor is a complex system that society navigates in many different contexts. Tolman (1999) states that “each of us carries out only a few of the sum total of actions required to maintain our own and our society’s existence” (p. 72).

One new aspect of second-generation CHAT requires separating the action from the activity. Leont'ev used the example of a hunter looking for food who - during the course of the hunt – frightens the game thus separating the action (frightening the game) from the activity (the hunt) (1981, p. 182). The hunter may have been flushing game out for other hunters to kill (i.e., division of labor) or they may have made a mistake in scaring the game, but whatever the reason for the action an action did occur. This action may or may not directly influence the outcomes, but it is now a part of the larger activity. This narrative seeks to differentiate between action and activity which then led Leont'ev to create a three-level activity model with the following characteristics: the uppermost level is the collective activity driven by the object; the middle level is of individual or group action; the bottom level is automatic actions driven by conditions and tools (1981, p. 182). The collective activity is also known as an object-oriented activity or the larger context in which actions occur. Actions are known as the goal-driven activities that comprise the larger collective activity (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4). The goal-driven actions are in the moment – just one step in the direction of reaching the desired outcome (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

The division of labor offered a finer perspective on activities; however, there were still socio-cultural aspects that were missing from the model. Y. Engestrom (1987) expanded the action triangle (see Figure 2) to include rules and community which offer the ability for more micro analysis of the socio-cultural situations that impact an activity. He defined the new areas as follows: rules are the internalized mediated knowledge that is used to define community norms and expectations; community is comprised of everyone in a particular activity system; the division of labor represents how actions are divided among the actors in the system (Engestrom, 1987; Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). Figure 2 below shows the second-generation activity triangle displays the socio-cultural additions and the interconnections between the six areas. Adapted from Engestrom (Engestrom, 1987). Image by CRADLE (2013b).

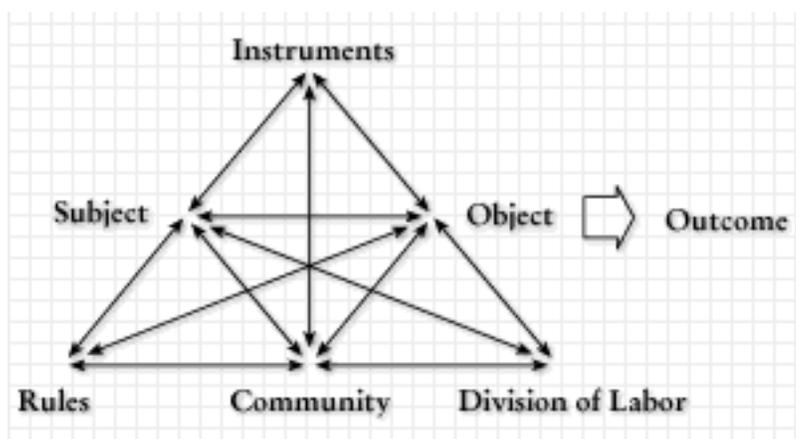


Figure 2: Second generation activity triangle.

Engestrom (1987) used this expansion to emphasize the socio-historical component in activity theory and to explore the ideas of transformations in a system. Transformations occur at areas of conflict or disruption; for example, a situation may occur when a rule violates a community rule, which can lead to a transformative change within the system. Conflict can occur through power situations, through divergent community norms, interactions with the mediating artifact or any other iteration of the dynamics shown in the triangle. These

transformations are also known as expansive learning – the processes in the system that lead to change and knowledge creation (1987).

Another significant difference between the first and second generation is the activity system concept. The areas in the new triangle are all components of an “activity system” (Cole & Engestrom, 1993) in which both individual and collective actions are taking place in different areas of the triangle in an effort to achieve the outcome. Cole and Engestrom (1993) state that an activity system is “best viewed as complex formations in which equilibrium is an exception and tensions, disturbances, and local innovations are the rule and the engine of change” (p. 8). An activity system is the unit of analysis for second-generation CHAT research as opposed to the first generation where the unit of analysis is the individual.

Activity systems are complex entities and Engestrom found it necessary to define the boundaries of a complex system in order to study specific actions and processes within a system (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). One way to identify boundaries is to find an environment where activities are directed toward modifiable objects (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). A modifiable object allows for outcome changes based on the actions and activities within a system.

Third generation

Second generation CHAT broadened the research to include more socio-cultural aspects; however, it was focused on only one activity system working on the object. Engestrom expanded his ideas into the third generation of activity theory, which studies the multiple activity systems that may be working toward a shared outcome. The ability to explore shared objects or outcomes between two activity systems recognizes the interconnectedness of systems (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Engestrom stressed the importance of understanding the multiple roles, cultures, traditions and norms that span subjects and systems that may be a “source of trouble, conflict, improvement, negotiation and change” (Youn & Baptiste, 2007, p. 4).

Engestrom (1987) makes five claims in relation to the third generation:

- that the collective activity system is the prime unit of analysis;
- historically evolving inner contradictions are the chief sources of movement and change in activity systems;
- expansive learning is a historically new type of learning, which emerges as practitioners struggle through developmental transformations in their activity systems, moving across collective zones of proximal development;
- the dialectical method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete is a central tool for mastering cycles of expansive learning;
- an interventionist research methodology is needed which aims at pushing forward, mediating, recording and analyzing cycles of expansive learning in local activity systems (p. 7).

One example of shared system is displayed in Figure 3 below shows the interconnectivity of two systems; however, there can be any number of systems connected to the shared object. Adapted from Engestrom (1987). Image by CRADLE (2013c)

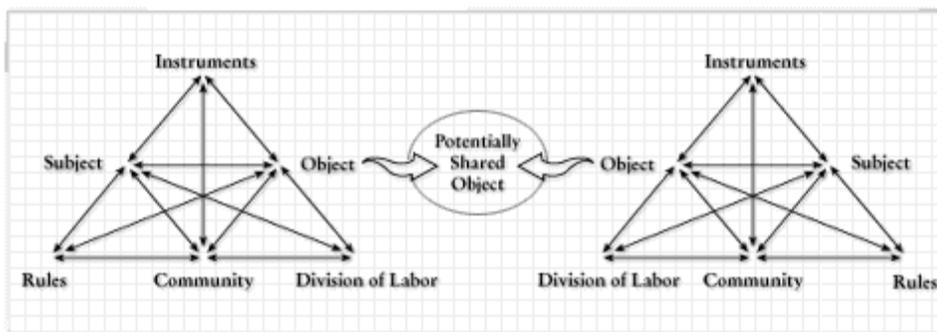


Figure 3: Third generation CHAT model.

An important aspect of third generation theory is the inclusion of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as "the distance between the

actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). ZPD is the space where people can internalize knowledge and develop understanding by working with others who may be at different levels of knowledge and understanding. It is similar to expert/apprentice relationships where someone with less knowledge goes to work with someone who has great knowledge in a particular area. As the apprentices build on their knowledge, they become more adept in the work and subsequently can proceed on their own. It is also known as scaffolding knowledge – the ability to build on previous knowledge as your learning expands. Engestrom offers a different perspective of the zone as the distance between internalized every day actions and the new externalized actions created in the system (1987). The ZPD is a space in which new learners traverse as they internalize new information, create new knowledge and then externalize them to the larger community (Engestrom, 1987, p. 186).

CHAT application to adult education

Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) describe adult education as a “large and amorphous field of practice, with no neat boundaries such as age” (p. 53). This amorphous area of adult education is hard to define since a person’s lived experiences play a large part in determining their status as an adult. CHAT provides a framework that includes all aspects of the system and provides a deep, rich understanding of the way adults interact as they work to achieve a desired goal. CHAT can explore the complexity of the system in the same way that adult education explores the complex differences among learners. CHAT brings social contexts into the research through an exploration of the socio-historical in the system.

Peter Sawchuk (2011) explored anti-poverty activism through CHAT and found that internal conflicts originated at an operations level in the division of labor and were able to be

managed. The edited volume *Vygotsky in the 21st Century Society* (Salas, 2011) provides a variety of research on marginalized communities which includes immigrant families and biliteracy. Activist research often highlights the power dynamics at work within an activity system and it can address issues of oppression and marginalization among system members. The boundaries defined by CHAT help localize the findings to the immediate needs and problems prevalent in the system.

Another aspect of adult learning is situated cognition which recognizes that adults learn from their experiences in specific contexts – learning that comes from “real-life” (Kiely, Sandmann, & Truluck, 2004, p. 24). Situated cognition derives from the idea that the social conditions are paramount in a learning environment. The external processes that accompany the teaching and learning process as well as the context of the learning experience also have an impact on what is learned.

Various critiques of CHAT led to its generational development; however, there are some other concerns that should be addressed - particularly in the areas of commodification, capitalism, the valorization of practice over theory, and engagement with the larger society.

The concern with commodification stems from its roots in Marxism – CHAT is seen by some as a tool that perpetuates the status quo and is therefore oppressive. CHAT in the way it focuses on the object can be used to marginalize the very participants who are working to achieve the desired outcome (Avis, 2009; Peim, 2009). By focusing just on the object as a fixed commodity instead of a malleable outcome, the workings of the system will direct all resources to an outcome that is not adaptable to changes within the system. In this situation CHAT is no longer a transformative event but a way to keep the system working toward a goal that those in power believe are most beneficial to their needs (Avis, 2009). Power dynamics within the system may not be continuously negotiated but instead maintained in an effort to impede

transformation as it may impact the outcome in ways the power structure does not desire (Avis, 2009). The implications are that CHAT is being used to maintain the hegemonic systems at work behind the scenes while displaying the outward appearance of accepting community norms and values. Engestrom's (1999) studies on activity in the workplace serve to mediate this concern and display the variety of ways CHAT can be deployed.

Another concern echoed through several works is the valorization of practice which leads to the implication that CHAT is under-theorized in the ways it examines power relations within a system (Avis, 2009; Bakhurst, 2009; Peim, 2009). Valorizing practice is thought to make it too easy to focus on actions and outcomes while ignoring the power structures that are creating and framing the system. CHAT is considered too micro-focused on action, thus missing the larger socio-cultural issues at work in the system.

Engestrom and Miettinen (1999) describe the third generation of activity theory as focusing on the local – as it is focusing on a particular practice – however, this is a cause of concern for some scholars. By designating CHAT as focusing on the local it may diminish larger societal concerns that impact the research (Martin & Peim, 2009; Peim, 2009) and in a global society where systems may cross innumerable boundaries this is a concern. Focusing on the local should not preclude the examination of the larger socio-cultural issues that impact the actions and activities in the system. These larger issues can be seen in a variety of dissertation topics on community centers, screenplay writing, computer and teacher mediated reading, social poverty, and an exploration of a College of Education (Menendez, 2009; Park, 2008; Samouilova, 2005; Wilcox, 2011).

Discussion

Assessment is a necessity of post-secondary education but at times it is extraordinarily nebulous – as if it exists in a cloud. While the many aspects of assessment may be hard to see as

a whole it is, in fact, a system – a system with many actors, tools, and expectations of outcomes – therefore, CHAT is an excellent framework to explore assessment. Because assessment does not occur in a vacuum the culture that creates and acts upon the system must be explored – this socio-cultural understanding is a vital component to understanding how assessment environment is perceived by part-time faculty.

The literature shows that community colleges serve a diverse group of students with a wide range of curricular and vocational opportunities. Community colleges not only perform workforce development functions but also serve as a starting point for students to attend a four-year institution. Part-time faculty are the largest teaching body on a community college campus but given their status they may not be able to attend the same meetings, training, or other team events as that of full-time faculty. Their engagement (or lack of) in the assessment environment may be due to factors such as heavy course loads, juggling multiple jobs, or not realizing what is available to them. However, part-time faculty are unquestionably a large part of the community college environment and if assessment engagement is not spread among everyone there may be large areas that are not accounted for from an assessment perspective.

Assessment is also a learning endeavor – those who assess and are assessed are in an iterative state of learning, assess, implement, transform, assess and then they begin again. This view fits in well with the adult education on experiential learning, which is founded on the idea that adults learn and shape their identities through experience. Experiential learning can be distilled into learning by doing (Fenwick et al., 2011) however, there are different variations of this concept. In particular the constructivist concept suggests that reflection is the key to understanding the action – you learn by performing then reflecting on the performance while an embodied perspective suggests that learning is embedded in the act and is not separate from doing (Merriam et al., 2007). In an embodied performance reflection is not necessary to

facilitate understanding of the performance. Another aspect of adult learning is situated cognition that derives from the idea that the social conditions are paramount in a learning environment. The external processes that accompany the teaching and learning process as well as the context of the learning experience also have an impact on what is learned (Jarvis, 1987). The learned knowledge is filtered through the learner's context and consciousness to work within the learners' particular system. Knowledge differs from context to context; however, by providing adult learners experiential learning in new contexts educators can enhance knowledge through the iterative internalization and externalization processes.

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework provides a lens to explore different aspects of systems using various aspects of learning theory. CHAT displays how people and artifacts in a system work together (or in conflict) to achieve an outcome. CHAT shows a respect for the socio-cultural aspects that comprise many different activity settings. Peter Sawchuk (2011) describes CHAT in this way; "more generally in CHAT tradition, it is recognized however that people are shaped by the competing object/motives of activity ... and agentively shape the objects/motives of activity" (p. 2).

Assessment is an integral part of community college education but finding the time to perform assessment can be difficult – especially for part-time faculty. The cultural issues of the part-time faculty work environment and lifestyle have a significant impact on the way they approach their work. They are often faced with minimal support from their colleagues and administrators and many live a nomadic existence as they move between schools and jobs as necessary. Their impact on the institution is large but often unheard – they also have an impact on assessment at their institution especially if their voice is missing from the process. Because part-time faculty are a significant part of the community college teaching faculty it is important that their contributions be recognized. Their understanding of the assessment needs, tools, and

culture are imperative for community colleges to obtain accurate data on their students and institution. This study uses third generation adaptations of CHAT as a guiding framework to examine and understand the ways that community college part-time faculty perceive and navigate the assessment environment at their institution.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Assessment in post-secondary educational institutions is an important factor in decision making across the institution. Its impact is felt from the classroom to the highest levels of administration as funding agencies and stakeholders require evidence of performance across a variety of indicators. In addition, part-time faculty are a growing contingent of educators in post-secondary education and community colleges in particular. The purpose of this study is to better understand how part-time faculty perceive and navigate assessment and the assessment environment in their community colleges. This chapter describes the reasons qualitative research and an instrumental case study is the appropriate method for this particular study. The chapter discusses the research design including the study site selection, sampling method, data collection, data analysis, and how cultural historical activity theory frames the study. In addition, discussions of positionality and subjectivity statement, study strengths and weaknesses, rigor, ethics, and IRB are included.

Ten community college faculty members participated in the study and the interviews were analyzed using the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the assessment environment within their community college?
2. How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the nature of their engagement with assessment initiatives at their community college?

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research allows for researchers to understand how people construct meaning in various contexts, identify and monitor bias (including the way bias may shape data collection), and it provides rich descriptive studies that explore the depths of a phenomenon (Hesse-Biber &

Leavy, 2010, p. 3). In addition it allows the researcher to explore a detailed understanding of a specific issue and the situation or context in which that issue occurs (Creswell, 2007). The research follows an interpretative approach as it allows me explore the meaning in how part-time community college faculty perceive assessment (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010; Merriam, 2002). through the aspects of the 3rd generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework of division of subject, object, division of labor, community, rules, and instruments.

For my research, using qualitative methods will allow me to explore the underlying meaning of people's experiences and how they navigate, perceive, and engage assessment in their environment.

Case Study

Yin (2014), defines a case study in two parts – the first focused on the scope of inquiry and the second part focused on study features. The scope of a case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). The features of a case study “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide collection and analysis” (Yin, 2014, p. 17).

Robert Stake (1995) suggests that there are primarily three types of case studies - intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study is used when the researcher wants to know about a specific case as opposed to learning about a more general issue while a collective case study may look at a number of cases to learn about the issue across numerous contexts or settings under study (Stake, 1995, p. 3). The instrumental study; however, is used to

“understand something else” – in other words the researcher uses the case to understand a larger issue instead of the particular case (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Using an instrumental case study allows the researcher to look at specific contexts and discard those that are not as relevant to the questions. This research study is well suited for an instrumental case study design as it is looking at multiple sources of data surrounding a larger issue – part-time community college faculty perceptions and engagement with assessment.

The instrumental case study research approach is also best suited to my theoretical framework because, as Creswell states: “case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2009, p. 256). A bounded system exists outside of the study, in other words, the research is exploring an already existing system (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 263). Cultural Historic Activity Theory (CHAT) examines the specific bounded context(s) in which a subject interacts with the various areas that lead to the creation of an object and as such instrumental is the appropriate choice. Using an instrumental case study allows me to focus on a specific community college context(s) with a guiding bounded context as defined by the CHAT model.

Theoretical Framework

The 3rd generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory or CHAT is the framework for this study. The CHAT framework allows the researcher to flow from subject to object across a system by placing an emphasis on the following: instruments, rules (both implicit and explicit), community, and division of labor. The subjects for my study are part-time, curricular faculty – in other words the part-time faculty that participate in degree programs at a community college. These are faculty that have regular interactions with students through teaching, advising, and assessment. These subjects bring their own context and perceptions with them all of which will impact the environment. Through this lens, the objects of my study include the assessments with

which the subjects engage. The instruments in this study include but are not limited to technology such as learning management systems, assessment software, and other emergent tools that influence assessment. Instruments also include the creation and delivery of class assessments, portfolios, student learning outcomes, and institutional assessments.

Rules in an activity system include both implicit (rules that are assumed or perceived) and explicit (those that are shared or communicated formally). Examples of implicit rules for this study include, but are not limited, to enacting assessment in the classroom, participation in assessment, engaging students, informal training with colleagues, department meeting minutes, and website placement of assessment information. Examples of explicit rules for this study include, but are not limited to, mandates on assessment (state, federal, institutional), assessment implementation rules, employment mandates on assessment, grading rules, professional development opportunities for assessment, memos that talk about assessment, and institutional websites. Examples of implicit rules include communication methods such as learning who to (and not to ask) for assessment help, understanding how colleagues and/or the department discuss assessment initiatives such as in the positive or negative, discovering how much time you are expected to spend on assessment, discovering the priority given to assessment by your peers as opposed to the institution. Other implicit rules or norms may focus on workload distribution or determining what various team members are responsible for in their position. The duties of part-time faculty and their perception of roles, authority and levels of input shape the community college environment and subsequently the ways in which assessment happens. Implicit rules such as these impact the participants' ability to join the community and what products they will implement and deliver.

It is necessary to situate the study of part-time faculty within the larger context of the institution as such various aspects of the community will be discussed. Descriptions of the larger

context will include items such as size and faculty composition. The type of assessment initiatives in which full-time faculty are involved and the professional opportunities they receive that impact assessment. Finally, the CHAT framework explores the division of labor such as who controls/implements assessment and what is the organizational structure of the various assessment entities. These entities include the various Southeastern community college systems, Federal agencies, the community college being studied, the individual departments, and the classes in the community college.

Lastly, it is important to discuss the use of the phrase assessment environment as opposed to assessment culture in my research purpose and research questions. A culture is comprised of values, conventions, and practices of a particular field or activity, while an environment is the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of individual or a community. The assessment environment provides more latitude when talking about the various assessment influences on part-time faculty. The assessment itself is not a culture but an aggregate of conditions in which assessment occurs – some of which of cultural. This study looks at an assessment environment through a cultural lens.

Data Gathering and Site Selection

This study used a large, urban community college located in the Southeastern United States. The selected institution offers a variety of curricular programs and 65% of faculty are part-time (“Institute of Education Sciences (IES),” n.d.) and this provides a large recruitment pool. Administrators at this site facilitated access to the campus and faculty, provided information for their IRB process, and subsequently approved the IRB.

This study used purposeful sampling which means that “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). In this case the sample

includes part-time curricular faculty at a large, urban community college. My sample criteria included part-time faculty with at least three years on the job with the community college as well as those who work in the curricular areas of the college. Many of the curricular faculty at this institution share a similar academic background such as having graduate coursework in their teaching area. These part-time faculty members all work in degree seeking areas of the institution and they have a similar focus on degree completion. The continuing education faculty gear their work toward licensing or the students who need classes to learn a skill, therefore, the student needs may differ. While both are vital parts of the community college the curricular faculty were a useful starting point from which to view assessment. The curricular programs at a community college include college transfer programs, a program for students who wish to complete general education requirements then transfer to a four-year institution, as well as the associate degrees, diplomas and certificates as opposed to the corporate and continuing education programs.

Recruitment Process

To begin the recruitment process the researcher requested a list of emails from the Institutional Review (IR) office at the host site – the list was comprised of part-time curricular faculty at the institution. The IR office placed them on a secured server and provided me access to download the list. The researcher placed the information on an encrypted hard drive. A series of emails to each person on the list by placing their email in the blind copy address line. The emails were sent out in three phases over the course of several months. The emails asked the respondents to complete a form that asked for basic information such as years of teaching and preferred contact method. The complete form is available in Appendix A. While eighteen respondents visited the form only 14 completed the information. Other respondents responded to the participant request email to either express interest in the project or decline. The researcher

communicated with the respondents and scheduled fifteen interviews; however, two participants were unable to continue with the process. Upon interviewing thirteen candidates it became apparent that three of them did not meet the criteria of teaching at the community college for at least three years. These participants were notified that their interviews would not be used. Part-time faculty are difficult to recruit given their status at the institution. For example, they are not as responsive to emails in part because this is not their full-time position and many of them have other positions. The research site has approximately 756 part-time faculty (“IPEDS Data Center,” 2017) and 10 participants were interviewed across various departments. Qualitative research has no set rules for sample size however the sample should provide enough data for understanding the system and the ability to see patterns in the data (“IPEDS Data Center,” 2017). The study size of 10 participants provided an appropriate depth of information that also allowed for time constraints by the researcher and participants. Table 3 below displays the participant demographic information.

