HOW CONTINGENT COMPOSITION FACULTY MEMBERS REFRAME PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITIES

by

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DEDICATION

To my partner, Lucas Paul Messier, for providing me with unwavering love and support.

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ABSTRACT

HOW CONTINGENT COMPOSITION FACULTY MEMBERS REFRAME PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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George Mason University, 2020

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Contingent faculty members are a marginalized majority in the university. Composition, in particular, is disproportionately contingent due, in part, to the considerable number of instructors needed to teach the required first-year writing course. These instructors are typically underpaid, overworked, and excluded from membership in professional circles and functions. The faculty learning community, a relatively recent approach to professional development in the university, has been touted as a means of developing a more unified sense of professional community and identity amongst otherwise disparate (cross-disciplinary, cross-rank) faculty members, but lacks sufficient research on contingent faculty participation. In response to this gap, this study sought to understand how eleven contingent composition faculty members at a public research university understood professionalism and their own associated professional identities during and following their participation in semester-long faculty learning communities. Data

collection included surveys, reflections, course documents, and semi-structured interviews. Data analysis followed grounded theory methodology. Findings indicated that contingent composition faculty members understood their professional identities as related to two largely inaccessible pathways of professional status: (1) *membership* as it relates to support, recognition, and collaboration, and (2) *respect* as it relates to compensation, security, and expertise. Findings also indicated that, of these two branches, participation in a faculty learning community afforded contingent composition faculty members with a sense of membership; however, in later semesters, this was perceived by contingent composition faculty members to be temporary, as the sense of membership that they experienced during the faculty learning community was thereafter suppressed by the lack of membership that they regularly experienced in the larger structural context of their work. Based on these findings, this study concludes that efforts to develop the professional identities of contingent composition faculty members through professional development opportunities, such as the faculty learning community, treat the symptoms rather than the underlying conditions of contingency, and thus only allow for professional identity through a fleeting semblance of membership.

CHAPTER ONE: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMPOSITION LABOR

> While the discourse of professionalism has produced an impressive body of knowledge about writing and the teaching of writing, it has also tended to subordinate the needs of teachers to the needs of writing programs . . . and has elevated consumerism—that is, the consumption of pedagogical theory—as the duty of all composition teachers (Strickland, 2011, p. 64).

The professionalization of the writing studies field dichotomized its North American university faculty.[1] While the field's research faculty experienced a burgeoning professional status, its instructional faculty concurrently experienced a "near-total conversion" of their positions to contingent status (Bousquet, 2004b, p. 5). Ruggles Gere (1996) concedes that the achievement of professional status for some members of the field "coincided with (and may have actually caused) an increased exploitation of other members of the field" (p. 125). That she used the word *exploitation* is particularly telling of the extent to which the conditions of contingency fail to meet professional standards, which, as this study shows, is evident in how contingent composition faculty members are often recruited through last-minute hiring practices, retained through short-term contracts, excluded from departmental governance and professional activities, provided with insufficient compensation, and otherwise blocked from achieving professional status and developing an associated professional identity.

[1] I join Bazerman (2002), Downs and Wardle (2007), and others in referring to the field as *writing studies* (in lieu or *composition*, *composition studies*, *rhetoric*, or a combination thereof), as a means of codifying a more encompassing identity.

The stratification of the field's labor has been likened to a "caste system" (Cox et al., 2016, p. 38) in which contingent faculty members, positioned low in the hierarchy, are responsible for teaching the field's lower division composition courses (which, at this study's research site, account for more than a hundred sections each semester), thus releasing tenure-track faculty members from this duty such that their course load, typically half that of contingent faculty, may focus on upper division and/or graduate courses and may provide time for service and research. Doe et al. (2011) assert that this system reflects an increasing departmental dependence on "discrete divisions of labor and specialized roles," which has subjugated non-tenure-track faculty members as contingent laborers "who shoulder the burden of teaching" to make possible the more specialized work of tenure-track faculty members (p. 438). Schell and Stock (2001) likewise claim that "contingent faculty have worked (at risk, underground, out of sight) to support others' more visible, more attractive labor" (p. 6). In this way, contingent composition faculty members' labor sustains tenured faculty members' professional status.