Table 3: Participant Demographics.

Identifier	Gender	Discipline/Department	Degree Level	Years Teaching
Herbert	Male	Math	Some graduate	5
King	Male	Communication	Masters	7
Matheson	Male	Social Science	Masters	3
Hopper	Female	Social Science	Ph.D.	12
Lovecraft	Male	Social Science	Masters	22
Keene	Male	Physics	Masters	20+
Atwood	Female	Computer Science	Masters	13
Carroll	Male	Social Science	Masters	13
Butler	Female	Fine Arts	Ph.D.	5

Table 3: (continued).

Identifier	Gender	Discipline/Department	Degree Level	Years Teaching
Dick	Male	English	Masters	4

Data source: Interviews

The first phase of the research conducted included face to face interviews with part-time curricular faculty in a community college. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2010) describe three types of interview: highly structured, semi-structured, and low-structure or open-ended interviews (p. 102). A highly structured interview means that all participants are asked the same questions, while a low-structure allows participants far more freedom and the interview topic flows wherever the discussion leads (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 102). This study used semi-structured interviews as they “rely on a certain set of questions and try to guide the conversation to remain, more loosely, on those questions. However, semi-structured interviews also allowed individual respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest of importance to them” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 102). This type of interview provided the rich description that is a hallmark of qualitative research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010) as well as offered the researcher some latitude in drawing out participant responses. The interview plan included questions loosely organized around the major categories of CHAT analysis, integrated with core issues of assessment. In particular, the questions focused on the processes involved in assessment such as exploring what participants perceive as assessment norms for their institution or the requirements for their divisions. Norms or rule can be implicit or explicit, so another part of the process is exploring where they hear about the rules and how they interpret what they hear. The tools they use is another important aspect such as understanding how participants use various tools in their assessment practices. CHAT also explores the division of labor in a

system, so the interview addressed who is engaged with assessment and how much they are engaged. The interviews focused on their perceptions of data-informed decision making, description of assessment practices, asking participants to respond to their perceptions of their own and others' definitions of assessment, asking them to describe a particular semester or academic year, and explaining about their perception of assessment processes and culture (such as their stories or reactions to situations). In particular, the researcher gathered information on how the participants perceive assessment from an institutional, departmental, and finally classroom vantage point. They discussed how different instruments and tools are used at various places in their institutions to explore the impact on their work as well. They were asked them to tease out their definition of assessment, and they explored other vocabulary such as outcomes, engagement initiatives, accreditation, and policies

The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and occurred in places suggested by each participant. The areas were quiet and allowed for sustained discussions as well as recording. The sessions were audio recorded and transcribed for the research at which point a member check process was performed. A member check is when the participant is asked to read a draft of the writing to check for accuracy (Stake, 1995, p. 115). Participants received a transcript of their interviews after the transcriptions were completed and they had the chance to clarify any of their concerns or expand upon any of the discussion. Member checking also helps address concerns of rigor as it clarifies that the researcher recorded the subjects appropriately. An example of some semi-structured interview questions grouped by the CHAT framework areas are in Appendix A. Participants were each told about the prospect, given the time to read and sign the informed consent and ask questions. Each interview was recorded on a digital audio recorder and then transferred to an encrypted portable hard drive. The data was transcribed by the researcher and then sent to the interview subject for review. Identifying information was

removed from the transcript and each participant was given a random name throughout the transcripts and this paper.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis for a case study is defined by Yin (2014, p. 241) as the “case in a case study”; however, in activity theory the unit of analysis is the activity itself. In this case the unit of analysis is the assessment environment and the part-time faculty are one subsystem of this environment. Using part-time faculty as a subsystem allows me to understand their perspective within the larger system.

Once the transcripts were complete each one was read, and initial areas of interest were highlighted for further review. After the first reading of the data the researcher wrote the first impressions of the information as a way to gain an initial understanding of the interviews. The transcripts were read again to explore how assessment was described. This first level of open coding identified these areas: assessment definition, assessment outcomes, assessment purpose, and assessment actions. Items that met this criterion were written on notecards, labeled and sorted by category. The researcher then read through the sorted cards and made notes on the contents. A second and third round of coding, using the CHAT framework, was performed with the following a priori codes : community, division of labor, subject, object, rules, and instruments.

The following CHAT definitions and examples guided the second and third round of coding. The community is everyone involved in the assessment environment so the codes will identify them. Involvement ranges from assessment creators to policy writers. The division of labor was identified by the tasks performed by the community members. For example, there are people who create assessments, people who disseminate information, and people who train on assessment tools. Community members are those involved with the assessment system in

various capacities. The instruments or tools are the technologies and other items that are used in assessment such as learning management systems (LMS) or rubrics. The rules or norms of the community were coded as either explicit (i.e. policies, procedures) or implicit (i.e. shared in hallway conversations or discovered through observations). The subject is the individual or individuals operating within the activity system, in this case part-time community college curricular faculty, that are acted upon by the mediating aspects of the system. The object is the outcome or assessment - this is created after the subjective is engaged with and acted upon by the activity system. This framework coding along with the open coding enabled “an analysis that directly answers my research questions and goals” about part-time faculty perception of their assessment environment (Yin, 2014, p. 241).

The multiple coding was to validate the initial round and determine if anything was missed in the earlier CHAT coding. The coding was done by hand on large sticky notes and each quote or transcript section was written on its own note instead of using qualitative software. The free coding brought several themes to the surface at which point the sticky notes were transferred to a designated place on the wall for grouping. This was also done with both rounds of CHAT coding. See Appendix B for a picture of the coding process.

Subjectivity

I am an educator, spouse, manager, and student. I’ve taught everything from IT workshops to graduate classes and all of my teaching experience is with adult learners. I should state that the adult learners I’ve worked with are non-traditional students many of whom have careers, families, and a myriad of responsibilities in addition to school. I believe that educators whether they are in corporate, non-profit, or higher education must consider the needs of non-traditional students so they can provide a positive and valuable learning experience.

I have also had the pleasure of working with and taking classes from a large number of part-time faculty and I believe they are often marginalized in the education community. My graduate studies have been in professional fields and part-time faculty bring a wealth of knowledge that is not always available from their full-time peers. I believe that if we miss the voices of this powerful group of educators, we will not gather a holistic picture of our education communities. Part-time faculty are my friends and colleagues and I believe that their voices should be elevated.

I am also a non-traditional adult student with a full-time job, a family, and friends. I have always been excited about learning and the majority of my professional education has been informal or on the job. As a student and professional the mix of formal and informal learning is positive, and they often work together in shaping my views. My education is holistic, exciting, and ongoing and this I believe makes me a better researcher. My background is significant in choosing this particular research – in particular working with part-time faculty in an environment that supports non-traditional students. The data analysis and framework are built on an understanding of systems – something that has interested me since my work in information technology. Systems – no matter their composition – are often in a state of flux. This flux is quite often where the opportunities and the challenges occur. Assessment can function as an opportunity and a challenge, but I believe that when it works it improves the system(s) for our students. I believe that post-secondary education is there to support the students and everything I can do to improve the system ultimately will support the student. That is what makes this research so exciting – understanding and sharing the part-time faculty experience may not just help the faculty but may also help the students.

Positionality

My role as a researcher – especially a researcher performing qualitative methods – requires me to address my positionality in the project. My experiences in both work and school shape the way I address my research topic. My study explores how part-time faculty in community colleges perceive and navigate assessment. My interest in this topic spans several areas.

I am a troubleshooter – when I was in computer networking, I designed networks, but I also solved problems in those same networks. These are problems that have a tangible reward at the end – the network started working and the system kept functioning properly. As I moved into education, I took this desire to solve problems into the library where I studied processes (both human and technological) to determine where we could make improvements. This work drew me into a greater understanding of assessment and how it can be used to explore issues in education. My position, however, is based out of a need for practice – I have to move beyond brainstorming and troubleshooting to actually working on the issue. I need a practical component to all of my work - choosing to study technical writing was for me the natural outcome of studying English. For me it offered a practical way to use the many skills the English degree provided. I followed this up by obtaining a degree in library science because it taught me theory and practice for something that was tangible for me. I love studying theory, but it must always come back to practice. I have to recognize this while working with part-time faculty in higher education. I need to recognize the tension between theory and practice as it relates to their current positions since post-secondary educators often sit somewhere in between these two realms.

In addition, I love creating, implementing, and analyzing assessment – as I believe that they can only help us improve. I recognize that assessments can be a burden as well – that many

educators are asked to perform assessment just for the sake of assessment. In other words, someone needs some numbers to put in a report and trying to gather these numbers can take away from the primary job of teaching. Assessment is not always perceived as a positive word and given the current educational context around assessment I understand why. If assessment is not used or not used properly it is demoralizing for the educator – not everyone shares my excitement.

My subjectivity and positionality statements describe how I see myself in this process as well as making me aware of how I may seem to others. I have to remain cognizant of how my experiences, bias, and worldview may impact the participants as well as my study. I am excited though that all of these experiences have led me to a topic I'm excited about and believe is important.

Rigor

Qualitative research provides a vehicle to explore phenomenon with a social and contextual approach that explores participants lived experience. Rigor includes collecting multiple forms of data, using a recognized form of qualitative inquiry, validate accuracy through methods such as member checking, triangulation, and peer auditing (Creswell, 2007, pp. 45–46). For the purposes of this study I will use validity to establish rigor - Hesse Biber and Leavy define validity is “ a process whereby the researcher earns the confidence of the reader that he or she has ‘gotten it right’” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 48).

Validity is demonstrated through the various data collected through interviews. The data will be analyzed using coding from the theoretical framework, CHAT, and the findings will be member checked by participants. In addition, the data will be audited by my dissertation chair as a peer audit on the process as well as the findings. Data source triangulation is also evidence of rigor for this study as data will be collected from institutional websites, interviews, and the

research literature. This triangulation shows the convergence and non-convergence of evidence in this study. Essentially this convergent evidence shows construct validity in that “multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 48).

Limitations and Strengths

Limitations

The scope of the research is limited by participant recruitment, institutional engagement or access, and time. This study is holistic in nature, but time and access hindered the ability to get a more comprehensive picture – the researcher did as much as possible to gain a larger understanding of the system within these boundaries. In addition, as an outsider there are parts of the organization or perspectives that were not a part of the research. The study is not generalizable to a larger community as it focuses on a contextually specific community college.

Strengths

The strengths of this study are the theoretical framework and contribution of contextual data and information that contributed to the improvement, the understanding, and the implementation of assessment within an important subculture in a community college. The theoretical framework, CHAT, provides a systematic way to explore how an assessment environment functions. The four areas of CHAT – rules, instruments, community, division of labor – allows for exploration of the assessment system itself by understanding how it is perceived at various levels of the community. The findings will provide administrators and faculty a place to start looking at how assessment impacts the institution, the part-time faculty, and ultimately the students. In addition, the study can offer insight into current institutional and departmental practices that are working as well as those that may offer opportunities for growth.

The study also provides a window into the way that part-time faculty are enacting assessments in their classrooms.

Ethics and IRB

It is important to participants and the research process to demonstrate ethical behavior by being honest, explaining the purpose of the research, ensuring the data is secure and anonymous, and protecting the confidentiality of the participants among many others (Creswell, 2007, pp. 120–121). This study went through the Institutional Review Board process at North Carolina State University (NCSU) as well as the institution under study. To apply for IRB approval, the researcher ensured that their training on human subject research was up to date by using the tools available through the NCSU IRB office. This ensured that the researcher was aware of everything needed to proceed with this study.

Each participant received a consent form and the researcher answered any questions regarding the process. In addition, the participants were instructed that they can withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. The data is kept on a secure, password protected drive and will be destroyed at an agreed upon time after the research is concluded. Throughout the process the researcher maintained the highest standards of integrity for the participants, the university, and the community college.

Conclusion

Understanding how part-time faculty perceive and navigate assessment is well suited to a qualitative case-study. I researched this assessment activity system through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory that delineates the system boundaries to allow for exploration. The study illuminates how part-time faculty enact or are removed from the assessment activities as well as their place within the larger assessment environment. The research is helpful to

administrators, department heads, and the faculty in designing and implementing assessment at their institution.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter describes the study findings first through sharing the participant profiles. The next section then uses the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) theoretical framework as a coding mechanism to interpret these stories. The CHAT activity system explores how part-time faculty navigate assessment practices and initiatives by looking at how the rules, community, instruments or tools, and division of labor impacts assessment. The chapter provides an overview of the activity system, followed by narratives of each participants based on their interview responses. This is followed by a discussion of themes found via the CHAT Framework coding. Finally, there is a summary discussion of the findings in this chapter.

Activity System

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is a learning theory that provides a systems approach to understanding an organizational process or culture. This study explores the assessment environment at a very large, urban community college. CHAT looks at actors in a system and how their actions are mediated by cultural rules or norms, community, instruments or tools, and division of labor. CHAT follows a subject – in this case part-time community college faculty – through a system while interacting with an object – in this case engaging with assessments. Figure 4 below shows how part-time faculty (the subjects) navigate the organizational culture while engaging with assessment (the object). The CHAT system and its component parts all mediate the ways in which part-time faculty enact their assessment activities. This figure shows the connections between all the areas of the activity system. These parts interact with each other and at times are very closely aligned.

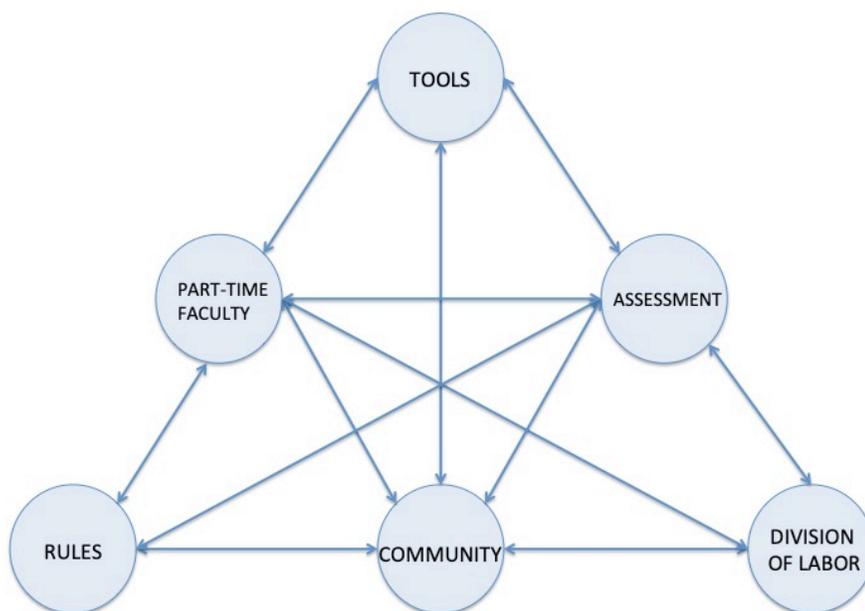


Figure 4: The CHAT Activity system.

Participants

The participants were comprised of 10 part-time curriculum faculty members in a large, urban, community college system in a Southeastern state. The participants included three females and seven males with between 3- and 22-years' experience teaching at the community college. The participants worked in the following disciplines: physics, theater, sociology, communication, computer science, psychology, English, criminal justice, behavioral science, and math. Two of the participants had Ph.D.'s, seven had master's degrees and one had significant graduate credits while working to complete a masters. Three participants are retired from other fields and had a desire to teach, five participants currently have full-time jobs in other fields in while teaching, and two have part-time jobs while teaching part-time. All of the participants have experience teaching face-to-face with some also teaching in online and hybrid formats.

Herbert

Herbert has had a variety of careers in a variety of fields before transitioning into education where he teaches math. He really enjoys working for a community college and is willing to take on an extensive load while being part-time. At one-point Herbert was teaching five classes and agreed to a waiver from the institution that allowed him to take on a heavier load. He stated that this made him “essentially full-time but of course I wasn’t faculty, so I wasn’t getting benefits or anything like that”. He enjoys the classes he teaches but looks forward to completing a master’s so he can expand the variety of classes he can teach at the institution.

Herbert defines assessment as “judging or evaluating what students know after they’ve been taught it” and discussed that he was “assessing them all the time” through tests and homework. Herbert enacted a variety of assessment activities that allowed him to evaluate student learning. The primary assessments Herbert gives in class are three tests that are “what you would consider old-school hand-written tests”. He prefers this to what he terms “standardized tests” which he defines as shared departmental tests that are used by numerous faculty as well as across semesters. Herbert’s graded, hand written tests are returned to the students and they have his comments on them as well. The students can then use them as study guides for the rest of the semester. Herbert finds standardized tests difficult to return to the students because they may share the information with those who haven’t yet taken the course.

His philosophy is different from some of his colleagues who he believes give multiple choice, standardized tests because they are easier to grade. Herbert believes that these types of multiple-choice tests can be manipulated as he says, “you can game a multiple-choice test”. The impact of this choice is two-fold – one is time and the other is credit. The time it takes to grade these tests is around three hours per class as opposed to using online tests or scantron forms. The online tests yield an immediate grade for the student while scantron only requires the faculty

member to wait for the forms to be processed. Both options do save the time of the faculty member. The time it takes to create the test is also a factor - Herbert spends approximately two hours to create a new test and creates approximately three tests a course. By creating a variety of tests he created his own test bank, which means he has a bank of questions to choose from as well. He doesn't have to worry about students sharing the tests because he can alter his own test bank so by just changing a few items in the question. Herbert can create new questions for his hand-written tests with minimal time on the backend. Hand written tests also allow him to grade on process, as well as product, which is important to his teaching. Herbert states that "I have all the opportunity in the world to give them partial credit" because when they use his tests and turn them in hand written he can see their process. This makes it easier to see the students thought process as they worked the problem and he can pinpoint problem areas.

Herbert creates the three major tests, but the homework assignments are standardized or "the same as everybody else's" since they do use the publishers test bank. The test bank is a part of a Pearson product called Mathlab and Herbert describes it in this way - "the question comes up and they type in the answer and they are right or wrong. Now granted I figure they've done the work, but I only see the results". Because the students can't show their work Herbert can only grade on the product - if it is right or wrong. This ignores the process that he checks for when his students take his tests. However, he does like the immediate access to student scores as he states, "I can just look at their scores, I can look and see, you know, have they been doing it every night". There is a customization feature that only allows for removing or adding a question not editing one. There is also a randomizer that allows for some differentiation between tests so theoretically the students will receive a random set of questions instead of everyone getting the same question. Herbert's classes also have a lab component and they are scheduled in conjunction with the class. The labs are comprised of activities and practices on the course

content. These labs are “already prepared in a folder” but Herbert can add his own practices if desired. Herbert also has to give a final exam – he states that they are required to give a final no matter the circumstance. Herbert does believe if he wanted to he could “get away with” not giving a final but prefers to “follow the line” on that one.

In addition to the tests that Herbert creates he also has to give an assessment called the signature assignment. This assignment is mandated by the institution and Herbert compares it to the K-12 “Common Core” initiative. For example, if Herbert is teaching course number 110 and 5 other professors are teaching 110, they will all give the same assignment. The assignment only counts for five percent of the grade, so he considers it “a relatively minor part of the class”. Herbert asked if he could alter the assignment and make it worth twenty percent but was told no. Since it is not a major project and at five percent “your average student is not that concerned about it” he has them do it during class. This assessment in his view is “not something they can brush off but at the same time it’s not major. It’s not huge”. Despite this he was able to make some tweaks because there was “a part of it that didn’t really make sense to the way we were teaching the topic” but because of the 5% he doesn’t feel that other instructors are taking it very seriously. In fact, this particular assessment is graded more on “effort than accuracy” in Herbert’s class. The signature assignment is given two grades by the instructor – one that is geared to the student such as an A, B, C, and another grade on a 0 – 4 scale that is used by the institution. The students may see the 0 – 4 but it recorded separately in the gradebook. The other mandated assessment Herbert discussed is the STAR report, or Success Through Academic Reporting, that identifies to the institution students that may be having academic trouble. The STAR reporting system is an early warning system for the institution to identify students who may be struggling and provide them with any help they may need. STAR did have some initial problems - at one point the technology would overload the faculty members mailbox due to

settings in the system. He described the system as “a joke with the full-timers and part-timers” with faculty saying “I gotta do my damn STAR reports”. Now that the system issue has been addressed Herbert is hopeful and believes the system is useful “if the student wants to use it”. Another problem with the STAR reports is that he doesn’t feel the timing is appropriate to accurately state that the student is unsatisfactory. He feels “sure they are using it at some level” in a hope to “see how many are actually asking for help, what’s happening to their grades”.

Herbert respects his colleagues as he feels they “interact much more with the students, you do see them have office hours and more kids show up to work with them”. Herbert describes this as a community that cares about the students and that is student centered. This extends in some ways to this view of the department as “pretty friendly and a pretty easy group to work with”. He also compared it favorably to situations he’s encountered at 4-year institutions in that “you don’t have the chasm between full-timers and part-timers” instead they work “hand in hand”. This happens, Herbert says, “because it is just the culture” but he does note that many of the full timers come from the part time ranks so it doesn’t help anyone to alienate their colleagues. As collegial as the environment is there are some physical barriers to his ability to engage with colleagues. The institution has six campuses across a large urban area and Herbert has taught at five of these. In addition to the campuses being spread across a large urban area many of the part-time faculty are teaching in the evening - when their full-time counterparts aren’t on campus.

Herbert also discussed the available professional development opportunities for him. He has access to the LearnerWeb, a professional development portal, which provides access to variety of professional development opportunities. The attendance module is one of the professional development options that is “mandatory for all of us” but there are others courses that faculty can take as desired. Herbert took a “part-time faculty certification class” that took

four weeks over a summer. This class helped him develop his classroom presence and enhance his learning environment. He also noted that the department shares a lot of information with him, for example, he didn't have to setup his first class in the learning management system - he stated that they "set up the chapters" and "set up the homework assignments". Over time he shared his course layout with other instructors to save them time. In some instances, instructors will gather assessment questions from each other, as Herbert says, "we've given each other stuff". He does appreciate that his department gives him a lot of autonomy stating that "if I don't need anything, they tend to let you do your thing".

Herbert is fairly sanguine about his classroom practices and as he says "they've never really given me any static about it. Because I was willing to do the department thing if that's what they want me to do but that's never been an issue". For Herbert, one surprising part of teaching at this institution was the lack of classroom observations by his leaders. This is something that he expected, and he commented that "this is something that maybe slipped through the cracks, but I've only been observed twice in four and a half years". He assumes that as long as he gets good student reviews, has a good attendance rate, and a normal dropout rate everything is fine. As he says, "I think at the end of the day you are doing your job, putting your attendance in, doing your STAR reports, as long as you are doing your thing they tend to, at least in my case, they tend to leave me alone".

King

King came to education after retiring from the finance industry. He has an MBA and upon retirement decided to get a Master's in Communication which he completed in 2012. He teaches at two different, four-year institutions as well as the community college. King has been teaching communication at the community college for seven years and he describes his application process as straight forward – he applied for a position and was hired. He can't

remember if someone told him about the position but since his hiring he has taught at the community college every semester. King generally teaches between seven to nine classes a semester across three institutions. His classes are primarily face-to-face, but he does have one hybrid and the classes have minimal oversight. King discussed the basics of the class stating that the syllabus can be adjusted but that they “manage your syllabus, you write your own syllabi, but they will review them”. The classes all have the same general structure and all instructors are required to have the same number of speeches. As he says, “it doesn’t mean you couldn’t have more but you do have to have a minimum”.

As the interview continued we began to discuss assessment; however, when asked to broadly define assessment as it pertains to student work King responded with performative answers. He states that there are “really five speeches you have to do. That doesn’t mean you couldn’t have seven, but you wouldn’t have four”. King also gives chapter quizzes and a final exam at the end of the semester. He discussed how assessment has changed over the years and said that “now there is actually a competency scale that we grade every student on”. This is a reference to the critical core component, or signature assignment, that is now required by the institution and as he says, “that will be one way that they assess”. King said that for the signature assignment the institution developed a rubric that is then handed to the instructors. He has “two co-heads that manage the distribution of those – who is going to do what” in regard to the signature assignment. And while King did say that they just “rolled it out”, they also had two sections where instructors were invited to come and walk through the new process. He said “it was more structured and a sense of, here is what we are doing. So, instead of just being email it was more personal this semester. This is likely something they said they would like to do moving forward”.

King's assessment focuses on the speech performance and if the student meets the parameters associated with the speech such as time limit, visuals, etc. King also tests them on the textbook content on a chapter by chapter basis. The quizzes are based on completion instead of correctness, which means as long as the student finishes the quiz they receive a passing grade. Another performative aspect is the self-evaluation students do when critiquing each other. This means that students don't just get King's feedback they also get feedback from their fellow students. In regard to the student feedback King states that he doesn't "edit them, I don't do anything. It's pure, straight, whatever the other students see I read them. Because it sometimes helps me, inevitably I get more involved in the speeches". He likes that the students learn from each other through the peer feedback process. His students also get 100 points for completing the self-evaluation, so he has good response. He also has them evaluate an external speaker from the community including those who visit campus or other events. While King draws a hard line in class or on the syllabus, he does state that in practice he will give partial credit in some situations.

King also discussed the LearnSmart tool that is a part of the textbook for the class. The textbook is used across the department and King uses all the quizzes that come with the text. He says, "I'm not saying everyone is required to do this, but I'm pretty sure they are". King can load them into Blackboard so his students can easily take the quizzes. He pulls "from chapter test banks across the board. Anybody that doesn't do that is out of their mind. They give it to you – why would I recreate the wheel". When he was hired King was given a choice of LMS – either Blackboard or Moodle – and chose Blackboard since it seemed more widely used across the institution. King also videotapes his course speeches and when asked he will upload them to Blackboard. In particular, he may be asked by his department to upload them to support his core competency grades. The departmental and/or the institution may review them to better

understand the signature assignment grade. King uses his own equipment to videotape and then uploads the video to his personal PC as well as Blackboard.

King speaks highly of the institution as whole stating in the beginning that “I’m very impressed with (the institution) and their overall, just running as a business. They are very good.” He then ends the interview by saying “I’m very impressed with (the institution), it’s been a, I love the organization of it”. He did mention that “they could pay more” but after being asked to go full-time he realized that he would actually take a pay cut to do that. Given that King teaches a number of classes a semester as an adjunct he brings in more money than if he were teaching full-time at one institution. As he says “now I can do Tuesday – Thursday and then have a long weekend. So why would I change that – I could get benefits, but I already have them. I could do it for retirement but I’m at 58, how much retirement am I going to get? So, I’m happy.”. King’s primary interaction with the community is through emails as he says, “I get a ton of emails, I’m constantly bombarded with a lot of emails and I don’t read a lot of them”. When asked about general communication with colleagues he stated that “other than my manager” he doesn’t have contact with many other people. He attributes this to people on different campuses, as King states “if I’m down at (campus A) I will stop and talk. They are very open.” He does make himself available to the community, he says “it’s going to sound silly. I’m kind of always a go to person for them.” King is happy to pick up a class or fill in for a colleague when needed. So, while he may not know many of his colleagues, he is happy to help the department as whole when needed.

Matheson

Matheson has two master’s degrees and works full time outside of education while also teaching at the community college. He has taught at other educational institutions as well as in

workforce development. Matheson has been teaching part-time in higher education for six years with three years teaching in the social sciences.

Matheson defines assessment as “identifying learning outcomes and whether or not the student has grasped the concept of whatever the material is that you are trying to get across to them”. He then discussed the performative aspects of assessment for his classes, which tend to be exam based although as he says, “I would probably like to do other ways but as far as time constraints go there is no other way”. Matheson gives four exams during the semester and then a final at the end of the course. For the first four exams “it is pretty much multiple choice and true and false” but for the final exams he adds a “couple of short essay opportunities to gain extra credit”. Matheson’s online class has a different feel with a focus on discussion board questions, worksheets, and one final exam. He travels quite a bit for his full-time job so Matheson grades in hotel rooms usually later in the evening. Because of the time constraints he often uses assessment handed down from other instructors and he also uses the signature assignment that is handed down at the institutional level.

Matheson’s communication with colleagues is primarily via email and he states that his chair is very responsive. He says the chair will “usually get back to me very quickly. Even on the weekends” which given the times he is available to work on classwork this is a big help. If it is something serious, like plagiarism, he “will definitely reach out to her” which provides support for his work. While he is in regular contact with the chair, he knows few of his colleagues saying “I couldn’t even tell you who the full-time instructors are. I mean I know their names because I see it in emails, but I haven’t met some of them face to face”. Matheson says that while the department would like to pull everyone together with “all the adjuncts having full time jobs it is really difficult”. Because he teaches in the same field as his full-time career, he has been asked to serve on a committee that blends his teaching and professional roles. His

committee serves as a bridge to his professional community to ensure that students are getting what they need “to be successful” in the classroom and their workplace. Matheson describe the committee “as one of those committees where sidebars happen so I could hear a couple of things going on and I asked a couple of questions”. It was through this committee that he heard that the new college President is “pro-adjunct instead of full-time, which is not good for us or the school”. It was the type of informal communication that team members have when they are in proximity to one another.

Matheson also belongs to the BABB group whose website states that they “offer products and services to help educators build their workload, find new teaching positions, be recognized as a subject matter expert in their field, and network with other education professionals” (“Services for Professors - The Babb Group,” 2019). Matheson describes it as a “group that instructors, a lot of people that teach full or part-time are part of this group. Everybody bounces ideas and they kind of vent sometimes...so I use that as a resource sometimes”. He finds the interaction easy as well as timely as seen in this example:

And so, this time I said I don't have a lot of time can you guys give me some ideas on what to do because I'm always given last minute information and I'm given the material and I don't have a lot of time to spend on it as far as what I would to do. As far as that weekend I took a lot of their feedback and I'm going to have a lot more group interactions, group assignments.

Matheson found the group when looking for faculty positions online and for him he likes that they discuss “what things you need to do if you want to teach as an adjunct, so basically get the workload of a full time and make the money as if you were full time”. He pays the service “\$10 or \$11 a month where they'll give you leads on colleges that are looking for instructors for that particular subject...so you can get a lot of leads that way. They show you how to cold call

basically”. Matheson would like to teach in higher education full time, and this is an avenue he is exploring to reach that goal.

Matheson shares that when he gets a request to teach he is often just given a “weeks notice” so he spends the time preparing for class and updating the syllabus. Therefore, he would “use whatever the last instructor used however the assessments are concerned”. Due to the time constraints both personally and professionally the assessments take a back seat to other aspects of teaching. Matheson is able to update the assessments as he says, “the department doesn’t specifically state that these have to be done it is more along the lines of here this is what I used and you can do what you want with it”. He has changed some of the questions and started requiring a longer answer than the initial assessment had, but he states that he doesn’t “have a lot of time to really change anything”. Creating assessments can be a time-consuming process and Matheson counts on obtaining previous information in order to get the class going in a timely manner. He even states that “if I had more time to devote to this I mean if I ever got a full-time gig that would be ideal. Because usually the workload is five classes and I’d be able to spend a lot of effort and time into building my own lesson plans and doing some different things”. Time is the main factor for Matheson in preparing for assessment. He also uses

a PowerPoint that is given by the, by the publisher I guess is the best way to put it and I can change that. I have the ability, I can change it every now and then, so I incorporate different videos, use a lot of different types of video.

The PowerPoint gives Matheson a head start in preparing the class materials and helps him frame classroom discussions.

Matheson also discusses the signature assignment which is built into the syllabus he received from his department. This assignment is mandated from the institution and then he said that the department decided to make it ten percent of the student’s grade. The grading system

and rubric for this assignment are handed down from the institution and the assessment is “a review of the entire course”. Matheson then discusses another mandatory assessment known as STAR or Success Through Academic Reporting which he describes as a way to “monitor where you are (the students) throughout the year”. He goes on to describe the STAR system and says “at the beginning it is really hard, I mean like two weeks in we are being asked to do this and two weeks in I’m still learning their names never mind what else is going on. Towards the mid-term it is a little bit easier”. He looks at how students are doing on assignments and attendance to determine the score that students receive on their STAR reports. The reports go to Matheson and to the student’s academic advisor. Other than these areas Matheson feels pretty free to do as he likes for his class.

Matheson uses the discussion boards in Blackboard, the campus learning management system, for his online classes and its grading system for all of his classes. He also provides feedback using Blackboard as he says, “my feedback is pretty much directly done when I grade assignments under the comments section”. When discussing his feedback and grading process he said that “some of the feedback is really long, several sentences, and some is the same. Like you continue to do this and here is what you can do to be successful. But yeah that is pretty much, that’s about it. That’s what I’m limited to at this point”. Matheson learned to use Blackboard through a professional development module available through the colleges LearnerWeb system. The course was online, included quizzes, tests, and homework assignments, and Matheson spent about two or three weeks in the course.

Hopper

Hopper took a non-traditional route in her educational journey - leaving school early and then later returning to complete a Bachelor, Masters, and Ph.D. During her graduate coursework Hopper taught at two year and four-year institutions and continued to do that after graduation.

She has been teaching a total of thirteen years and at a community college for twelve years in the social sciences. Hopper was very excited that her graduate coursework discussed teaching in higher education – something she did not have a background in at the time. In particular she discussed how they learned to assess their own assessments to determine what questions are useful as well as what questions show an error in the assessment. The job market was fierce, however, and Hopper ended up teaching nine classes between a community college and a four-year institution. By the Spring of 2012, Hopper was creating five course preps and teaching nine classes. Initially she was able to teach 4 – 5 classes to make a living but a change in the pay structure at the four-year institution required Hopper to take on additional classes. She decided to leave the community college when, after eleven years, her pay had only gone from \$1500 a course to \$1900 a course so it was not a sustainable career. When Hopper describes her classes however, she is very practical about the goals as she says

I don't need to teach you historical writing graduate level work. I need you to be able to apply the knowledge you use to have, to teach you the basics of argumentative writing, that will help you in any other field that you go into and also help you understand that there are different ways to cite something.

When we begin to discuss assessment, Hopper defined it in this way:

it means a lot of things to me. Because there are all different kinds of assessment. The formative assessment, where they are right now. Assessment focusing on content, formal assessment that focus on skills. Can a student put two sentences together, can a student apply the content they have to a knowledge-based question can they apply to an analytical question?

Hopper went on to say, “it's a way in which to gain information, a way for me to gain insights on how much information has been retained and how that information is being applied”.

Hopper also discusses assessment as both formal and informal – and this is evident in her description of the performative aspects of assessments.

It can be done in an informal way in a conversation in the hallway with a student.

Outside of the traditional classroom setting. It can be an email where a student sends me, hey, I just saw this thing online and I just saw this in a movie, and it made me think about the class. That is an informal assessment. Or it could be a traditional exam, a traditional quiz...it can be an essay, it can be an in-class simulation where you have student's role play.

When Hopper discusses assessment, it includes the time spent creating and grading - for example she spends about eight hours grading a mid-term for a class. And if it's a new assessment there is extra time spent making sure the questions are fair, so she looks for examples where all the students missed the same question and makes a determination on its efficacy. Hopper says that "any new assessment is a lot of time".

When it comes to assessment types Hopper prefers essays and experiential learning stating "I hate multiple choice" tests even though they are easier to grade. One experiential learning example she gave involved students attending a community meeting about neighborhood issues and then they return to the class to discuss gentrification issues. The discussions around the issue are a part of what Hopper assesses and she also provides a lot of feedback to students.

The core competencies are another performance area of assessment – these competencies are mandated by the institution and require two grades – one for the student and another for the institution. Hopper describes the competencies as "21st Century skills, writing skills, pretty much this is the basic minimum that every student that graduates, that takes a class at (the institution) needs to master". She considers the assessment "very basic" and that it is "not so

much an assessment of content as an assessment of skills”. The competency assessments have a particular grading system that requires the instructor to be “very specific about your gradebook”. She can make up any assignment she wants as long as it ties into this core competency.

The primary way Hopper provides feedback is through a rubric – the rubric helps her “justify giving a grade” and states that the less formal the assessment the harder it is to justify a grade. In addition, Hopper uses a rubric to show that that what the students are doing is not only “skills based” but also “content based”. The hard part with a rubric is that she wants to have some wiggle room, because there are some things that shouldn’t be just “right or wrong”. She creates rubrics to “help equalize” as opposed to making it be “detrimental to someone’s grade”.

The online gradebook is an important tool for Hopper as well. It is the cause of some frustration since “when you have an online gradebook, I can’t move that grade any further necessarily”. This is important for Hopper because there isn’t a minus system at the college so a B- student will get the same grade as a B+ student and the online system leaves little room to alleviate any disparities. As she says “that’s bullshit” using an example of a student who

busted ass, communicated with me outside of class, they tanked a couple of assessments.

I barely saw the other kid, so yeah that doesn’t matter. But then you’ve got the kids who really are struggling but I can’t do anymore.

Hopper feels that the problem with the online grading system is that “the autonomy is taken away from a professor”. However, given the situation with grades the rubric “comes in handy” to justify a grade to the student. The gradebook is an important part of the core competency project because the data is being pulled “across the entire university system”. Hopper states that a “lot of time and effort and training goes into making sure that you have this perfect in your gradebook”.

Time and training are an important part of Hopper's professional development. Part-time faculty are offered an array of professional development opportunities that they can take as desired, but unlike full-time faculty they do not have very many required classes. One opportunity that Hopper took was a course in learning BlackBoard, which she says is "basically taking an online class to learn how to teach online. And they have support groups for it". There are a number of places on the campus where a faculty member can ask for help, as Hopper says "one thing that (the institution) does really well is that they have a tremendous amount of administrators who are there to help you. There are entire fields of people who is that's their only job". In addition, she states that "there is a whole group of people who is there to help you design your entire curriculum" and furthermore she says that "it's very helpful". The institutional community has a number of ways to work with faculty both full and part-time. Part-time faculty are encouraged to use these services as they plan and teach their courses.

Hopper primarily communicates with colleagues and her department via email. While Hopper was invited to departmental meetings she believes that over an eleven-year period that she "went to maybe four department meetings". It is hard to attend the meetings when you are working at several institutions which Hopper sums up by saying "adjuncting is not convenient". There are touch down stations at each campus and a mailbox at one campus so they could share information, but the mailboxes aren't always convenient, and Hopper would only check it "once a year". Hopper found early on that "there was very little attention to what I did in the individual classroom. No one told me really anything. We just need you to teach this class" which gave her what she considers a lot of autonomy. Her colleagues are open to sharing and training people but "you just have to find the people who have the time to be able to do it and want to do it". At times she would have like some help with creating assessments and said it "would've been great to see other eyes".

New policies, procedures, or any “new thing” the department or institution “would send emails and updates about it. If I had any questions I would go to my chair and ask. It was very autonomous. I spent about eight years just autonomous”. However, this autonomy was confused in other ways, for example, in another part of the conversation Hopper said, “I would just wait to be told what I needed to do”. Essentially the rules focused on recording grades and attendance other than that Hopper had almost complete autonomy. Hopper summed up her views of adjuncting in this way “look the reality is you’re not going to make any money doing it, you are going to sacrifice other things in order to adjunct. And you will, it is, indentured servitude”.

Lovecraft

Lovecraft has a bachelors and masters along with graduate coursework in other areas. He has been teaching social science at the community college level for twenty-two years. Lovecraft teaches in both online and face-to-face classes on top of a full-time career outside of education. He was asked to teach at a community college during an office conversation that ended with him taking on a class. As Lovecraft says, “I was just happened to be standing there and I happened to qualify academically to teach the course”. Lovecraft wants his students to be “critical thinkers” and defined assessment in this way:

you identify an objective, fairly concrete, specific objective, for the learner to have completed. And then create a set of questions or measures that capture the degree to which that objective was met, and you can apply that to whether the department is reaching its goals, or a student is gaining knowledge, define a primary objective, define a measure, and go from there.

However, he did discuss the new critical thinking objective that his department has now “imported into Blackboard”. This is a part of the signature assignments that departments are mandated to use. Lovecraft performs assessment primarily through quizzes, multiple choice

exams and then adds “sets of essay questions so that I can qualitatively grade, see how they write, see how they are thinking. I also, and that’s based on explaining and understanding, and applying concepts from the book”. Lovecraft has his students do work in small groups and reflect on what they’ve learned and “see what knowledge transfer happens. Some of that is more qualitative and subjective”. A majority of his assessment is done in Blackboard and away from class which is something he would like to change, but at the same time he doesn’t want to take too much time away from class for formal assessment. Part of the reason he would like to move back to “paper and pencil testing” is so he can “apply a score to a degree to which the student met the learning objective without calling them out in class” something he feels he can’t do online. Lovecraft does discuss that if a student has an A average he gives the student the option of skipping the final – he finds that it “seems to motivate them a lot”. He also discussed using the STAR system or Success Through Academic Reporting software. Based on the STAR system he sends out assessments through the semester at the quarter, half, and three-quarter mark. The STAR report is used to identify students who may need intervention if they are struggling in class.

Lovecraft pulls a portion of the test questions from a test bank which is a database of questions that come from the publisher. He does have some concerns with the test banks in that over the years you

could tell that there is not a quality control process, around the questions, so I tell my students, if you see one that you think is incorrect, the textbook clearly shows that you are correct in your answer, but it was counted wrong, please send me those.

The textbooks and associated test banks are chosen at the department level with no input from him. However, he does get to choose the book for his latest class since it is a new class, and he feels the book will better help them learn, which then leads to better assessment. He doesn’t,

however, know about the “quality of the test bank”, but fortunately, since he is choosing the text, he has direct contact with the publishers in case there are problems.

The discussion boards in Blackboard are a point of contention as he feels the discussion boards are “artificial”, so while the discussions are assessed he doesn’t find it useful. The students tend to give “complements, like you made a really great point” instead of an “academic reply”. He feels that online in general is a difficult training environment as he says for “many students it’s a quicker, cheaper way to get work done and get the grade. But it’s not as rich in content, not, not as rich in experience, in terms of assessment it’s far more limited”. In general Lovecraft feels that online classes put you in a “box” and he doesn’t feel he has as much freedom when teaching online. He has also found that students interact in different ways when performing assignments online. For example, he encounters students using speech to text features to answer questions online, which leads to misspellings and grammatical mistakes making it hard for him to grade.

Lovecraft was very excited about the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA compliance initiative that the institution is rolling out in the online environment. He stated that everything including “assessments of all activities in Blackboard classrooms have to be ADA compliant, which is a great thing. A part of this is understanding “that if you don’t use one of the premade” assessment or assignments then you “have to build your own” which can be time consuming for the faculty. This has caused some discussion in the department with “some instructors are like, sure, trust my colleagues...but other instructors are saying we are getting told what to teach and how to teach”. Lovecraft did not have the opportunity to be trained on all aspects of ADA, so he was forced into using the shell. The department offered training during the day so that assignments and assessments could be workshopped for ADA compliance, but it was hard for a part-time faculty member to attend.