The field has long been concerned about the rise of contingent labor and the lack of professional status associated with writing instruction. More than thirty years ago, a cross-rank group of writing studies faculty at the Wyoming Conference on English drafted what would be referred to as the Wyoming Resolution, which called for the field's most prominent professional organization, Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), to not only align contingent conditions with professional standards, but to also establish procedures for contending with institutional non-compliance. Although CCCC followed by publishing a statement that claimed "tenure as

the chief standard that would ensure quality writing instruction," it did not formulate measures to ensure that any of its listed standards were met, as that was deemed "impractical" and "beyond the scope of the organization" (McDonald & Schell, 2011, pp. 369-370). In the decades since, with no larger structure in place for upholding writing instruction to these standards, this burden fell upon members of the field at their respective institutions, at which they kept the spirit of the Wyoming Resolution alive through research on writing studies labor and through what local reformative measures they could effectuate (McDonald & Schell, 2011, p. 374).

Although it fell short of the tenure standard, one significant reformative measure was the creation of the full-time non-tenure-track position, which supplanted most "part-time, piecemeal positions" (McDonald & Schell, 2011, p. 374). This position was conceived as a "career-track instructorship" that, while still contingent, would carry more professional weight, with those holding these positions recognized as "legitimate full-time academic citizens with governance responsibilities and salaries running parallel to, although always somewhat behind, those of traditional [tenured] faculty" (Murphy, 2000, p. 25). Compared to the part-time contingent position, the full-time alternative offered a salary rather than a by-the-course wage, a one- or multi-year contract rather than a semester-long contract, and varying degrees of involvement in departmental matters. However, at this study's research site, full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members struggled to be recognized as *legitimate* members of a professional academic community and were largely aligned with their part-time counterparts in shared concerns about their contingency. One such concern, not exclusive to full-time non-tenure-track

composition faculty members at this university, was their lack of time or contractual expectation to engage in research (Colby & Colby, 2017, pp. 62-63).

The importance of time to engage in research so as to connect practice and theory cannot be overstated. For contingent composition faculty members, the majority of whom hold credentials in creative writing or literature instead of writing studies, a separation between practice and theory reinforces the understanding that they are not "professionals with specialized disciplinary knowledge," which also reinforces the myth that "anyone can teach composition" (Wardle, 2013, para. 9). Subsequently, this separation dismisses the act of teaching writing as service and, as such, reverts the nature of composition to its origins as a non-disciplinary service course (Colby & Colby, 2017; Hammer, 2012).[2]

* * *

This lack of connection between practice and theory was one of the central issues that the composition program at George Mason University, a public R1 institution in Northern Virginia, was in the process of addressing when I joined the administrative team as an assistant director in 2016.[3] While its first-year composition course, English 101, was primarily taught by graduate students who received extensive professional development through their assistantships, its advanced composition course, English 302, was primarily taught by part-time and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members who were not as well-supported.

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[2] Composition's history as a service course (and its reliance on undervalued labor) is well-represented in the literature. See Berlin, 1987; Connors, 1997; Crowley, 1998; Schell, 1998; Strickland, 2011.

[3] With the exception of the director position, which was filled by a tenure-stream faculty member, the five associate and assistant director positions composing the composition program's administration team were filled by full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members.

In prior years, due to budget constraints, the administrative team had relied on the workshop model of professional development. Because these workshops were occasional and of relatively brief duration, they did not greatly infringe upon participants' already-constrained time, but, for that same reason, they also did not provide for meaningful community-building amongst participants and thus did not abate the sense of isolation that most contingent composition faculty members experienced (Bond, 2015, p. 9).

Additionally, because the workshops were constrained by a budget that limited their regularity and duration, they were not designed as sustained education but instead as either training in that they served to update faculty on course modifications or as assessment in which faculty evaluated student work to ascertain the extent to which certain course modifications were effective. As such, they did not provide "the intellectual foundation necessary for making fully informed curricular or pedagogical choices required of those who would purport to be 'professional' teachers at the university level" (Marshall, 2003, p. 89). The administrative team understood that most contingent composition faculty members held credentials in creative writing or literature instead of writing studies and thus lacked the specialized vocabulary and theoretical background associated with substantial disciplinary expertise (Myers & Kircher, 2007, p. 398). They also understood that these faculty members would, for that reason, benefit from professional development that focused on developing their *interactional expertise*, which involves both domain knowledge and disciplinary specialization knowledge (Wardle & Scott, 2015, p. 72).