Lovecraft defines par-time instructors as “independent agents” and he even says some of the emails he receives are “kinda funny”.

You see things like, hey here’s a training opportunity, that can teach you this and that – then you think great and you read that it is always tomorrow afternoon. Part of the culture, some of the full-time staff here believe I’m at the college because everyone’s here. They’ve got an office in the building nearby and if they say tomorrow afternoon they’re doing a thing at 2:00 – to a training event that people could just appear...I can’t go.

He isn’t able to attend departmental meetings primarily due to the time constraints, but he does communicate with the chair. He will “email and ask for suggestions” but feels that the department is “more interested in just administrative issues, grade changes, and things like that than they are the real supervision of instructors”. He feels there is something about the larger culture that has impact as stated here:

there’s a culture of when it comes to managing your classes, assessing your students, you know best it’s almost like, I hate to say it, about community college instructors wanting to be seen as a quote professor who has highly advanced knowledge, and to be honest to me lecturers are not professors, but lecturers want to be treated as professors. But I think lecturers could use more supervision – they could make it easier for them to learn – the meetings are about administration – I think there could be meetings about teaching”.

Since this doesn’t happen, or happen during a time that the part-time faculty can attend Lovecraft has ordered some items for himself on “developing techniques for delivering materials and, how to assess it”.

Lovecraft’s work environment is minimal, but he had one particularly difficult story. For one class he had to teach in a different building than the one that houses his usual classes. His

department asked the leaders of the department who was responsible for access to allow Lovecraft privileges to areas for faculty – in particular part-time faculty. The other department refused to give him access. He had to use the student computing areas to do his work which made his job difficult since he comes straight to campus from his full-time job. Lovecraft “couldn’t have a cup of coffee with me because in the student areas you can’t have a drink by a computer, that was pretty disappointing. So, I don’t expect an office, but I have not had consistent access to any kind of faculty area”.

Keene

Keene has multiple master’s degrees and worked in industry for over twenty years when he “eventually started getting out of business” to start teaching. He has also done Ph.D. coursework in the field of education. Upon retirement from industry he began teaching physics full-time for another twenty years and now teaches part-time in the community college. Teaching in higher education combines his “science background in academia and applied science from industry and the mathematics and quantitative methods that go along with virtually all of engineering and science”. In addition to being an adjunct in this community college system he is also a retired department chair at a different community college. Keene teaches mostly online although in the summers he has been teaching on campus if needed.

Keene describes assessment as “measuring qualitatively how well students have mastered the subject being taught”. He follows this up by saying that “we assess content as well, but we also want to assess as well how to develop things like critical thinking skills”. Keene also discusses how measuring content is “easy”, that you can do it with multiple choice questions, but critical thinking is “more of challenge”. But again, he states that this can be content dependent, for example in some of the sciences “you can give them a problem to analyze” which “requires them to do some critical thinking”. He came to this definition of assessment through his work as

a teacher and as a department chair. Keene states that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is a “minor” motivator for assessment but he describes the big motivator is the desire to be a good teacher. He states that

teachers want students to learn and good teachers will not assume that what you’re doing is working – they will test to see whether the test is working – that will challenge the idea that what they’re doing is working. So that’s where assessment really comes from.

Essentially, while institutional and regional factors have an impact on assessment, Keene feels that the teachers desire for student success is the primary motivation in performing assessment. He does distinguish this view of assessment from that of the department or college, as he says, they look “for any data that will support positive answer to the SACS concerns, questions, recommendations”.

Keene assesses primarily through quantitative, online homework that is created by the publisher of his textbook. The reason for this type of assessment is practical in that “it gives them immediate feedback, it frees me from having to grade traditional papers in front of me or essays on the screen and it fits well with the courses I teach”. A part of the reason Keene uses this is time – as an adjunct he has a larger course load and has less time per student so

the tendency there, the trend is to use, make much greater use of online testing quizzes homework objective assessment at that level students prefer that anyway, because they have a strictly multiple-choice quiz that integrates immediately, and many online students prefer that.

In addition, Keene uses simulations that give students a chance to analyze a problem and then there are some short answer questions in the assessment. Keene’s classes also have a lab component where students also work on simulations as well as complete written assignments.

The simulations and online quizzes come from Pearson who also publishes the textbook. Keene states that “any textbook comes with a list of questions”. However, Keene does share that he will “insert my own questions”. The reason for this is that “the test banks don’t think of everything”. Keene is currently editing a textbook for a different company and he gave an example of a question in the test bank that had the correct answer, but the words used in the question didn’t appear anywhere in the text. This could be misleading for the student, so he deleted the question and “told the accuracy reviewer who follow behind me” that “this term is not in the current chapter”. He surmised that the term was probably in a previous edition but with the changes the question was out of date. As he said, “you can’t test students on stuff that’s not there”. Keene discusses the practice of test banks in that you can have randomly generated questions, you can have a subset of randomly generated questions, and/or you can add your own. The problem with the randomly generated question is the instructor must be sure they taught that part of the chapter, and as he states, “you probably have not”. You also need to make sure that the chapter content supports the “learning objectives in the syllabus”.

Because Keene teaches primarily online the learning management system is an important tool for his classes. He teaches asynchronously so there is not a required time to be online for his students – he likes this since an online meeting can be “inconvenient for people that can’t meet at the time”. Keene also doesn’t have a need for online collaboration with students; therefore, he doesn’t need to use any conferencing tools within the LMS.

Keene sees a good deal of autonomy in his position as an adjunct in that he can “manage my own course load and the time I put into each course”. He does have some collaboration with faculty if he desires and given his full-time work in his education area, he has been asked to help develop new courses. Keene states that 95% of his coursework is autonomous in that “the instructor can do what he or she wishes to do the other 5% is those cases where a particular

course is chosen to meet a SACs accreditation thing”. Adjuncts rarely are a part of shaping the 5% of assessment or other policies that are provided to them. Primarily the people making these decisions are the regular course instructors and the chairs over that particular area. He suggests that new part-time faculty “learn what they can and what they cannot change. Learning outcomes are typically something that cannot be changed”. Keene explains that the

only expectations that raises anybody’s interest are reporting deadlines that apply across the board, attendance reporting on a timely basis, end of the semester grades being posted by deadline, responding to students emails within the stated timeframe, basically anything that meets administrative requirements or students’ expectations. As long as I do that, I refer to it as keeping the job off the department chairs desk.

Keene shares that the “expectations of adjuncts expected interaction with faculty is minimal” and the adjuncts rarely communicate. He says that this based on the “don’t make waves theory” which means if you keep your head down and do your job you will be fine.

Keene says that there are regular department meetings that everyone is encouraged, but not required, to attend. He says that while “that’s how you meet some of your colleagues, some are often working at several different schools so finding time is difficult”. There are also “very limited facilities – you have access to copiers, limited access to computers, it’s not much and it’s not good, we end up doing the vast majority of our work at home, in your own space”. He does say that in terms of resources for adjuncts, especially about assessment or the mechanics of Blackboard, that there is not “any formal resource but we do have the informal resource of talking to a colleague”. Keene states that there are people who are hired to help with course creation and design, but that he tends “to be skeptical of that”. This means that while there aren’t formal solutions “adjuncts are encouraged to interact with their peers full and part-time and that’s mostly how we do it”.

Atwood

Atwood has worked as a part-time faculty member in the community college for over thirteen years teaching computer science. She has a Masters degree and has worked in a variety of fields unrelated to education – she is now pursuing a Ph.D. She is happy as an adjunct right now since her full-time employment provides benefits and will provide lifetime medical coverage after twenty years work. In addition to teaching at the community college, she also teaches online for two other four-year institutions. She has an interesting story about obtaining her position at the community college in that she applied and never heard anything, so she decided to follow up. When talking to the department chair, she was told “you were hired” to which she responded, “I never interviewed”. Atwood had all the necessary qualifications, so they hired her without her knowledge, and she got the course information two days before class started. She was told “there’s your students, you should take attendance” and that was all. It was not an auspicious beginning, but it has turned out to be a lasting commitment. She teaches primarily online but uses a lot of ways to communicate with her students such as facetime, phone, text, and sometimes Facebook.

When speaking of assessment Atwood shifts between the views of instructors and faculty. She says that when leaders “talk to instructors, they talk about assessment as far as more accreditation” or “being able to offer certain degrees”. But if Atwood is speaking to an immediate supervisor then “they’re talking about student assessments. So, there’s a differentiation, so I have to know who I’m talking to, what we’re actually talking about and sometimes there’s an assessment of the instructor”. Atwood defines assessment as understanding “what the student knows or doesn’t know and how to get an end result. Where they know what I think they should know not necessarily what you know, maybe even what the University thinks they should know”. She puts herself into the role which is evident in this

comment “there’s things about me that I think they need to know – because I bring the real world to them”. Atwood believes that anything she teaches “you should be able to apply” when you leave her class. Atwood does wish there were more “standardized assessments” especially for new adjuncts who don’t have as much experience.

Atwood uses assessments that have a “real life” application so that the students can apply the knowledge outside of the classroom. She has no big tests in her class instead it is she uses quizzes and homework to assess. She uses Pearson products SIMnet and SAM to provide student quizzes and simulations. The students purchase a code to access the product and Atwood records a video for the students to learn about the tools. The system automatically grades the students work and shows them where they made a mistake. Atwood can set it up so the students get two attempts and walks them “through other things that can do with a real-world applicable life story. So (the institution) says this is all they need to do”. She sees this as a baseline but “that’s not engaging enough” because students can finish up the materials in two weeks if desired and as she says “what’s worth a 16-week course if they’re done in two weeks? I have to entice them to stick around”. To do this Atwood has a weekly quiz that counts attendance, so they are “forced to come back every week” since she doesn’t deploy the quizzes all at one time. She does have the option to give extra credit if she desires. The quizzes are created for Atwood, so she doesn’t have to spend a lot of time on that part. The problem with the software is that sometimes the programming is wrong and therefore “all students across the board were getting it marked wrong” so Atwood has to go through each assignment carefully.

Atwood wasn’t given much training to learn SIMnet, in fact she said it “was thrown at me”. But she considers it superior to the previous software called SAM. Her leaders told her in order to learn it she should “sit at home the first couple of nights and play with it because you have to have a lot of patience”. Her colleagues provide some relief as she says the nice thing

about have so many adjuncts is that “there’s always somebody else who’s been up later than me trying to figure it out”. They communicate via email at any time of the day or night and often there is a quick response. This has been helpful to Atwood when SIMnet has problems, because, she can get a solution then make sure that grades aren’t compromised. When the students complete their work in SIMnet Atwood then has to transfer the grades into the official grading system on Blackboard. She does wish that there was “time to spend with another faculty member, the full-timer/part-timer teaches the exact same course, so that you know what they do and how they do it or maybe they have little tips and hints”.

Communication is not always where it should be, for example, Atwood told a story of entering a classroom and finding another instructor setting up for the first class of the term. They had a discussion and the other instructor admitted that he did not have a signed contract, but he always taught that class. Finally, a student who had overheard part of the conversation stated that Atwood’s name was in the syllabus so she was the designated teacher. She does recommend that adjunct faculty get to know their colleagues whenever possible and if you can get a day class you should do it. She gave an example of meeting her fellow adjuncts and how they were able to spend some time discussing teaching methods and other classroom techniques. When the faculty can come together it is helpful, but it can be hard to do given the differing schedules and campuses of her colleagues. Atwood recommends that part-time faculty determine their own standards and “what they would let the kids slide with”. She gives an example that when she teaches, she lets students circumvent some rules – such as bringing drinks into the computer rooms. The attendance requirements are standard across the institution, but it is up to the instructor on determining attendance if a student needs to leave early or come in late. As she states if they “came and made an honest effort...it was good enough for me”.

Carroll

Carroll has been teaching at the college level since 2006 and at a variety of two- and four-year institutions. He has a Bachelor's and a Master's degree and has taught a variety of subjects. Carroll has been teaching in the social sciences at the community college on and off for thirteen years and his hiring process was interesting. He applied to teach and wasn't hired, but then received an email from a department chair asking if he could teach "a couple of courses in a couple of sections". Carroll taught for a semester then didn't go back for a few years. Upon his return he hasn't left the institution and still continues to teach at a variety of schools. He teaches about three classes a semester and only teaches face to face where "they can see me, and I can see them" – he refuses to teach online. Carroll states that there is a

tendency to load online instructors with as many students as they can possibly stuff and you just sit there and you spend your whole day, your whole life, running threads and all the rest of the stuff. I'm not doing that. I'm old-fashioned, I'm sorry, I just find that I like to interact.

When asked what the institutional expectations for assessment or definitions are, Carroll's first thought was teacher assessment – where two sources evaluate him. He describes the process as he believes it's supposed to happen - with a department chair sitting in the class and then providing feedback. This has only happened in his classroom once and he never saw the feedback. But when the conversation shifted to his understanding of assessment, he states that "I'm more interested in their thinking, and their thinking process and I, I want to cause them to think critically and analytically". He follows that up with this comment:

When my students finish my course, they know they know they have had drummed into their head's theoretical analysis. So that's one thing, more than anything else, that they

are going to take from my courses and never forget. Theoretical analysis as a basis for analysis rather than personal opinion, just your personal opinion.

Because of this Carroll does not give any quizzes or tests instead his course focuses on twelve papers. His course is very writing intensive due in part to an articulation agreement with another school, but he has students do “twelve observations, 350 words” each. He makes a point of making his assessments add up to 125 points so “the students don’t have to ask for extra credit”.

Carroll uses rubrics extensively to ensure that his grading is not “arbitrary”. The student gets the rubric back for each paper and they then understand “the basis for having given the student the grade that he or she has gotten”. He is very careful to make sure the rubric uses affirmative terms and that it tells the student “on a scale of 0 to 5 this is how you did”. The group projects are also assessed by rubric as well as their final oral presentation. He also takes a lot of time when grading the observations and then shares them back with the class. He does this to generate discussion and then the students are graded on that participation. Carroll learned about rubrics while at another institution and has found that they “gave me a better means of assessing them more objectively”. He also found that when grading a rubric allows him to “get through a lot faster and a lot easier than just reading it”.

Carroll doesn’t have a lot of interaction with his colleagues primarily because he is not at the school. He also states that over time his “input hasn’t been asked for, so I’ve never really discussed any of this with anybody else”. Because of this Carroll had a strong reaction to the new signature assessment that he was told would address a problem in their department. That there is “not a lot of emphasis in our particular discipline, not a lot of emphasis is being made on theoretical analysis”. He stated that the initiative “kind of pisses me off because I’m already doing it. I’m going to be required to do this and I’m not even familiar with this process”.

Carroll did say that he should hear more about this from his discipline chair and in the interim he will continue running his course the same way.

When it comes to speaking with colleagues Carroll has little to no interactions - he even states that he thinks “they deliberately keep us away, we don’t really talk to each other”. He can attend department meetings if he wants but he is never asked to inform the agenda or contribute to the meeting. In addition, he says that “they’re probably not going to pay me to attend” and given that the amount of time he puts into a course amounts to a “full time” endeavor his schedule is very tight. Carroll also doesn’t use Blackboard because it “automatically creates a curve” a feature he discovered by accident. He was entering in grades and noticed when he entered in one grade someone else’s grade would change so he decided not to do that anymore. He says that “anytime a student wants to see his or her grade all they have to do is ask me. But I don’t use Blackboard for grading”.

His work environment does not give him much opportunity to meet with students either. Carroll says he will find some place for them to meet but that can change depending upon which campus he is teaching since they don’t all have spaces for adjuncts. He said, “especially if you want privacy” so he actually finds that “I get more privacy if I’m just walking with a student in the corridor someplace because there is enough background noise so that they can’t hear what we’re talking about”.

Butler

Butler has a masters, a doctorate, and has been teaching in the liberal arts for seventeen years with three of those at the community college. She has taught at both two and four-year schools and in a variety of subjects. Butler also has done research in higher education with some of that work in assessment. She has helped with accreditation at one institution and with faculty development initiatives at another. She applied to the community college through the online

system and received a response asking if she would teach. The email went to her junk folder, but she eventually found it and responded. It took a while to hear back but the response was that “the class made, and you can pick up your book”. Butler was surprised that there was no interview just an application and an offer. She teaches one to two classes a semester and always face to face.

Butler believes that “when it comes to assessment, I think it’s important to give students the opportunity to prove what they know”. To do this she is careful in crafting her classes and she makes

sure to go through the textbook, make sure to go through the lessons, make sure to match the course objectives, okay this is what we are going to learn, this is how you will learn it, how I’m going to assess you.

However, she also approaches everything from a place of fairness, as she says, “I’m not here as an assessor to make you lose your scholarship, make it so you don’t get into that university because you missed a test”. Butler states that “it’s important that they’re learning the material”. To achieve this learning environment Butler tries to create culturally responsive assessments.

One way she does this by eschewing tests as much as possible because as she states:

I don’t like tests, I think they are biased. They are culturally biased, I think they are biased against people with learning disabilities, I feel like they’re a got you. And usually, especially in a community college setting they’re usually the multiple choice which is the lowest on your Blooms Taxonomy scale. So, I don’t like using them, but I will because I have to make sure they are all paying attention.

Butler initially had them write papers because as she said “you really have to know it to write it” but over time she realized that wasn’t the best option for all of her students, so she added differentiated assignments. So, her assessments may be to write a paper, or take a test, or do a

project and based on the students “learning style they can choose” their topic. There is a lot of freedom in her area, as she says, there are five or six different instructors and they all assess differently”. But there are times that she does use quizzes and gave an online final in the last year – Butler is always working on new and different assessment options. Butler uses the learning management system Blackboard when she does deliver a quiz. She uses a variety of systems at different institutions and finds moving between them can be a challenge. For example, she deployed a quiz and forgot to make it available which caused stress for the students, so she gave them extra time to complete the task. At the community college she also finds that there are problems getting help. For example, when she was trying to work on the quiz on a Sunday and had a problem but there was no available help until the following Monday. This caused anxiety for her and for the students who were trying to access the course.

Butler shares that the college is “getting more into, quote, assessment” and they all now have a signature assignment that everyone in the department needs to have in their classes.

Butler took the initiative on the project because as she said:

we needed to come up with the rubric and of course I was the one who came up with that and sent it to my boss. They’re like we need a rubric and I’m like here you can use mine. So now that is the standard rubric we’re using.

Her work environment is rather solitary as she sees her colleagues about once a year. She mentioned that one year she saw them twice “because we got a new textbook and the people from McGraw-Hill were sponsoring something. So, I got to go over and learn how to use the textbook and stuff”. She does communicate regularly with her department chair and recently a department coordinator was hired. Butler receives “emails or e-blasts” from the department coordinator about items of interest to the department.

Butler's perceived autonomy provides her a lot of freedom in her class and assessment design. When describing her classroom practices and in particular grading she says, "I have never told my bosses I do things that way, and I'm just being honest. For me, more than anything, I want to be fair, I want to be just, I want to do right for the students". She was referencing how she works to ensure the student gets a fair grade - that may not be indicative of the numerical scores on the assessments. She also stated that she had never been evaluated for a class at this institution. Butler sees this as a positive development in that her chair "sees me as a professional. Like if he would've gotten complaints or had my student evaluations just been crazy, I know he would be in my classroom very concerned". She also states that she has never really had a contract in fact she says "I asked for it once. Like aren't I supposed to sign something? They're like no, you're good".

Dick

Dick has undergraduate degrees in philosophy and economics because while he loves philosophy, he thought he could make money with an economics degree. Although as he says, "it turns out you can't make any money with an economics undergraduate degree, you need to know, get involved in the business community or something like that". Dick realized he needed a graduate degree but instead of economics he realized he loved writing, so he got a masters in English. During his graduate work he was able to participate in workshops that "helped a lot because I didn't have any kind of classroom or educational development outside of that". After his graduate work Dick taught English in middle and high schools, English as a second language environments, four year and higher institutions as well as community college. When it comes to defining assessment, Dick sees it as a

combination of that effort they've put into the class and how they've grown. And the concepts they've learned. And it can be, it can be on paper and it can be conceptual such as the way that they started to talk about concepts in class.

He finishes by saying that he has "a combination of objective measurements and ones that are slightly more, you know, effort based and subjective". Which Dick believes fits in with his departments view of assessment.

At the community college Dick started teaching in developmental courses which do required "training, kind of a crash course, usually one day and then they'll have that once a year" and he would have to recertify each year. Dick then moved on to teaching other courses which do not require certification. The developmental classes all have labs and for assessment they use "Pearson's...multiple choice questions...and so it's not very useful". Dick felt that the assessments weren't helpful and as he said "the first time I read it I was like I don't think I understand the question" but he believes that Pearson's is required by the institution.

Dick teaches both online and in person for the community college. He discussed how it is difficult as he had "a lot of trouble, trouble just because I couldn't get students to understand its upper level concepts in an online class and the standards list doesn't really get into complex concepts". Dick would incorporate his own Wix page that had thematic information on the topic, but it did not enhance his online class. Wix is a website building and hosting tool that is freely available. He did use a master syllabus through which he could add in his own assignments and then submit "them for approval". While Dick does have freedom in his classroom, he does have one required assignment and two others he has "free reign on". His assignments include an e-portfolio, an ethnography, and the required assignment which is "just the research paper". His preferred assignment is the ethnography as students can explore and "use their biases in a positive way" by showing them "that their personal experience and

anecdotal evidence is worth something”. The signature or required assignment has a little bit of “wiggle room”, however, “the division head send out a very specific requirement and, and it’s explained line for line what she wants and so I imagine most people use that one. I’ve used it and not used it”. There is a specific grading system for this that “rates students one through four on how well they do on the assignment”. This is in addition to the grade Dick gives them for the assignment and as he said that he assigned the numbers based off of his grades.

Dick provides a lot of feedback and requires peer-review as a part of his assessment plan. He provides opportunities for revision, as well as, giving students models for them to use when creating their drafts. The peer reviews he feels have been successful when used in conjunction with the revisions as he has “never had a student that has complained about a grade”. Dick does this a lot with his signature assignment, but he doesn’t know what the institution does with the information gathered from the zero to four grading system. For other classes he teaches Dick believes that

they have some kind of requirement...I forget what it is, and I can’t remember if I meet that requirement or not...I kind of feel like I know how to teach this class really well. So, I don’t pay attention to that and I’m part-time.

Dick goes on to say that one of the great things about being part-time is that “they aren’t going to get rid of me if I’m not doing this”. However, he does note that he may not have that freedom were he to push back on the signature assignment “because it is directly related to funding”. The other classes do have some requirements, that are essentially student learning outcomes he should follow, but otherwise he can design his own assessments. Dick uses a rubric for approximately 60% of his assignments. He states that he would like to look into using a rubric more often but some of his grading is just too relative to do that. The other problem is the time it takes to create a rubric, time he really doesn’t have.

The textbooks are chosen by the department and even though they are listed as a required text Dick doesn't always require students purchase the title. This turned into a problem when a student bought the book and "they wouldn't let him return it because it's required for the class because of some kind of financial deal". The situation did make him a little nervous, but he just doesn't "know how tight the rules are" and he stated that "at a community college as long as you get the students through and don't cause a big stir you are ok".

Teaching online is a challenge, in particular initiating or receiving good class discussions on the discussion board. Dick puts students into groups, has them exchange papers, and grades them on the feedback they give each other. Dick tried to use the same syllabus for his face to face and online classes, but it doesn't work well online. Because of this, if he teaches online again, he is going to use what he calls the "standard syllabus" but he would prefer not to as it "takes the heart out" of teaching the class. Dick states that the standard syllabus is "very practical for real-world research". He creates a separate website for his classes and two of his classes share the same page – although he thinks he made a mistake "in not making a separate page" for the two courses. He uses the website at more than one institution, which saves him time on course preparation. Dick uses Blackboard and does spend some time in class showing it to students as many haven't had any exposure at the early part of the community college career. He also has all students upload assignments to Blackboard, whether they meet face to face or online because "my hand writing is atrocious" and it is easier for him to provide feedback. In addition, the students and Dick both use Microsoft Word or Google Docs to provide peer feedback since that is easier than the peer review tool in Blackboard.

Dicks department has three chairs, one for each of the classes he teaches and another for teaching online however, he shares that they usually "leave you alone unless you need help". When he first started at the community college, he sat down with someone on a regular basis to

help him get adjusted to teaching. They discussed lesson plans, “how to handle discipline problems”, and even “how to make them interested in this because this PowerPoint is horribly boring”. His department chair helped him find someone after he asked her for help – the chair sent out an email asking for a volunteer. Dick has what he considers a light load of three or four classes a semester and he describes the load in this way.

Well if you think about it this way, in order to make forty grand a year you would have to teach twenty classes a year. So that’s six to eight classes a semester. Which is standard for a university lecturer position. Four classes per semester so I look at it kind of like that. And they have administrative duties on top of those four classes.

Dick also met with a colleague at a different institution who discussed classroom and assignment issues with him. In particular she helped him learn how to provide feedback as well as make sure the students are learning from his feedback.

Study Findings

The semi-structured interviews gave each participant the opportunity to discuss their views on assessment in their community college. The questions focused on their understanding of assessment, assessment activities, assessment policies, assessment roles, and work environment. This section discusses the common themes found in their responses that were coded via the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework as well as themes found through free coding. CHAT explores the interconnected nature of the subject, rules, tools, community, division of labor, and object; therefore, each section will build on the framework and display the connections. CHAT is an interconnected framework but through necessity the findings are presented in a linear fashion. The diagrams are included to show how the connections are built as the findings are discussed.

Thematic Findings

The Subject: Part-time Faculty

The subjects in this framework are the part-time faculty members at a community college. The coding highlighted the views of the subject and how these views define their assessment environment. Figure 5 shows an unconnected framework with the subject as the starting point of the learning system – before the connections are made.



Figure 5: CHAT Subject.

The participants were asked how they define assessment, which in itself is a very broad question as Hopper said “assessment means a lot of things to me. Because there are all different kinds of assessment”. Some of the participants asked if the definition was how they assess their students or how they themselves were assessed then they were given the opportunity to discuss both. All of them did focus on student assessment and only mentioned institutional assessment when prompted. Lovecraft gave a high-level definition to the question as follows:

When you identify an objective, fairly concrete, specific objective for the learner to have completed. And the create a set of question or measures that capture the degree to which that objective was met, and you can apply that to whether the department is reaching its

goals, or a student is gaining knowledge, define a primary objective, define a measure, and go from there.

The majority of the responses defined assessment as an understanding of classroom content, which can be seen in the following quotes. Assessment is:

- judging or evaluating what students know after they've been taught it (*Herbert*);
- I think it's important to give students the opportunity to prove what they know...to me it's important that they're learning the material (*Butler*);
- a combination of that effort they've put into the class and how they've grown and the concepts they've learned (*Dick*);
- whether or not the student has the concept of whatever the material is that you are trying to get across to them (*Matheson*);
- we're looking for content, looking for understanding...how well students have mastered the subject being taught (*Keene*);
- focusing on content, formal assessment that focuses on skills. Can a student put two sentences together, can a student apply the content they have to a knowledge-based question, can they apply to an analytical question...it is a way in which to gain information, a way for me to gain insights on how much information has been retained and how that information is being applied (*Hopper*);
- assessing what the student knows or doesn't know and how to get an end result...it almost boils down to grading, testing (*Atwood*);
- I'm more interested in their thinking, and their thinking process and I, I want to cause them to think critically and analytically (*Carroll*).

These participants want to discover if students are learning about the subject being taught. This content understanding is a significant focus for their assessment initiatives as well as higher level outcomes like critical thinking and communication.

Atwood believed that critical thinking involved application in that “anything I teach you, (you) should be able to apply”. In particular for Atwood she wanted to teach things that aren’t in the course text but “where they know what I think they should know not necessarily what you know, maybe even what the University things they should know”. Keene sees critical thinking as a step beyond understanding the content, as he says, “we assess content as well, but we also want to assess as well how to develop things like critical thinking skills”. Critical thinking also comes up several times in terms of the signature assignment that is provided by the department. The definition of critical thinking is only defined by one participant, Keene, as the act of presenting students with a problem that does not have a “plug and chug” solution but needs some analysis. King when asked to define assessment discussed the performative acts of assessment instead of providing a definition.

Overall, the participants defined assessment in terms of understanding content. This took the form of determining if students grasped concepts or were able to apply the content outside of the classroom. While some felt critical thinking is an important part of any assessment definition. Very little discussion occurred explicitly around student learning outcomes and how they play into assessment; however, it does seem that in general student learning is the primary component of assessment. The language of assessment the participants used centered on assignments, grades, feedback, content, and critical thinking. Language, such as learning outcomes, was not addressed by many of the participants, but it is implicit in some of the discussions.

Tools and Instruments

The tools or instruments in this study included technological – such as learning management systems – as well as educational tools such as rubrics. The tools can be imposed upon the subject or designed by the subject to engage with assessment in their institution. Figure 6 below shows the connection of tools with the subject and the first joint in the system.

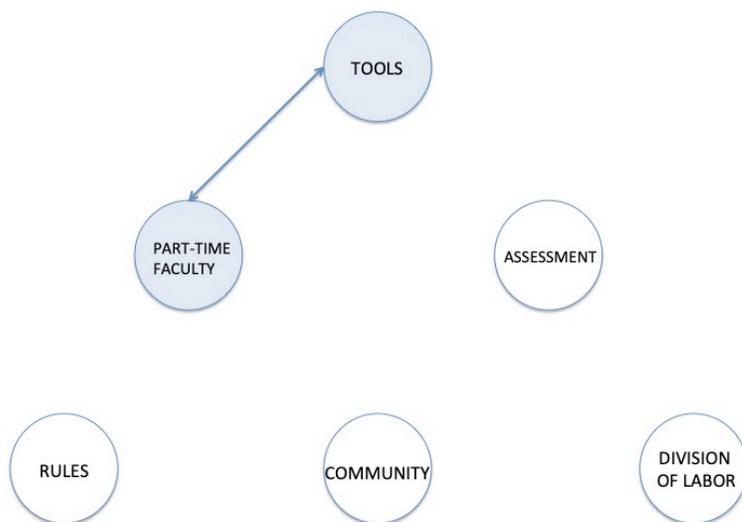


Figure 6: CHAT Tools.

Publisher test banks

A number of the online exams are questions generated by a publisher created test bank. Keene uses questions from Pearson publishing which also provides some of the textbooks and test banks used by his department. Keene does also insert his own questions into the tests because “the test banks don’t think of everything”. He does share that faculty should be careful when using the “random selection” part of the test bank, because if you haven’t taught all the chapters, students may get a question they’re not familiar with. It is very important, as Keene states, that the chapter content must “support the learning objectives in the syllabus, which comes from the college” so you should only test what you teach. Keene is currently editing a test bank for a publisher and he found a question and answer that was correct, but no longer

mentioned in the text. As he says “you can’t students on stuff that’s not there” so he just “deleted the question” from the bank. Lovecraft also uses a “test bank with the course work material in Blackboard for general quizzes, multiple choice, and that kind of stuff”, however he expresses concern that the items that come from the publisher “really vary in quality”. In fact, he states that he has had “a couple over the years, some where you could tell that there is not a quality control process, around the questions” a situation he has to mitigate by telling the students to send him those when they find one they believe to be incorrect. Kings exams are pulled “from chapter test banks across the board. Anybody who doesn’t do that is out of their mind. They give it to you why would I recreate the wheel?”. Herbert says his homework is standardized through Mathlab and has both positive as well as negative aspects. The negative is that he cannot grade the students process but the positive is that

it randomizes the questions so that even if the two kids are setting in class working on a computer next to each other they may or may not get the same question...it is nice because, it, they, some of my students will meet and work together. That’s great because now they are doing work together...in a sense I would rather they do that because now they are doing more math (Herbert).

Dick also uses Pearson test banks, but has had only negative reactions to the tool. As he says it’s not very useful...they figure out a way to get it done in one day. Otherwise it takes like an hour and half for every three classroom hours of them just looking at the screen and filling out these multiple-choice questions...the first time I read it I was like I don’t think I understand the question (Dick).

Atwood uses Pearson products SIMnet for her classes and likes that the quizzes are in the test bank, because now she spends “more time one-on-one”, which gives her more time to work with

her students. The publisher tools comprise a significant portion of assessments – particularly in regard to homework.

Blackboard

Blackboard is the learning management system of choice by all the participants although one mentioned that they had the option to choose Moodle. Blackboard is the grading system of record and the place where faculty keep their syllabus. Blackboard though does cause problems for the research participants. The list below highlights some of the concerns:

- Blackboard “automatically creates a curve” which was “discovered quite by accident”. Subsequently “anytime a student wants to see his or her grade all they have to do is ask me, but I don’t use Blackboard for grading” (Carroll);
- Blackboard doesn’t have any nuance and the participant can’t “move that grade any further than necessary” even if the instructors feels the student deserves a different grade (Hopper);
- Students interaction with Blackboard is a challenge since they “don’t know you’ve left them feedback” (Dick);
- Adjuncts may work with a variety of systems at different institutions and at times you can “forget things because they work differently” (Butler);
- Grading in the LMS can cause extra work because some tests are taken in other systems, but the grades have to be transferred to “Blackboard because it’s a grading system that goes through to the registrar’s office” (Atwood);
- Blackboard allows for audio transcription which can make it difficult for instructors to understand when students use voice texts because “letters are not capitalized, and the grammar is poor” making it hard for him to grade the assignment (Lovecraft).

There are also issues with Blackboard support since, as Butler stated, “I cannot call Blackboard, I can’t email them. I can only email IT, IT is not working. That pissed me off”. Matheson laughed about some of the Blackboard changes stating, “there is a new one every 6 months. 9.2 or whatever, or 9.1, or 7. I can’t remember exactly. I notice the color changes a little bit but everything else is the same”. Professional development is a component of helping with Blackboard support – there are several discussions of training which are highlighted in the community section of CHAT, as there is overlap between the various aspects of a CHAT learning system. One thing to note; however, is that many of the participants learned Blackboard on their own despite the availability of online professional development

STAR

The Success Through Academic Reporting or STAR system is another widely used tool at the institution. The STAR system is used as an early warning system for the institution to identify students who may need help to them successfully complete their courses. Herbert shares that faculty must submit reports at “4 weeks and one at 8 weeks” although it is a “pretty bare bones” system. Matheson echoes Herbert by saying that you click “satisfactory and not applicable or unsatisfactory” and states that adding comments is at the faculty members discretion. Lovecraft says that STAR is useful because the institution doesn’t have to scour Blackboard to intervene when students need help. The instructors who spoke about STAR do consider it to be an institutional mandate, but only three of the participants discussed the system by name. WebAdvisor is another piece of mandated technology that is used to keep attendance at the institution. All of the participants discussed the necessity of keeping attendance – often attendance was viewed as vital to the position. LearnerWeb was mentioned by several of the participants – it is the professional development site for the institution and is available online. All of the faculty have access to the system, which has online modules as well as a list of

available, in-person classes. LearnSmart is a third-party tool created by McGraw-Hill that provides online quizzes and homework assignments much like the Pearson products mentioned earlier. King states that it “feeds through Blackboard” and is built off of the textbook so students can take quizzes based on each chapter. SIMnet and SAM are another set of third-party tools development by Pearson - tools used by Atwood to provide simulations and quizzes for her students. SIMnet does not integrate into Blackboard so Atwood has to copy all the individual student grades from one system into the other.

Rubrics

Rubrics are another tool that participants widely used. Carroll didn’t start out using a rubric, but found that he was “grading student papers rather arbitrarily” so now everything has a rubric and he gives it back to the student with each assignment. Lovecraft, on the other hand, doesn’t “use a lot of them – to be honest I just don’t have the time”. Hopper uses them but also find that they “take hours to do” and require a lot of preparation, however, she likes that they serve as the “justification” for a grade thus eliminating difficult conversations with students. Hopper also provides a caveat when using a rubric in that there should be “wiggle room”, because “a hard rubric...can be detrimental to someone’s grade”. Hopper doesn’t want the rubric to hurt the students – she only wants it to help. Butler created the rubric that is now “standard” for her department – it was one she was already using and the department wanted it for everyone. In addition, the rubric when placed in Blackboard doesn’t let her “maneuver around” in that she may want to alter the grade based on other aspects of the student’s performance. She also found that students preferred a rubric – she was asked “do you have a rubric for that” (Butler) and subsequently created one for a class. The signature assignment also has a rubric, which Herbert states is “created for them”. Matheson also uses a rubric for his quizzes as well as for Blackboard discussions, in addition, the rubric is built into Blackboard.

Dick takes a different stance toward rubrics and while about 60% of his assignments have them, and he shows it to the students he doesn't "grade by it ...because I recognize what I'm looking for". Butler, along with Carroll, spends a lot of time creating rubrics and her signature assignment rubric was eventually used by her department. The rubrics are another tool that crosses into other aspects of CHAT such as rules and community, but the tool is discussed by the majority of participants.

Summary

Other tools that were discussed by participants included WIX which allows the users to create websites. Dick finds it useful and has one page that links to information for all the classes he teaches regardless of institution while Matheson discussed using the screen recording tool Panopto on a trial basis. King also uses his iPad to record student videos and upload them to his PC or Blackboard. The recordings can be reviewed by students and may be reviewed by the signature assignment team if they have questions. These tools can be a challenge because there is an expectation that the part-time faculty know how to use the technologies as well as educational instruments like rubrics. While there may be some professional development modules few of the participants were able to use them. Some even go to the developer sites instead of using the tools available to them. In addition, they have to use separate systems to essentially do their jobs – providing assignments, grades, feedback, among other items the students, department, and institution expect.

Rules

The rules in a CHAT system are those implicit and explicit norms with which the subjects move through the system. The rules can include institution and departmental policies/procedures, governance, hiring, as well as implicit rules such as how to interact with

colleagues. Figure 7 below shows how the CHAT system is connected to Subject, Tools, and Rules.

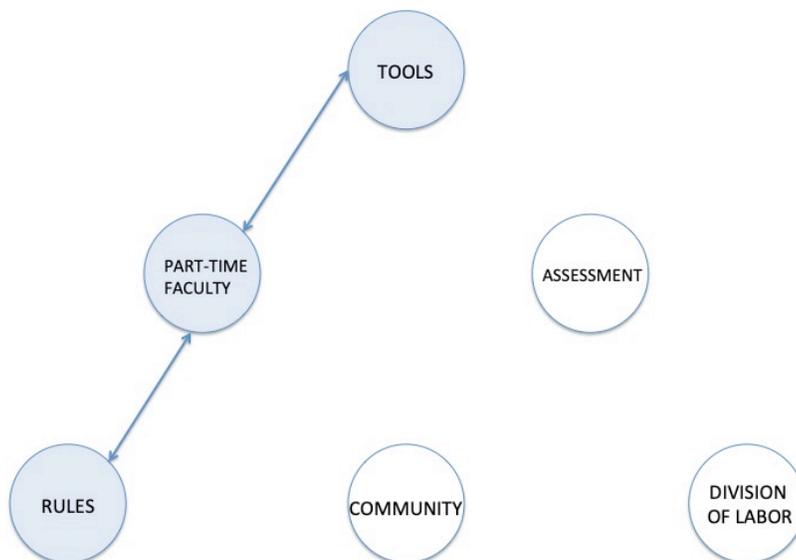


Figure 7: CHAT Rules.

One of the institutional mandates is the signature assignment that comes with a rubric created by the institution, which is then given to each department. The departments then decide how to share the information with their faculty and how the faculty should enact the assignment. There is little room to maneuver within this assignment as Herbert describes:

It's not designed to be a major, major project. And as a matter of fact, I give them time in class to do it and I think the other instructors do as well. I don't know how, I don't know how seriously the instructors take it. Including myself. Because, for instance I did ask at one point, I said can I change and make it like a 20% project and make it a full semester project to where they will really, and I was told nope. 5% period. And you know 5%, your average student is not that concerned about it.

This leads him to believe the assignment is not that important to the department or the student. King stated that for the signature assignment the department designated people to manage the

assignment and the rollout. Hopper was told that the department had to have “one common assessment across the board and that assessment (should) include some type of research”.

Lovecraft says his assignment “is now imported into Blackboard and you are required to use it” and “the college requires that it be 10% of the grade”. Carroll talked about the assigned as being imposed on him because “it’s come to their attention that not a lot of emphasis in out particular discipline, not a lot of emphasis is being made on theoretical analysis. So, they’re imposing some kind of process whereby the instructors will require that the student do this”. Butler says that her department is interested in “having a standardized assessment for at least one of our assignments” and she created the rubric for this assessment. Dick says that “the division head sends out a very specific requirement and, and it’s explained line for line what she wants. And so, I imagine most people use that one. And I’ve used it and not used it”. He also explains that for this assignment “we actually have to import specific grading data into our Blackboard shell for this assignment” (Dick). The mandated assignment is used regularly but it doesn’t appear that many of the participants consider it very important or interesting. It is an add on that they all follow but have little interest in the outcomes. The assignment is still relatively new so the outcome data may not be available, but none of the participants expressed an interest in knowing how the scores looked across classes.

The gradebook is a very specific item that is mandated by the institution. Hopper shared that:

you had to be very specific about your gradebook. Because they are pulling it across the entire system, and you have to have it this way. A lot of time and effort and training goes into making sure that you have this perfect in your gradebook so when you upload your grade, they can pull it for their data processing.

Hopper also shared that the gradebook can get in the way as she states with “an online gradebook I can’t move that grade any further than necessary...you’ve got a 75 – I can’t move that to a B...I just know that you really are B work, but I just can’t do that”. Atwood likes that she has “total control of gradebook” so she can help students who may have trouble getting an item in on time; however, since a lot of her work is initially graded in SIMnet she has to transfer the grades to Blackboard for “the registrar’s office”. Dick finds Blackboard is intuitive for “grading” and has no problems using the tool. Carroll, however, refuses to use the LMS for anything until the end of class stating that if “anyone wants to know their grade they can come ask me”.

Attendance is another area that came up with all the participants in that it is a significant part of their classes. Herbert describe college policy as saying if a student misses “4 classes in a row they are dropped” and that he “can’t just ignore that”. Participants had the following comments about attendance:

- They were more concerned and are still 100% concerned with attendance. I would get numerous emails about the census day. I mean numerous, and I mean they always tied it to funding, this is tied to funding, this is tied to funding and that was the only thing they cared about. And if my attendance was not up to date, I would get constant emails about it (Hopper);
- You, you are required to, and this is a state requirement I believe, and this is for funding. The first four classes are required – if a student missed one of the first four classes they are automatically dropped. If a student misses the first four classes, then they are not enrolled. But every class we enter into an attendance record and it is electronic. And so, we monitor attendance everybody is free to grade on attendance and I add that as 5%. You know if you miss and we say in the syllabus that if you miss 8 hours of class, we can drop you – I always say a

grade. And I do, I mean I will use that as a judgement. I won't always apply it, but I can. But the school monitors it very closely (King);

- The only expectations that raises anybody's interest are reporting deadlines that apply across the board, attendance reporting on a timely basis (Keene);
- The attendance requirements are standardized for the institution. It's really based on financial aid model. If we make it standard across the board nobody's treated unfairly so you can't miss more than two consecutive weeks (Atwood).