Enter the faculty learning community. This model of professional development, which originated at Miami University in the early 2000s and which picked up steam during the 2010s at other national universities, facilitates expertise- and community-building by operating as a structured and intensive program in which a small group of faculty members regularly meet to read and discuss research on teaching and learning and to collaborate on individual curricular projects as informed by that research (Cox, 2004, p. 8). Much of the early research out of Miami University helped to establish a framework for faculty learning communities that has since been widely accepted. This framework is aligned with consensus in the literature as to what constitutes substantial and effective professional development—namely, that which (1) involves active learning over a considerable duration of time, (2) focuses on specific disciplinary content and pedagogical theory, (3) provides opportunities for research, reflection, and hands-on practice, (4) cultivates a social, collegial, and collaborative environment, and (5) recognizes the expertise of its participants (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Garet et al., 2001; Knapp, 2003; Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005).

The composition program had received a substantial budget increase that allowed the administrative team to offer faculty learning communities as a means of supporting its part-time and full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members in much-needed expertise- and community-building. Babb and Wooten (2017) argue that efforts by writing program administrators to professionalize contingent faculty were often restrained by the belief that “because contingent faculty do not have the same service obligations [as tenured faculty] and because they are already underpaid for their labor,

they either cannot or should not be expected to engage in additional professional and curricular development" (p. 170). While the administrative team had briefly weighed this line of thinking in an effort to operate with sensitivity to contingent conditions, it understood the importance of the connections previously discussed—that between practice and theory, and that between otherwise isolated contingent composition faculty members—and worked to adapt the faculty learning community model so as to facilitate these connections while maintaining that sensitivity.

Faculty learning communities are typically organized by a university program director who reviews proposals and advertises across the university for faculty participation in approved faculty learning communities, thus assembling a cross-disciplinary and cross-rank faculty group interested in a particular topic (Cox, 2004, p. 9). Contrarily, because the composition program wanted to assemble an in-house group of contingent composition faculty members to both improve the delivery of the advanced composition course and to promote a sense of community amongst this faculty body, its faculty learning communities were homogenous in both discipline and rank. Bond (2015) suggests that discipline-based faculty learning communities such as these are not without precedent and that, in fact, some disciplines that face common challenges may benefit from such an approach (p. 4).

The aforementioned programmatic assessment workshops had revealed common challenges that faculty faced in designing and teaching the course's two major projects: (1) a discipline analysis project, in which students analyzed the rhetorical situations of texts relevant to their discipline, and (2) a discipline inquiry project, in which students

produced an inquiry-based researched text that demonstrated disciplinary and rhetorical awareness. With this in mind, the administrative team offered two faculty learning communities in the fall of 2016 that focused on assignment design, each on one of the two major projects of the course, as well as a third faculty learning community in the spring of 2017 that focused on overall course design and scaffolding.

That these communities were semester-long, rather than occurring over the course of an academic year, represented another significant departure from the literature, but one deemed necessary by the administrative team, as a one-year commitment would have likely deterred participation from both part-time and full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members due to the time constraints associated with their contingent conditions. There was also the matter of contract duration. While full-time non-tenure-track positions were contracted annually, part-time non-tenure-track positions were contracted by the semester. Because it was possible that part-time non-tenure-track faculty members who joined a faculty learning community in the fall would not be rehired in the spring, a yearlong faculty learning community would have likely seen diminished participation in its second semester.

Time constraints associated with contingent conditions also prompted a change to the expected outcomes of the faculty learning community model. The literature suggests that participants not only focus on their learning and projects within the faculty learning community, but also on presentations of their achievements to those outside the faculty learning community (Cox, 2004, p. 19). Contrarily, the administrative team felt that this

imposed too greatly on contingent composition faculty members and thus did not elect to ask participants to engage in presentations.

One important way in which the faculty learning communities did not depart from the literature was in regard to their method of facilitation. Petrone and Ortquist-Ahrens (2004) describe three roles that a faculty learning community facilitator serves: (1) a *coordinator* who organizes and manages the faculty learning community to serve its larger objectives, (2) a *champion* who provides research and other resources to enhance participants' knowledge and who works to motivate participants past the discomfort of change, and (3) an *energizer* who directs participant interaction in the faculty learning community meetings with the aim of facilitating, rather than interfering in, discussions (pp. 65-66).