Some of the participants grade on attendance so it becomes a part of what they consider their assessment process and one has a weekly quiz that is used to count attendance. This is a very important part of the classroom process as defined by the institution. It is even considered important enough to have mandatory, yearly professional development for all faculty.

Other participants discussed that departmentally they have to have a minimum number of assignments one of which should be the signature assignment. Herbert discusses that he "has to give a final" but he suspects" he could get away with not doing it while Lovecraft doesn't give a final to his students. The choice of a final is a departmental decision not an institutional one. Dick doesn't follow all the requirements for his classes because he feels "like I know how to teach this class really well" as he says, I have a lot of freedom but these "are the things if I screwed up, I would probably not be teaching".

There seems to be an implicit realization that if you are willing to go along with the organization you do not have too many rules to worry about. As Herbert said, "they've never really given me any static...I was willing to do the department thing if that's what they want me to do". Dick has found that "as long as you get the students through and don't cause a big stink, you're ok". Keene refers to it as the "don't make waves theory" because if you aren't noticed you can keep doing what you feel is important for your class.

An interesting component that participants discussed was the expectation of a classroom assessment from their leaders – an expectation that rarely if ever occurred. Butler states that she has “never even had a performance review. At all the other places like a year of teaching I would have had a performance review”. Herbert says that “I don’t know if this is by design, I don’t know if this is something that maybe slipped through the cracks, but I’ve only been observed twice in 4.5 years”. Keene was asked to “fill out this form” and then he spent some time with the department chair to discuss. He stated that the chair was not as comfortable doing the review as other institutions where he taught. Dick stated that he has never been evaluated for a face-to-face class but he “did get evaluated for (his) online class”. Carroll says his “discipline chair is supposed to periodically sit in the classroom and observe the instructor” but instead “they keep saying I’ve got to go to your class, but they never show up”. It is worthwhile to note that these evaluations are mandated by the college, but their actual performance appears to be rare.

Community

CHAT explores the community aspect which includes the system environment – which in this case is the workplace, as well as, interaction with other members of the community college at both the departmental and institutional level. In addition, it includes the larger community whom the participants turn to for help. Figure 8 below shows how the areas of CHAT are interacting across the system.

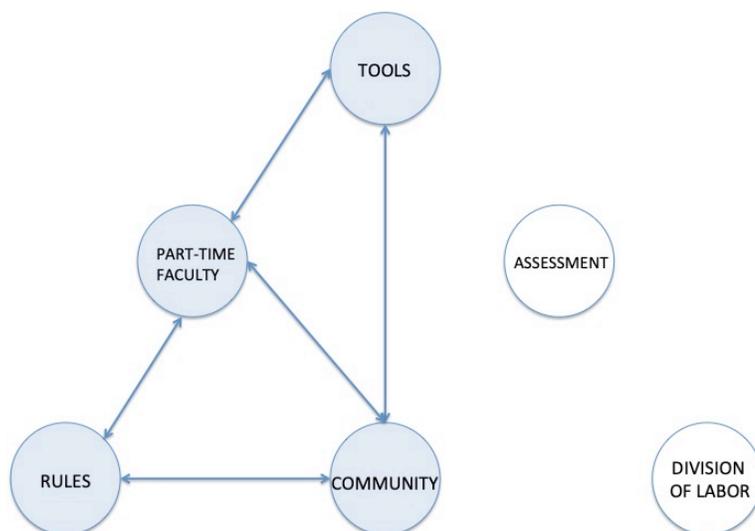


Figure 8: CHAT Community.

The community aspect for part-time faculty includes the physical space as well as interactions with colleagues, departmental leaders, and institutional leaders. The physical environment is spread across multiple campuses in a large urban area. When Hopper discussed attending departmental meetings, she was unable to go because she “was teaching between different places”. Herbert has taught at several campuses but many of the smaller campuses don’t have the same resources as the main campus, for example, he says that if he isn’t teaching at the primary campus “I’m using a whiteboard and markers” instead of document cameras. However, if Herbert needs a computer, he said that there is a “touch down station” at each campus for part-time faculty to use. Carroll echoes Herbert’s comment but adds that it can be hard to “actually meet with a student” because the touch down stations are in communal spaces. Hopper also mentions that the communal spaces have printers so you can “do your work and get out”, while Lovecraft states “I don’t expect an office, but I have not had consistent access to any kind of a faculty area”.

Departmental interactions were also a talking point among many of the participants as shown below:

- I'm invited to everything, I'm invited to department meetings, I'm invited to department social gatherings, I just don't have time to go (Hopper);
- I can always email my program chair. She'll usually get back to me very, very quickly. Other than that, I couldn't even tell you who the full-time instructors are. I mean I know their names because I see it in the emails, but I haven't met some of them face to face (Matheson);
- It's pretty friendly and a pretty easy group to work with. It's pretty collegial it's not such a huge department that you wouldn't know everybody (Herbert);
- The nice thing is that so many of us adjuncts, there's always somebody else who's been up later than me trying to figure it out and I'll send an email I'm like, just don't know somebody will send back an email saying this is what it is (Atwood);
- I communicate with our chair from time to time we email a lot and ask for suggestions (Lovecraft);
- We don't really have much of an opportunity to interact with colleagues. I know in that department there is I think there's a weekly meeting for faculty and staff, but they are usually happening when I'm in the classroom. Or I'm not at the school – so it's not really convenient for me to be involved. And my input hasn't been asked for (Carroll);
- If I email on a Sunday, he (my chair) will email be back saying thanks I got it. I'm so fortunate to work with him (Butler);
- As far as getting ahead and just getting involved with the community it's pretty impossible. Because there is not really one there (Dick);

While the majority of the comments are positive there is also a sense of isolation in that the participants tend to speak with colleagues mainly over email. There are opportunities to attend meetings but because of the nature of part-time work – working evenings and other jobs – they are difficult for the participants to attend. Matheson joined a Facebook group associated with the Babb group, an organization that helps part-time faculty members find positions. This group allows him to “bounce ideas and they kind of vent sometimes” especially in situations like this one Matheson describes:

I don't have a lot of time can you guys give me some ideas on what to do because I'm always given last minute information and I'm given the material and I don't have a lot of time to spend on it as far as what I would like to do.

The participants all feel that they have a significant amount of autonomy in their classrooms, but they all had some comments on being an adjunct in other ways as well. Hopper shares that “adjuncting is not convenient...you have to be flexible”. Keene says that “it is about 95% autonomous, the instructor can do what he or she wishes to do”, while Atwood shares that “adjuncts have the opportunity to have their say”. Lovecraft believes that “the department is more interested in just administrative issues, grade changes and things like that than they are in real supervision of instructors”. Lovecraft goes on to say that “lecturers could use more supervision – they could make it easier for them to learn – the meetings are about administration – I think there could be meetings about teaching”. King says that he has “complete freedom” and that he is “very impressed with (the institution) and their overall, just running as a business”.

There are also some professional development opportunities available to part-time faculty that the participants discussed. Hopper is “invited to participate in any professional development opportunities, especially when it comes to learning content, learning management content or digital”. Matheson took a “two or three week long” course on how to teach online” while

Herbert discussed that he has some professional development requirements such as “attendance...Title IX” and “safety”. Dick attended a course similar to Matheson, which allowed him to get “certified as a part-time teacher” but followed up by saying it can be hard to attend but “when there’s a stipend involved” it is easier to take the time.

Division of Labor

CHAT defines the division of labor as the manner in which work is split among the actors in the system. This is also influenced by the way the institution assigns classes, hires faculty, as well as how items are shared among colleagues. Figure 9 displays the last mediating factor in the CHAT framework.

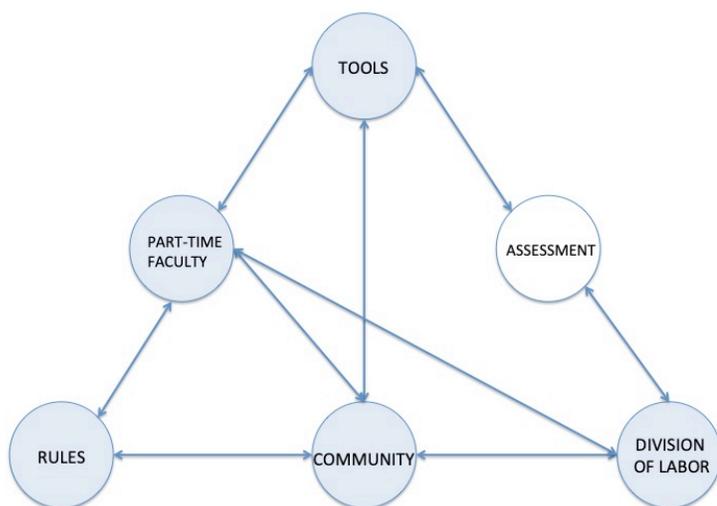


Figure 9: CHAT Division of Labor.

Hiring and course load is an important part of the division of labor for the community college and a lot of responsibility for teaching is on the part-time faculty. In addition, pay has to be considered when discussing division of labor since part-time and full-time faculty are paid at different rates and benefit structure. Herbert describes his experience in this way:

You know how the community college setup is, they rarely hire into a full-time slot.

They almost always hire part-timers and then you work your way up and you apply from

within. For most of '16 and '17 I was carrying a full load. Like I was teaching five classes – because you know they are only supposed to give you 29.5 hours and they were doing something with the books, they were figuring out some kind of waiver where I was carrying 35 or 36 hours carrying 5 classes a semester. So, I was essentially full-time but of course I wasn't faculty, so I wasn't getting benefits or anything like that.

Essentially a large portion of full-time labor was being given to a part-time employee without the support or benefits that full-time faculty receive. Hopper got tired of teaching “three classes and making the equivalent of a class” at a four-year institution, as she said, “it was not sustainable”. Carroll applied for a position and then “received an email asking if I would be interested in teaching a couple of course, a couple of sections” with no interview required. Butler had a similar situation in which she applied and didn't hear anything until “the class made, and you can pick up the book”. Dick is put into classes he is not prepared for, for example, he was asked to teach one particular class that he had never taught before and was told “it is pretty easy just follow the book. I really need a class this semester and it's super late”. The hiring process epitomizes the labor needs of the organization and how they fall on part-time faculty. Both Dick and Herbert at various times have been asked to teach developmental courses because as Herbert states “they're not hiring the developmental full-time positions – they are kind of going away from that”.

Time plays a large part in how work is performed as well. Herbert says that full-time faculty have a full load at approximately five classes a semester. The majority of participants in this study teach at least three classes a semester. The full-time faculty also attend faculty, departmental, and institutional meetings, as well as, participate on various committees. While the part-time faculty are invited to attend faculty meetings, they are rarely able to do so. Time is another aspect that participants discussed during the interviews. Time involves their ability to

attend meetings, their ability to get their work done and their ability to meet with students.

Below are comments many of the participants shared about the time they spend or don't have time to spend in the community:

- A mid-term is going to take me eight hours to grade... I would say that (the institution) has done a very good job of training people you just have to find the people who have the time to be able to do it and want to do it (Hopper);
- here is no really time to prep and do a lot...I would like more time (Matheson);
- I spend five or ten hours on class most weeks (Atwood);
- Probably maybe ten hours more or less. Of course, in the two or three weeks leading up to the start of the semester I'll put in a good 15 hours a week (Lovecraft);
- I would say probably no fewer that forty hours a week (Carroll).

Given the autonomy and isolation the participants described in previous sections there is not a lot of shared labor. The participants take on a good amount of the work themselves, but there are some things that are shared. For example, Hopper describes "a whole group of people who (are) there to help you design your entire curriculum" and shares that there are "entire fields of people" who are just there to help you understand the community. King says that his department manages his syllabus in that he writes his "own syllabi but they will review them". When discussing tools earlier many of the participants share Blackboard shells, assignments, and syllabi as well.

Lastly the participants discussed their pay which does have an impact on their instruction. Lovecraft has worked at the institution for a while and said:

They offered full time a couple of times over the years, but the pay isn't worth it. They used to have twelve months of pay for two academic semesters, paid through the summer

and they stopped that about ten years ago...the full-time thing lost its luster when you signed a contract for a semester, and you're paid in the semester. But in the summer unless you're teaching, you are not paid at all. I know some of the full-timers were thinking, well that's more of a challenge. So, the full-time lost its appeal because of the level of pay and also because of that.

Dick describes the situation this way “well if you think about it this way, in order to make forty grand a year you would have to teach twenty classes a year. So that's six to eight classes a semester”. King has a different take and says this “I think I would take a pay cut if I became full-time. But I really think it would be a pay cut based on the way I've pieced together the eight or nine classes I don't think I would make the same”. Hopper stated that “they pay me to teach they don't pay me to grade” which brings an interesting perspective to the pay structure. This raises questions about what faculty are actually paid to do – is it just teaching the course, is assessment a part of teaching, or is it an addition to being in the classroom? Hopper's comments also sum up issues of adjunct pay in this way, “the reality is you're not going to make any money doing it you are going to sacrifice other things in order to adjunct. And you will, it is, indentured servitude”.

The Object: Assessment

The object in the CHAT framework is what is produced or practiced when the subject moves through the activity system and is informed by aspects of the framework. The object is a culmination of all aspects of the system and how they interact with each within the system.

Figure 10 shows the entire system in action with all aspects in play.

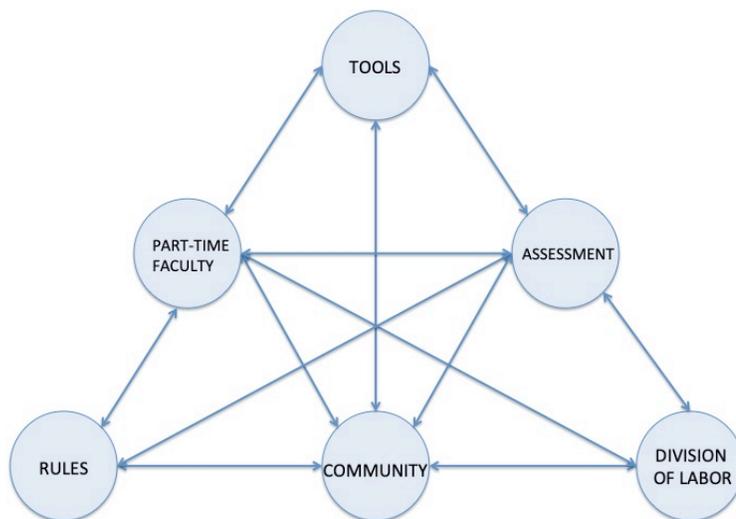


Figure 10: CHAT Object.

The participants discussed a variety of assessment activities including: online quizzes, exams, and homework; in class assignments; lab assignments; group projects; e-portfolios; papers; peer-review; hand written exams, differentiated assignments. Exams and quizzes are a big portion of the activities performed by the participants.

A number of the assignments are tests that include multiple choice, true/false, problem solving, and short answer, with a portion of them delivered online. Some of the participants discussed how they used these types of tests and their interactions with the tools that help them create the assessments. Herbert creates his tests by hand which he considers “old school” and the include problems, multiple choice and true/false questions. As Herbert says:

one of the nice things about me writing my own tests is I give them back to the kids...if I was giving a standardized department test, I couldn't do that. I would have to take them back...if I write my own, I give it to them...and since I'm writing a new one every time anyway, I don't care if they have it or not.

Herbert does this type of assessment and creates his exams completely by hand. In his classes he wants to grade on process as well as product, which test banks do not allow him to do. He does

recognize that multiple choice is easier as he says “because of the grading things – it is easier to grade as a scantron. I’ve never been a big fan of that...you can game a multiple-choice test”.

Herbert believes his assessment methods allows him to see “more of an effort on these guys parts to see more of their work and actually work it out” an option not afforded in an online test.

Matheson uses primarily “multiple choice, and true and false” questions during the semester and adds some “short answer” to the final as well as a couple of “short essay opportunities to gain extra credit”. King has a short exam for each chapter covered in the text, as well as, a final exam. His exams are “textbook multiple-choice questions” with some questions he writes as well – but he does say that he primarily uses the “textbook questions”. The chapter quizzes are judged by completion, so if they finish the quiz King will give them all the points associated with the exam.

Butler recently prepared an online quiz and had her students do “their final online for the first time” which was multiple choice. She usually creates her own questions and, like Herbert, usually has them turned in during class, but she wanted to try the online environment. Butler doesn’t like multiple choice as it’s “the lowest on your Bloom’s Taxonomy scale” so she does add other types of activities in her course. Keene uses “multiple choice questions” because he gets “a fairly good measure” of his students’ knowledge. The majority of his assessment activity comes from “online homework systems”, which is practical in that it “gives them (the student) immediate feedback”. This type of assessment is also helpful to his area of study which does not lend itself to “papers or essays”. Dick also uses a test bank in his labs but as he states, “it’s multiple choice question on stuff about writing and so it’s not very useful”. The questions can even be confusing to Dick - he gave one example then said, “the first time I read it I was like I don’t think I understand the question”.

There are other assignments used by part time faculty in addition to the types of testing discussed in the previous section. Carroll prefers a writing intensive form of assessment, so he has student do “twelve observations, 350 words” and the total number of points he offers is 125 so his “students don’t have to ask for extra credit”. King’s students have to do five speeches in class which he videotapes. King then has the students work in groups of five to evaluate each other after a speech – he then gives the student all the feedback to help them understand how they were perceived. Butler allows students to choose from a variety of modalities – to help them find one that suits their academic strengths. She states that students can “write a paper...do like PowerPoint or a project, they can build something, they can draw something”. Dick has students do an ethnography because he is “trying to show them that their personal experience and anecdotal evidence is worth something” and he says it is the only assessment that students say to him “don’t get rid of this one”.

The participants invariably discussed the STAR report or the Success Through Academic Reporting initiative at their institution. STAR is an online progress report system that faculty have to use three times a semester. Herbert describes it this way:

It is online based, and we go in and unsatisfactory, satisfactory, above average, or meeting standards, I forget what they are called but it is basically not good, good, great. They’re named better than that but that is what they are. We do them, so for instance for the 16-week classes I’ll do one in about a week. You do one at 4 weeks and one at 8 weeks. I mean it’s very, you go in there, look up (the student), meeting standards and if I want to put a couple of comments I can. I tend to usually do but you don’t have to. If (the student) is not meeting standards than there is a small checklist of things, why. Missing assignments, assessing absences, and but it’s not, it’s pretty bare bones.

Matheson describes STAR in a similar way but finds it hard to comply with at times:

At the beginning it is really hard, I mean like two weeks in we are being asked to do this and two weeks in I'm still learning their names never mind what else is going on.

Towards the mid-term it is a little bit easier. They have half of the casework completed – the have half of the exams so I can kind of tell, I mean they haven't turned in or they are missing assignments on a regular basis. And you know they are not doing too well on exams so for those students who are like that I can put an unsatisfactory with comments on here is what you can do to improve and that goes to the student.

Lovecraft uses STAR as another way to provide feedback to students and these reports are “sent out repeatedly” as a type of early warning system if a student is having problems. This system is required by the institution, but only three of the participants discussed it openly as something they must do.

The other required assessment that participants discussed was the signature assignment or core competency initiative at the institution. Herbert described it as “the same kind of thing as common core” where every faculty member has to give the same assignment to the same classes. The assignments may differ across departments, but everyone has to participate. The faculty member has to grade the assignment as they would any other; however, they also have to give this assignment a grade from zero to four as well. King aligns the one to four grade with his regular grading so, for example, a grade of 90 or higher will get a four, 80 to 89 will get a three, and so on. King may also have to submit more information if he is asked, for example, “they also may ask me to submit recordings” of the assessment activities he videos so “they can go back and have a basis” for the grade. Lovecraft stated that the college requirement for this assignment was something he was already doing, but now it has to be “ten percent of the grade at least”. He says that the new assessment is imported in Blackboard and “you are required to use it” but that this is his first mandated assessment. Dick said that “the division head sent out a very specific

requirement and it's explained line for line what she wants...I've used it and not use it" but "this one is kind of interesting because we actually have to import specific grading data into our blackboard shell for this assignment". Hopper discussed the need for one common assessment that "came top down" because "everybody needed to focus on digital learning skills, 21st Century skills, writing skills, pretty much this is the basic minimum that every student that graduates, that takes a class at (the institution) needs to master". Matheson stated that "we've seen core competencies built into the syllabus or syllabi for quite a while" but "last semester was the first time they actually started collecting results". Butler has an interesting situation in that she has learning objectives set by the state and that "these are the objectives you are going to meet" and that "one of our learning objectives actually meets one of the colleges...we have, have to submit our assignment specifically for that" objective. Carroll says that in the past there has not been much attention given to "theoretical analysis" but "they're imposing some kind of process whereby the instructors will require that the student do this". This is a source of irritation for Carroll since he is already doing something similar, but has yet to hear from the department chair about how he has to enact the new assignment as he says, "I can hardly wait to find out what that is going to be".

Only two participants – Atwood and Keene - didn't explicitly mention the signature assignment; however, Atwood does share that the department does have a core competency now that is "critical thinking".

Summary

This chapter shared the participant data as they discussed their understandings of assessment at their community college. This was followed by a discussion of each element of the CHAT framework. While the framework is discussed in a linear fashion the diagrams were

developed to show the interactivity of the framework. Aspects of each area can also cross into other areas of the system – the CHAT framework exposes how the system impacts the subjects.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore how part-time community college faculty perceive their assessment environment and subsequently enact assessment. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) provides a framework that helps us understand the variety of ways a system operates. In order to answer the research questions, the data included document analysis and ten part-time community college faculty member interviews. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed using the CHAT framework. After the coding was complete themes were identified and were used to answer the research questions. This chapter answers each research question and then discusses how these findings fit into the current literature. This is followed by a discussion of the research, implications for theory, practice, and research, along with final thoughts on the research.

Research Questions

How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the assessment environment within their community college?

Part-time community college faculty members experience and perceive the assessment system in a non-linear fashion. Each of the areas inform and are informed by the other – with all of these interactions leading to an assessment outcome or object. Figure 11 below shows the assessment environment as seen through the CHAT framework – within each circle are examples from the findings as they relate to the coded areas. Each area of the assessment environment is described through the lens of the part-time faculty members interviewed for this research. There are instances where the descriptions overlap in areas that are indicative of an assessment environment where the parts at times flow through the various parts of the framework.

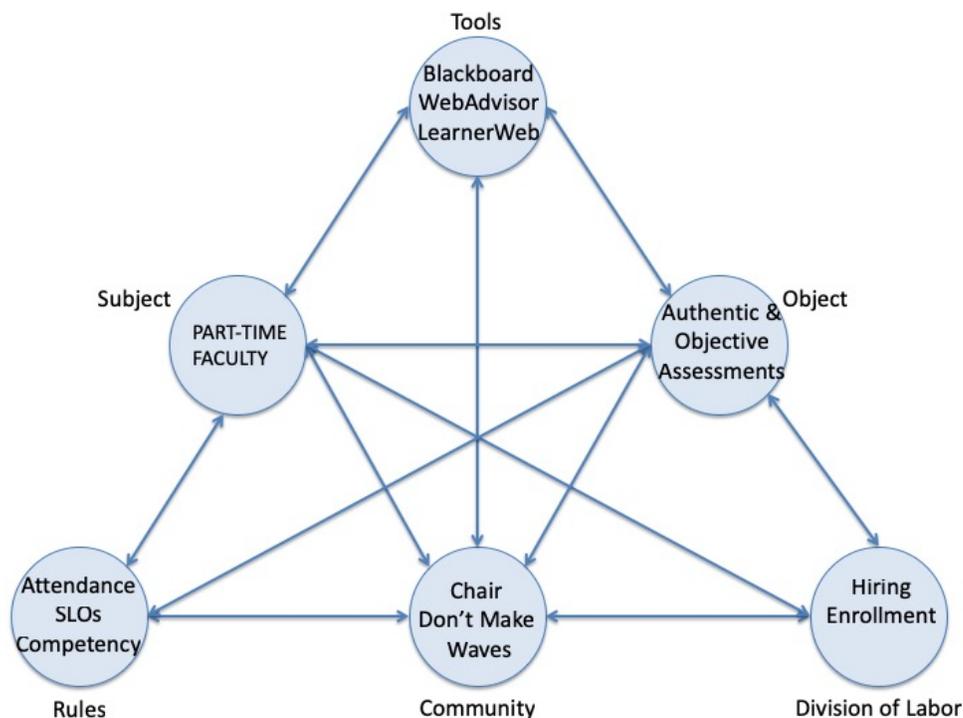


Figure 11: CHAT Institutional Assessment System.

Division of Labor

The participants in this study have worked for the institution for varying lengths of time – some with unbroken semesters and others hired back periodically. However, many of them had a story about their hiring that displays the indifferent nature of obtaining a part-time faculty position. Here are some examples of the ways these participants were introduced to their environment:

- I applied and never heard anything...then I called, and they said you have a class...so then came the first day of the class...it was there's your students, you should take attendance (Atwood);
- I got this email that somehow ended up in my junk mail...they were asking me if I was still interested because there was a course...then I don't hear anything and then I hear well the class made and you can pick up the book (Butler);

- I met the chair of the department and we got to talking and he said would you want to teach a class for me (Herbert);
- I applied and then they've used me every semester (King);
- I knew the department chair (Keene);
- I applied to teach and this I wasn't hired and then I suddenly got an email from the discipline chair asking if I would be interested in teaching a couple of courses (Carroll).

None of the participants listed above discussed having an interview – not even a phone call to discuss job expectations. Some of the participants knew a department chair that facilitated the hiring while others applied in a more traditional fashion. In particular, those that applied through the traditional hiring process were not asked to interview instead they received an email telling them what classes they would be teaching that semester. These emails at times came a day or two before classes started and while that is unfortunately common for part-time faculty it does put the class off to a chaotic start.

Rules

The chaotic start is exacerbated by the rules and norms that are required of part-time faculty members. The first of which is to take attendance, Keene sums it up nicely by stating that “the only expectations that raises anybody’s interest are reporting deadlines that apply across the board, attendance reporting on a timely basis”. In some cases, over the course of a few hours a part-time faculty member has to find out who their students are, how to note their attendance, and what they are expected to teach. Atwood even uses a quiz to ensure attendance in her online classes. Attendance was discussed by all the participants and in particular it’s importance to the institution. Hopper shared that she gets numerous emails reminding her to take care of attendance, especially if she misses a day. While attendance is not an assessment requirement

the time it takes to maintain attendance and read the accompanying emails is time away from other classroom activities.

Classroom evaluations are another activity that the participants expected but didn't receive. While it may cross other areas, it is an institutional policy that all part-time faculty are reviewed at least once per academic year. New part-time faculty are supposed to be reviewed in their first semester of teaching. Only two of the participants stated that they had been reviewed while teaching and the others were quite surprised they had not been evaluated. A part of evaluating classroom activities can include providing feedback on the syllabus and assignments. King was asked to turn in his syllabus for review, but others would often base theirs on another instructor's syllabus. The reason the syllabus is important is because it highlights the departmental student learning outcomes (SLOs).

Outcomes

SLOs are set by the department and are one of the items that faculty – either full- or part-time cannot change. But given the lack of communication, or even oversight, the part-time faculty may not be aware of their importance to the institution. Only three of the participants discussed student learning outcomes in any fashion. Butler spends a good deal of time ensuring that the syllabus assignments “match the course objectives” while Dick even puts student learning outcomes from other institutions on his syllabus so the students “can compare them”. Keene and Butler also shared that the outcomes are set by the department. However, no one is aware of what happens with the outcomes data, they do not know of any reports, or how outcomes assessment impacts the institution – if at all.

Another outcome that is mandated by the institution is the signature assignment or core competency. This is a new initiative that focuses on skills such as critical thinking and communication. The institution created the skill component and then worked with departments

to determine which component was appropriate for their courses. Each class has a signature assignment with the core competency designed into the activity. The departments determine how much the assignment counts in each class - % of grade – and gives that to the faculty. In addition to the traditional grade that the instructor will give they also have to grade the assignment on a scale of 1 to 4. This data is recorded in the gradebook along with the traditional grade – students can see both grades in the system. The institution then harvests the data for future use.

Community

The participants learn about these rules primarily from the department chairs as they are their primary contact upon hiring. The chairs perform the hiring process and they serve as the main source of contact for the participants. In essence, outside of the students, the chairs are their main source of community while they are working within the system. Seven of the participants use their department or discipline chair as their main source of information about anything. Lovecraft “emails a lot”, Butler says that if she emails “on a Sunday he will email me back”, and Matheson says, “I can always email my program chair...and she’ll give me feedback”. While emails with the department chair are the primary source of community many of the participants stated that they can attend faculty meetings if they wish or they may speak with colleagues if they are in the office. As they try to work through the assessment system there is very little community from whom they can learn.

Communication about initiatives tend to be one way with little occurring beyond emails. For the signature assignment described earlier the majority of faculty were told via email and given the rubric the same way. With the exception of King there were no substantive communications about the new assignment – his department assigned someone as a project coordinator. The coordinator then offered facilitated sessions that were timed so both day and

evening faculty could attend. That is the only formal communication anyone received about the project although there is some thought that the findings will be released at the appropriate time.

Tools

The grading system is in the Blackboard Learning Management System and it is a mandated tool for all faculty. The LMS hosts the grades, the syllabus, and can provide links to various institutional tools such as test banks – where a variety of assessment occurs. Blackboard is the gateway for the students to determine how they are doing in a course, understand the syllabus, and upload assignments. In addition, the part-time faculty must use WebAdvisor – the attendance system. The importance of this tool can't be underrated as it is the only tool that requires mandatory professional development via a computer-based learning module. Regular emails go out to faculty to ensure that they are keeping attendance up. One participant has yet another system for her students to perform simulations and take quizzes; however, it does not integrate with the Blackboard system, so the faculty member has to enter all of her grades into Blackboard from SIMnet. This is in addition to the dual grading system required for the signature assignment – so at least one participant is pulling grades from multiple systems. Which brings to light the third system used for assessment - the Success Through Academic Reporting, or STAR, system. This system is an early warning system for the students – faculty members enter in information about their students at prescribed times of the year. These reports are uploaded to the system and some of the information is shared with students – it is yet another system that faculty need to use.

Lastly, publisher test banks are a major part of the assessment environment. Every participant discussed how these test banks were used to perform homework, quizzes, and even significant tests. They are included with the textbook for the class and the textbooks often come

with PowerPoints and other classroom materials that faculty members can use when developing their activities and facilitation.

Summary

Part-time faculty perceive the assessment environment as one of isolation, prescription, and technology. The faculty do not have a lot of interaction with the larger community beyond their department chairs. They rarely have the ability to attend faculty meetings or campus events due to their work schedules or get to know their fellow faculty members. While there are some shared spaces for part-time faculty to sit while outside of class they are often spread across several campuses and they rarely cross paths with each other. The prescriptive aspects are prevalent in the outcomes – in the signature assignment, the STAR early warning system, and the student learning outcomes. Part-time faculty have little to no input into the creation, implementation, and analysis of these assessment products. Lastly, they are inundated with a number of technologies that come with little or no training – such as Blackboard and publisher test banks. These technologies sometimes integrate but at other times they cause the faculty to perform dual work. Even the signature assignment has technological implications because it requires grades be entered into the system to meet student, departmental and institutional needs.

How do part-time community college faculty perceive and describe the nature of their engagement with assessment initiatives at their community college?

Part-time community college faculty members engage with the assessment system from within their classroom. Their engagement is examined through the CHAT framework to see how they work through the assessment environment. Each of the areas inform and are informed by the other – with all of these interactions leading to an assessment outcome or object. Figure 10 below shows how part-time faculty members engage with their assessment environment. Each aspect of the engagement is described through the lens of the part-time faculty members

interviewed for this research. Aspects of their engagement in the classrooms may overlap with the other assessment areas in the environment. For example, the signature assignment is an institutional object but it also a classroom rule that all faculty must perform. Examples of some of the engagement activities are displayed in the circles below.

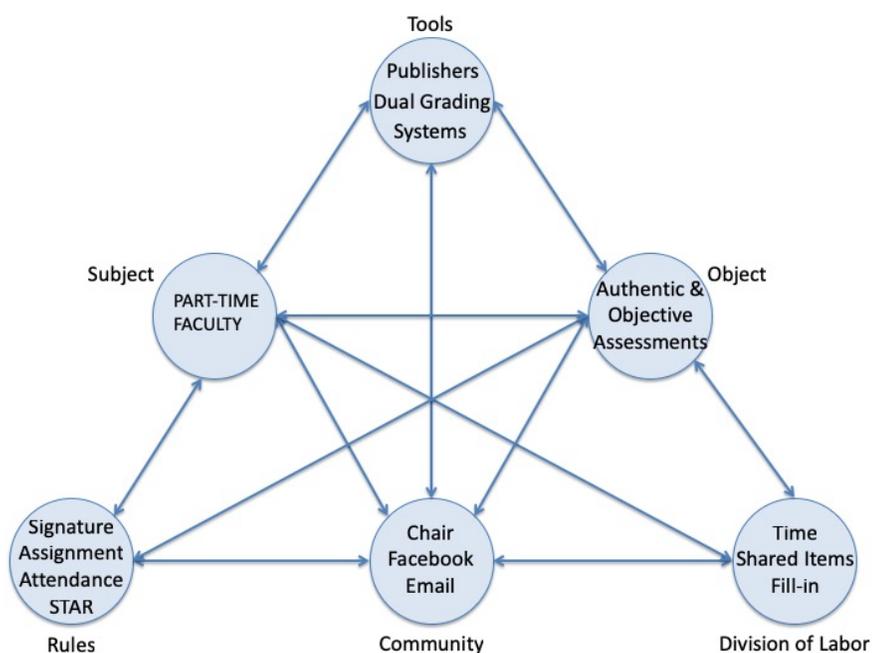


Figure 12: CHAT Engagement with Institutional Assessment Environment.

Division of Labor

Part-time faculty members are often hired at the last minute which means that they have to move very fast to get their class prepared. They are hired this way to meet the needs of the institution, but this has an impact on how their time is spent in the classroom. Each of the participants in this research use shared resources to ensure they can get their work done. Shared resources include assignments, syllabi, and Blackboard templates. Herbert states that the lab assignments he uses are from a shared folder that all the faculty use while Matheson uses assessments from previous instructors. For some of the faculty their time is so constrained that the ability to use these shared resources is an imperative.

The participants in this study are also happy to help out when another faculty member can't attend a class for any reasons. So, if a faculty member calls in sick, and the participants are free, they are happy to help out the department. King states that he is the "go-to guy" for his department because he is retired and has more free time. There are different reasons for this while King and Keene are retired and have the time, Butler and Herbert are both working part-time positions only which gives them the time as well. Participants are also so accustomed to being hired at the last minute and they are willing to take on courses if someone decides not to teach a course.

Rules

When part-time faculty engage with the assessment environment some of what is considered an outcome in the environment becomes a mandate for the faculty. This includes the signature assignment, the STAR report, and student learning outcomes. When part-time faculty engage with the signature assignment it is not seen as important as some of their other assessment activities. Herbert said it didn't match the course content very well while Carroll shares that he is already doing what the assignment is designed to do – explore critical thinking. So, while the institution sees it as important that does not extend to the part-time faculty themselves.

The student learning outcomes (SLOs) are discussed by very few of the faculty and Dick even calls the phrase student learning outcomes "boring". There appears to be no communication about the importance of SLOs to the institution or how they should integrate into the curriculum. Butler is the only participant who actively works to ensure her assessments explore the learning outcomes while Dick said that he read them, and they fit with his planned assignments. Dick gave no indication that he would change his activities if they had not addressed the SLOs.

Outcomes

The part-time faculty view outcomes as the assessment they design for their class and these are directly influenced by the way they understand assessment. Their view of assessment can be seen in their assessment language such as this: “judging or evaluating” (Herbert); “prove what they know” (Butler); “concept of the material” (Matheson); “apply the content” (Hopper); “what the student knows or doesn’t know” (Atwood); “how well students have mastered the subject” (Keene). While there were some larger aspects of assessment present in the definitions as well: “the concepts they’ve learned” (Dick); “apply that to whether the department is reaching its goals, or a student is gaining knowledge” (Lovecraft); “I’m more interested in their thinking” (Carroll). The language moves between understanding course concepts to understanding “thinking” which in many ways mirrors the desires of the institution without using terms like student learning outcomes, objective assessment, or authentic assessment.

Objective assessments are often enacted through publisher test banks that provide multiple choice questions that faculty can use as a part of their assessment practices. For example, publisher tools such as test banks provide another way for faculty to perform assessment without having to spend a lot of time creating new items. These test banks offer multiple choice options that provide instant grading feedback for the students. However, there are some issues that the participants noted with using test banks that may impact student learning.

Butler shared that the multiple choice is the lowest on Blooms taxonomy and is a marginal method for performing assessment. Herbert discussed how it minimizes his ability to observe the students’ process which is an important part of performing outcomes assessment. There was also concern about the accuracy of the test banks with Lovecraft and Atwood telling students to notify them when the test banks are wrong. Some participants described the ability to

randomize the questions or even a subset of questions but even that can cause problems. Keene mentioned that if you skip chapters and you aren't careful with your randomization you will be asking students questions about topics with which they aren't familiar.

Even with these concerns some of the faculty don't have time to do any others or are not aware of the problems. This makes the system either derelict in saving time or not appropriate for assessment at some levels. Some only use it for homework but that still counts toward the overall grade. For those with whom process is important they feel the time crunch in creating their own, responsive, assessment.

Even with the time crunch many of the participants perform other types of creative, authentic, assessment in their classes. Faculty have students do presentations, puppet shows, attend community events and share the experience, there are ethnographies, and math that is based on examples that impact everyone. However, the only assessments that the department follows is the signature assignment. Of course, these extra assignments do lead to even more time constraints on the part-time faculty in terms of grading. As one participant stated, "they don't pay me to teach, they pay me to grade" (Hopper).

Community

A large part of part-time faculty member interaction with the assessment community is via email and primarily with their department chair. All but one participant says that they are invited to faculty meetings while Carroll says that he believes the department actively keeps part-time faculty away from the department. In other words, there is not a lot of engagement with anyone outside of the classroom. However, they all engage quite a bit with their students even above what may be normally expected. The participants in this study follow up with their students via phone, Facebook, text, or whatever communication method they find appropriate to help the students succeed.

Matheson belongs to a group on Facebook that is designed for adjunct faculty and he will ask questions of the other members. The questions he gets help with include assessment and also strategies for classroom management. Dick talks to colleagues from other institutions to help him with questions as does Carroll. Dick learned about providing feedback to students while Carroll learned how to design a rubric. The part-time faculty members have a broad network with very little of it belonging to the institution.

Tools

The faculty members use a number of technologies to perform assessment within their institution. The Blackboard learning management system is the primary tool the faculty use in their classes – they use it to distribute assignments, store their syllabus, and distribute grades. There is no mandatory training for Blackboard but there is some available on the professional development portal LearnerWeb. Despite the availability of training few of the participants looked at the computer-based learning object in the portal. There were complaints about Blackboard that may have been addressed through training but instead some participants decided to use it sparingly and only put grades in when required.

WebAdvisor is the other tool that participants discussed because it is the attendance system. This system does have mandatory professional development and participants believe it is the most important thing to the college. Lastly, the test banks are discussed quite often despite some of their shortcomings. They are helpful in quizzes and chapter tests, but their efficacy is dubious at times and no participants use only test banks for assessment.

Summary

The participants see the assessment environment as isolated, prescriptive, and technological, but they come up with ways to make it meet their needs. They understand that the signature assignment is mandated, and all of the participants ensure the assignment is completed.

However, the assessments they create on their own are what they consider student centered. Those are the assessments that really tell them if the student understands content, concepts, and demonstrate skills like critical thinking. The faculty use of these authentic assessments and their assessment efforts may be unheralded, but this can be liberating in a number of ways. In fact, many of the participants feel they have a lot of freedom as long as they do the mandated activities – and take attendance – so they turn that into their own student-centered environment.

Discussion

CHAT is a learning theory and this study shows how the part-time faculty members essentially learn how to perform assessment within – and at times in spite of – the defined system. The assessment environment and engagement with that environment is comprised of two systems that work together. The perception of part-time faculty illuminates the assessment environment while the ways part-time faculty engage with the environment completes the system. The systems at work in this study are closed in that outside influences are not studied as an influencer. Figure 13 shows these two activity systems, where aspects are similar, where they diverge, and where they overlap.

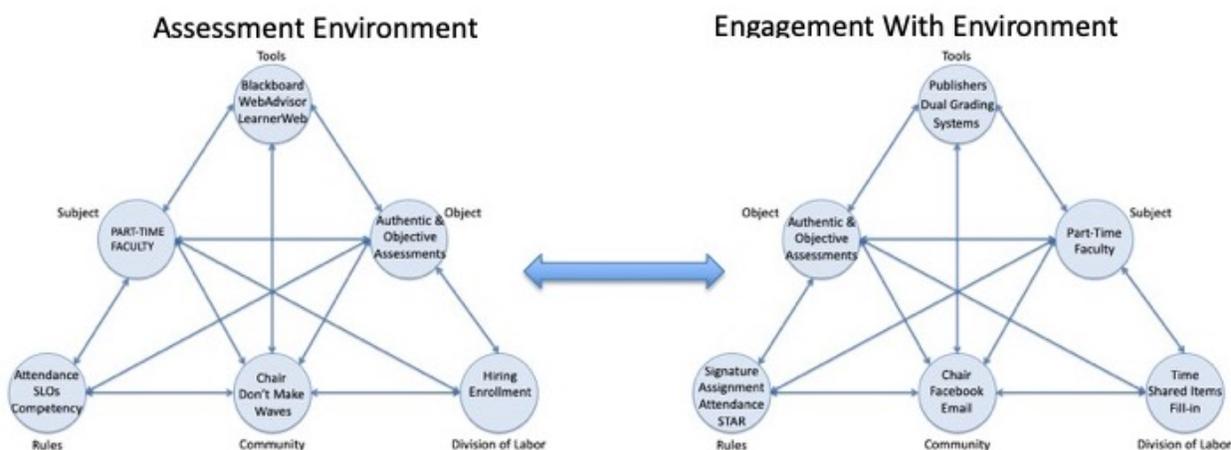


Figure 13: The Assessment Systems.

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework allowed me to explore the assessment environment at a very large community college and how part-time faculty learn within that system. The research questions showed how the environment is constructed and how actors engage with the environment. There are several areas that stand out in the environment that relate back to the literature.

They pay me to teach they don't pay me to grade (Hopper)

Hopper's was laughing when she said "they pay me to teach, they don't pay me to grade" but she was making an important point about what they are paid to do in the classroom. The contact hour is understood to cover time outside of class but there is some question as to whether time outside of class is actually paid. There are discussions around what adjuncts are paid to do – such as whether assessment is an expected part of teaching or an additional component – which has an impact on faculty pay (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013b; Shulman, 2019). These discussions are an important consideration in how part-time faculty are paid as well as determining what they are actually being paid to do both inside and outside the class.

As one study suggested "assessment designs need to balance gathering information on teaching effectiveness with workload concerns. Part-time faculty are less likely to assign many (or any) graded papers because most are not specifically paid to grade" (Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2013a, p. 67). A part of this argument is centered around time – in an already compressed time frame what should take precedence for an adjunct faculty member. This study highlighted that for this particular group that the time it takes to enact assessment did not seem to overshadow what the participants wanted to do for their students. While there are studies that suggest there is a strong focus on objective assessment many of the assessment activities that they discussed were considered authentic assessment (Barnett, 2007; Benjamin et al., 2012;

McClellan, 2016; Murphy, 2006). The signature assignment – while causing some concern over its’ practical use – did not seem to upset the majority of participants. On the contrary, two of the participants actively tried to make it work in their classroom and the others folded it into their syllabus with little obvious concern.

Part-time faculty are often hired to fill gaps in the schedule such as over-enrollment or to meet the immediate economic needs of the community college (Frye, 2017; Jolley et al., 2013; Wagoner, 2007; Xu, 2019). Economics is obviously a key driver in hiring decisions at any institution, but it does have repercussions for all faculty and even more importantly the students. This is evidenced in the way that the faculty are hired at the last minute to fill under-anticipated needs of the institution. While some of the faculty can depend on having a course or courses every semester even they still find out particulars at the last minute while others cannot count on a class each semester (Jolley et al., 2013). This can lead to an over reliance on previous instructors work as well as an over reliance on tools such as test banks the efficacy of which raised concerns among the participants and researchers (Cheng & Crumbley, 2018; Maxwell & Gleason, 2019).

Levin (2007) discussed that part-time faculty are not always hired for their expertise either, instead they are hired as a stop-gap without a lot of regard to their content knowledge. Several of the participants laughed about the times this had happened to them and described how they made it work it can be of concern. In fact, Levin found that “liberal arts faculty are essentially hired not for their expertise but rather for labor as substitutes for full-time faculty” (Levin, 2007, p. 18). While this may not always be the case it can have a deleterious impact on classroom practices and how assessment is enacted. Essentially, while “institutions have experienced many benefits from employing contingent faculty, particularly increased institutions flexibility, expanded course and program offerings, and labor cost savings” (Frye, 2017, pp. 34–

35) these benefits also come with their own set of negatives. These include part-time faculty members ability to fully engage with many classroom practices and provide an assessment experience that meets both student and institutional needs.

Don't make waves (Keene)

Keene referenced his “don't make waves” theory to describe a way of life for part-time faculty members. As a former department chair and current part-time faculty member he believes that most part-time faculty members want to go unnoticed out of concern for their job. While that may not be the case for all the participants in this study it is apparent that there is not enough engagement available to them to try and make a wave. The part-time faculty I interviewed had little internal engagement with anyone other than their department chair. This communication was primarily via email although they were invited to faculty meetings the time is usually not convenient for the part-time faculty. This is aligned with other studies of part-time faculty in that communication is minimal and they often feel isolated (Danley-Scott & Gray, 2014; Diegel, 2013; Meixner et al., 2010). In addition, there is no mandatory professional development opportunities for part-time faculty that focus on assessment – or even classroom faculty. Numerous research has shown the importance of professional development for both full and part-time faculty members. Caudle and Hammons (2018) found that “training in how to do assessment improved faculty members' motivation to participate in assessment” (p. 58). Given the fast pace of change in education and in the tools of education it is imperative to the institution to offer on-going training for their faculty and with the significant numbers of classes taught by part-time faculty understanding assessment is a vital skill.

The faculty members at this institution did have some mandatory professional development in attendance and in Title IX. Herbert was fortunate to take a part-time faculty certification class over four weeks in the summer. In addition, King was given a \$500 stipend to

attend a weekend training session followed by a month's worth of activities delivered online. The research shows the importance of professional development. In fact, "the quality, preparation, and pedagogical skills of the faculty have to be central" (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, p. 20). While Eney and Davidson (2012) state that it is "critical to provide a supportive environment and professional development opportunities that allow part-time faculty to focus on quality teaching and learning while also giving them a stake in the institution's mission" (p. 28). Another part of professional development is a faculty evaluation – it is also a requirement at many institutions but that doesn't mean it is performed. For part-time faculty the classroom evaluation may be their only feedback on their classroom practices which includes assessment. Each participant mentioned the faculty evaluation and that at most it had been performed for them one time in their time at the institution. This aligns with research that shows many adjunct faculty do not receive instructional evaluations and at best have to rely on student feedback to understand their own practices (Jolley et al., 2013).

This lack of community causes some of the participants to seek help and information from outside the institution. While that is not inherently a bad practice it does raise concerns about the efficacy of the information in regard to this institutional context. As Diegel (2013) found "adjunct faculty wanted someone to whom they could ask questions and exchange teaching advice" (p. 604). There are few spaces for part-time faculty to gather – even if just for a little bit – with their colleagues and these informal communications can be vital to a healthy community (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015). With one exception, the part-time faculty interviewed for this study had minimal contact with anyone outside of their department chair either formally or informally. There may be an office space available to them – depending on their campus – but given the disparate nature of the campuses faculty may not see each other.

These spaces are an institutional resource that leads to more interaction and knowledge sharing – they are important for vital faculty engagement (Bailey et al., 2015).

Formal initiatives for adjunct faculty are an important factor as well – particularly professional development. With the many and varied initiatives that occur on a community college campus it is imperative that all faculty members are given the information and appropriate training necessary for their jobs. Research shows that professional development increases participant job satisfaction, increases the sense of community, and can improve the pedagogical quality of instructors (Bailey et al., 2015; Banasik & Dean, 2016; Umbach, 2007) There are two professional development opportunities required by the institution and these involve using the attendance system and Title IX training. While both of these are exceedingly important there should be other opportunities available for part-time faculty.

Multiple choice is the lowest form of assessment (Butler)

While multiple choice tests are not inherently bad Butler was making the point that there are a variety of assessment methods that have different purposes to the faculty member. It is interesting to note that “pragmatic considerations in assessment activities, can dictate that certain types of assessment are chosen in preference to others” (Murphy, 2006, p. 44) as seen in the choice to use objective and/or authentic assessment.

Objective or traditional assessment focus on repeating facts or memorization of information and are developed as multiple choice tests while authentic assessment focuses on student understanding through application of concepts (Boarer Pitchford, 2014, p. 1068). The participants in this study use a variety of assessments in their classroom such as multiple choice, papers, presentations, puppet shows, and items that require problem solving. Multiple choice is a form of objective assessment in that it can be a time saver for many of the faculty. They don't have to spend as much time creating assignments and some studies have shown that faculty

prefer multiple-choice given the time constraints (Falchikov & Boud, 2007; Mundhenk, 2004). In addition, many of the participants discussed the use of publisher test banks (PTB) for their classes – test banks are comprised of multiple-choice questions that are created in conjunction with textbooks. Given the time constraints that many part-time faculty have it is not surprising that the multiple-choice and test banks are an attractive option. However, there are some concerns about objective assessment in that the recall of factual items may be short as well as concerns that they are used to bypass the learning process instead of enhancing the process (Boarer Pitchford, 2014; Cheng & Crumbley, 2018). Maxwell and Gleason (2019) suggested that objective exams should “limit the number of multiple choice items and emphasize free response items” (p. 237). It is interesting to note that the participants in this study often add free response items to their exams and primarily use the test banks as homework. The majority of participants in this study used a combination of authentic and objective assessment in their classrooms.

A study by Boarer Pitchford (2014) found that full-time “instructors substantially utilize authentic assessment techniques compared to objective or traditional assessment” (p. 1075), while “part-time faculty put more emphasis on attendance, objective exams, and homework assignments” (Boarer Pitchford, 2014, p. 1075). This is in line with other research by Lei (2008) that part-time faculty tend to provide more objective based assessments due to time constraints and other labor demands. However, participants in this study use a number of authentic assessment techniques such as research projects, portfolios, presentations, and other tools that demonstrate understanding of the course concepts. This may be due to even greater understanding of the importance of authentic assessments and their ubiquity in some areas of study. In addition, this understanding can help larger initiatives such as institutional outcomes assessment and the new signature assignment. What is missing is the feedback from part-time

faculty in these areas, as Herbert shared, the signature assignment did not really follow along with his course and he wanted to make it more robust. His suggestions were denied, and he believes that this lessens the integrity of the assessment because he and other colleagues are not taking it seriously. A stronger feedback loop would help in this process – sharing in assessment practices and planning encourages more investment in the process (Bruce, 2018; Guetterman & Mitchell, 2016; Pham & Osland Paton, 2017; Rogers, 2015).

Implications

Theory

CHAT provided the coding framework for this study via the a priori codes embedded in the theory. The codes rules/norms, instruments/tools, community, division of labor all provided insight into the system. The initial coding with this framework was harder than initially anticipated given the disaggregation and significant overlap in some areas. The system is designed to show overlap between areas but at times it was difficult to make distinctions between items. For example, community and division of labor which on the surface seem very distinct could at times be hard to determine. Items like professional development may be a community aspect that was also mandatory (a rule) which made the coding difficult at times in the first round. To address some of this confusion the researcher went through the CHAT coding process on two separate occasions to determine how my initial codes related to my second round.

CHAT is a useful tool when looking for a socio-cultural framework that helps address practical questions – such as assessment practices in an institution. It provides a base in practice for researchers who appreciate theory but need a practice-based underpinning for it to come to life. The sticky note method of data analysis was stressful, and it may be easier as well as faster to use qualitative software. Tagging items and then filtering by tags would be more efficient as well as show more data than the manual process used for this study. While the visual aspect

helped somewhat to see where the data was aggregating, there are concerns that some nuances were left behind by using this framework.

CHAT is a useful framework for understanding how a system works from a socio-cultural perspective. This would be a useful tool to study the impact of workforce development outside of higher education. There are many socio-cultural implications to teaching in the workplace, but training is often considered to be a singular event instead of an ongoing process within a system. The everyday activities that occur in a workforce environment all have implications for training because they impact the way process are, or are not, followed. Youn and Baptiste (2007) found that CHAT as a framework for understanding these process will help organizations understand the socio-cultural actions that are taking place within their environment – especially those actions that impact training and practice. Tara Fenwick (2009) discussed CHAT as a resource for professional development because a “richer approach to learning development could be derived from practice-based socio-material perspectives” (p. 242). CHAT can also highlight the way technology use – training about technology as well as the tools themselves – impact students understanding. When training is focused on how to use a system there are social-cultural underpinnings that impact the way students interact with and understand the system and people (Karanasios, 2018). Healthcare software systems, for example, use system generated icons and terminology in describing patients – descriptions that may impact employee/patient interactions. The CHAT framework highlights the socio-material in a system or process and the framework is well designed for areas such as healthcare – because every interaction, whether human or technological, has an impact on patient care. Research on aspects of activity theory in healthcare systems (Greig, Entwistle, & Beech, 2012; Lin & Hsieh, 2014; Wickramasinghe, 2016) would be enhanced by studying the front-line, non-clinical care workers who often provide the first interactions with a patient. The interactions with the patient, the

system, and the employee all set the stage for the patient experience and impact patient care. A CHAT study can pull out nuances in these interactions.

Practice

This study illuminated interesting aspects of an assessment system at a community college and how part-time faculty interact with the system. This section explores some ideas for practice at the institutional and departmental level.

Professional Development

An important aspect of part-time faculty feeling involved and a part of this can be found in professional development opportunities. While institutional priorities appear to the participants to be centered on attendance there are other areas that would be helpful for them. The first of which is ensuring that institutional policy on part-time faculty is followed, in particular teacher evaluations. Jolley et al (2013) found that planned evaluations were often forgotten or cancelled and subsequently they were not rescheduled (p. 227). Many of the respondents discussed that the evaluations were something they expected but rarely ever received. Assessment practices are often a part of the evaluation which can include a syllabus review as well. This is simple, already institutionalized practice that would go a long in making the part-time faculty feel a part of the community. At this point they are depending on student feedback as a way to determine the success of their classes and assessment.

Another aspect of professional development that could be institutionalized are opportunities to learn about assessment initiatives. For example, the signature assignment was rolled out to the college in a variety of different ways. One department actually had training for everyone in their department that included times to meet with the part-time faculty. Others heard about it via email from their department chair or departmental newsletter. Few of the participants in this study had an idea of the larger picture in place around this initiative;

therefore, there are some who don't understand why they can't make it more applicable to their class. While it may be difficult to meet with everyone in person there are other ways to make information accessible other than email. The participants in this study appear very interested in assessment from a student learning/student centered perspective but it is not always apparent to them how institutional initiatives fit into that perception. A visit from the department chair or designee to the classroom to share information about big projects would be helpful. The participants are very interested in student centered learning and the assessment that goes with that – although they all do not have the vocabulary. It can be helpful for them to learn how their work in the classroom translates to the larger community.

Onboarding of faculty should include information about assessment, assessment practices, and other practices of the institution as well as the department. In addition, onboarding should include information on departmental and institutional communication methods. Departmental onboarding practices start the process of bringing a part-time faculty member into the community as well as set a standard of expectations and best practices as they enter the classroom. This type of professional development also provides the part-time faculty member an easier entry into the classroom in that they understand expectations and can plan their class according to the guidelines.

It is difficult to find information about faculty development on many community college websites; however, there are some interesting work being done at four-year and above institutions that can be helpful. For example, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte offers an adjunct teaching academy that employs a learning community model (“Adjunct Faculty Learning Community | The Center for Teaching and Learning | UNC Charlotte,” 2019) that can include assessment practices. North Carolina State University has an extensive faculty development program that shares information on faculty evaluations, teaching with technology

and how to prepare to teach a course (“Office of Faculty Development – North Carolina State University,” 2019). Development in areas such as how to prepare a course would be useful to part-time faculty when they begin teaching and as refresher courses throughout their career. Libraries often offer training and even in-class support for both online and face to face classes. This support includes helping faculty add outcomes assessment to their syllabus especially in terms of information literacy. They are also adept at creating online learning that may be useful for adjunct faculty.

In person meetings with a department chair or other designee would be a great way to share information and provide feedback. Pons et al (2017) suggest that institutions “explore policies that encourage full-time faculty to visit adjunct classrooms and provide collegial feedback” (Pons et al., 2017, p. 55). It is important to visit classes, share information and work with the part-time faculty to make them feel a part of the campus. This also serves a dual purpose in that you can identify and alleviate any concerns that may only be apparent via a visit to the classroom. In addition, this designee could share the importance of student learning outcomes to the class, the department, and the institution. So many of the participants are doing creative and authentic assessments that may be useful for everyone in the department to see. The department chair or designee can serve as a bridge between the full- and part-time faculty.

Technology

Time is a large factor in faculty being able to participate or create authentic assessments and some of this is due to institutional technology. There are currently separate systems that employees have to use in performing basic functions – it would be useful to streamline the systems that faculty can use or at a minimum make them integrate into the learning management system. IT can work with the faculty to determine if there are issues that can be addressed or if it is a training problem in that the part-time faculty may not know how to connect the systems. In

addition, the library works closely with publishers on books, eBooks, and the subsequent test banks – their contracts with the publishers may include ways to integrate into existing systems.

Attendance is the primary technology – as well as the primary policy – that all participants discussed. Part-time faculty are inundated with emails and at times feel that attendance is the primary goal of their classroom. Because of this, part-time faculty spend significant time thinking about attendance, answering emails about attendance, and entering attendance into their system – this is time that could be better spent on student learning. Essentially, attendance may be seen as another form of assessment – at the institution in this study attendance is an important part of funding, as well as, serving as a trigger to find students at risk in their courses. It is worthwhile to understand the emphasis on attendance and the impact on student learning – such as understanding how much time is on attendance as opposed to classroom activities.

Hiring

Lastly, making the hiring process less chaotic would go a long way to encouraging part-time faculty that they are working for an institution that values professionalism. There are numerous examples of best practices available for talent acquisition and none of them appear to be used at the community college. Wake Technical college, on their website states that they are developing training to help their “hiring agents” (“Human Resources | Wake Technical Community College,” 2019) better perform their job. This initiative will be useful to follow and see how it can be used at other institutions.

Summary

Implications for practice can be summarized in this way:

- Mentorship opportunities for part-time faculty where full-time faculty can work with them and be available to answer questions;

- Ongoing professional development that is specifically designed for part-time faculty. Designing for part-time faculty mean ensuring the content is created based on their specific needs and that it is delivered in modalities that best fit that population;
- Partner with areas of the institution to provide support such as the IT department and the library;
- Ensuring that faculty evaluations occur as scheduled and that feedback is provided in a time manner;
- Following best practices in the hiring and onboarding process.
- Share the information found in this study with faculty development offices, departments and institutional leaders.

Research

Further research on part-time community college faculty engagement with assessment could further the understanding of assessment in institutions as a whole. In particular a better understanding of the assessment tools and their impact on enacting assessment and the influence of the learning environment would be useful. It seems as if the tools may get in the way instead of helping with assessment.

Future studies which draw upon a larger participant pool that looks at both full and part-time faculty members could indicate how the assessment system is working as a whole. The perceptions may be different for full time faculty and for faculty with differential years of experience, disciplines, or demographic backgrounds. Understanding all expectations may be helpful in addressing any issues. In addition, a study of the test banks or other resources available to instructors and their impact on the classes would be helpful. There were some concerns about their accuracy which could impact the assessment environment.

Also, a study with as strong focus on student learning outcomes assessment and part-time faculty members would be a strong asset. This could be paired with other institutional initiatives such as the core competency initiative or signature assignment at this institution. Lastly, an understanding of the idea that “they pay me to teach they don’t pay me to grade” (Hopper) would be a significant study for part-time faculty. Is assessment – authentic, objective, institutional, departmental – something that the faculty member is paid to perform. There are studies and a variety of opinions on the exploitation of part-time faculty members, and what they are paid to do is a part of this discussion (Brennan & Magness, 2018; Shulman, 2019). Some faculty are paid by the course with others paid by the contact hour, but for those in this study that meant time spent in the classroom not in other aspects of teaching. In particular, grading and assessment take a lot of time but faculty do not feel that they are being paid for that time. It is important to understand the impact of assessment on the part-time faculty pay structure.

Closing Remarks

The participants in this study are an asset to the institution through their concern and investment in the students. There are simple things that could be done to alleviate some of the marginalization that they may feel in their role. This research shows that part-time faculty, with their various backgrounds and ideas, bring a lot to the institution. They deserve to understand and share in the understanding of how their practices and assessment impact the institution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol:

Interview Protocol

Date

Time

Location

Participant name

Participant email

Participant phone

Introduction:

I appreciate you meeting with me today – my name is Beth Martin and I am a Ph.D. student at North Carolina State University. I am currently a manager in workforce development for Novant Health as well as previous careers as the Head of Assessment for UNC Charlotte Libraries and as a network engineer for various companies. My Ph.D. research focuses on the ways part-time community college faculty perceive and navigate assessment in their institutions.

Our conversation should take 1 to 1.5 hours and I will ask you to reflect your understandings and experiences with assessment in the classroom, the department, and institutionally. You won't give any wrong answers and my goal is to gather a deep understanding of your assessment practices.

Our conversation will be confidential, and the responses will only be shared with my dissertation chair and there will be no identifying information included in the report.

I assure that we don't have to talk about anything you don't want to share, and you can end the interview anytime during our conversation. You can ask questions any time during our conversation as well.

Do you have any questions for me before we start? Are you willing to continue with the interview?

Background information:

- Please tell me about your academic and teaching background such as your degree(s), department, and the number of years you've been teaching.
- How did you come to work at Central Piedmont Community College?

As you know this study is about the part-time community college faculty members perceptions of assessment and I am really interested in hearing your point of view as you answer the questions.

Assessment Understanding:

- Can you tell me how you believe this community college defines assessment (reports, research, accreditation, etc.)?
 - Probing Questions
 - What words or phrases do you hear when administrators talk about assessment?
- How does your department define assessment?
 - Probing Questions
 - What words or phrases do you hear when your colleagues or department leaders discuss assessment?
- How do you define assessment?
 - Probing Questions
 - What lead you to this definition?
- How does your definition of assessment align with your department? Your institution?

Assessment Activities:

- Can you describe any assessment activities or projects you use or see others using?
 - Probing Questions
 - Involving student learning outcomes?
 - Classroom activities?
- Can you describe any projects you are involved in?
- If so, who participates?
- How do you and your colleagues determine what activities to use on a project?
- How do you determine who performs the different tasks?
- What kind of assessment activities do you have in the classroom?
- How do you learn about classroom assessment activities?
- If you have questions about classroom assessment activities how do you get help?
- What happens when a project or activity is complete?
 - Probing Questions
 - Do you write a report?
 - Give a talk?
 - Send emails?
 - Do you have any examples?

Assessment Policies:

- So, while we are thinking about these activities you just described I wondered if you see any connection between your assessment projects and the policies you encounter at this community college?
 - Probing questions
 - If the policy doesn't work or doesn't seem to be practical what do you do?
- Do you have examples of situations where the policy didn't align with the assessment goals?

Assessment Roles:

- If I was a new co-worker here what advice would you give me in general?
 - Probing Questions
 - Work hours
 - Time spent both in and outside of class
- What do colleagues expect from you at work?
- What do administrators expect from you at work?
- Can you tell me what happens if these expectations differ?
 - Probing Questions
 - How do you decide what takes priority?
- Can you describe a typical week for you?
- Can you describe a semester?

Conclusion:

- Is there anything you would like to add or talk about?
- I will forward you the transcription for your review.
- Thank you so much for your participation in this study.

Appendix B

Example of coding process.