The composition program administrators who facilitated the faculty learning communities at this research site fulfilled each of these roles. As coordinators, they wrote an overall mission or description of their respective faculty learning communities, recruited contingent composition faculty members, and designed the schedule and shape of the face-to-face meetings. These meetings, held around five or six times in the course of a semester, typically took place in a small conference room on campus. As champions, they assigned writing studies research for each meeting and encouraged participants to voice and collaboratively negotiate any difficulties associated with their learning. While much of the faculty learning community was facilitated in this way, through back-end administration, the meetings themselves were largely participant-led. As energizers, they prompted for and refocused the discussion when needed, but otherwise encouraged

participants to work through their thoughts with each other and to collaborate on their curricular ideas.

* * *

As both a full-time non-tenure-track faculty member and a composition program administrator, I was interested in the potential of the faculty learning community to intervene in the stratification of labor, as I imagined that contingent composition faculty members who had participated in such a community and who were thus armed with increased awareness of their field's research would be able to stand a few rungs higher on the professional status ladder. I based this understanding of professionalization on that discussed at the start of this chapter with regard to the discernable dichotomy between writing studies faculty members who produce knowledge and those who disseminate knowledge, and thus on the premise that the university regards those associated with research as professionals, and those associated with instruction as laborers (Kwok, 2018, p. 10).[4] Facilitating deeper connections between contingent composition faculty members and writing studies research through faculty learning communities, it seemed, would reconcile this power dynamic and allow for contingent composition faculty members to recognize themselves, and to be recognized by others, as professionals in their own right.

[4] Horner (2000) attributes this difference in status and associated treatment to the university's recognition of the material conditions that it provides to instructors (classroom space, for example) and its lack of recognition of the material conditions that it provides to researchers (database access, for example), which helps to associate instruction with dutiful labor while associating research with autonomous, professional work; these associations are furthered by the difficulty in attributing course development as the intellectual work of an instructor, as opposed to the lack of difficulty in attributing scholarship as the intellectual work of a researcher (pp. 2-8).

There also seemed to be potential for this professional recognition to arise not only out of engagement with research, but also out of engagement with each other, for despite the fact that instruction is considered "relational work" in the sense that contingent composition faculty members work not only in relation to students, but also in relation to their program, department, and institution (Russ et al., 2016, p. 404), these faculty members often feel excluded from professional contexts outside of their classroom (Penrose, 2012, p. 109). In fact, Bousquet (2004a) asserts that contingent composition faculty members are often informally advised to work for their own professional inclusion, such as "showing up at guest lectures, eating at the faculty club, organizing conferences, volunteering for committee work," and other work that is rewarded not with compensation, but instead with the opportunity to act like "someone with a professorial job" (p. 17).

Although I had taught composition for over a decade, initially as a graduate instructor and later as a full-time non-tenure-track faculty member, it was not until I had assumed the role of a composition program administrator that I felt a sense of membership in a professional community. I was thus interested in whether participation in faculty learning communities could allow for contingent composition faculty members to feel that same sense of professional membership that my participation in program administration had allowed for me. There is much research that attests to how collegiality amongst participants in faculty learning communities contributes to a sense of inclusion in a professional community (Chang, 2018; Cox, 2004; Cox, 2013; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007; Vogel & Rogers, 2017); however, there is limited research on faculty

learning communities composed solely of contingent faculty, and thus a limited understanding of the potential for a sense of professional community amongst a faculty body not typically perceived as professional (Bond, 2015, p. 2). This study aimed, in part, to address this gap in the literature.

Departure Point and Destination

This qualitative study focused on the professional experiences of eleven part-time and full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members during and following their participation in faculty learning communities to explore how they understood their professional identities and how their participation in a faculty learning community that focused on their pedagogical development contributed to this understanding. Because there is limited research on contingent faculty's participation in faculty learning communities, as well as a lack of formal theories associated with faculty learning communities, I aimed to generate an interpretive, substantive theory that may be tested and extended in future research. To fulfill this purpose, the study was designed and conducted in accordance with grounded theory methodology, which requires a systematic process of interpreting data in which codes are generated, categorized, and theoretically conceived without theoretical presuppositions such that the resulting theory is grounded in the data rather than in initial hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 33).

Grounded theory departs from other qualitative methodologies in that a researcher may begin with research questions, as I have, but may not necessarily arrive at answers to these questions; instead, these questions serve as what Charmaz (2006) refers to as a "departure point" (p. 100). Thus, data analysis may lead the researcher to a theory only

tangentially related to initial research questions. Indeed, in this study, data analysis led to a theoretical discussion beyond the scope of the three research questions that served as my departure point:

Q1: How do contingent composition faculty members describe their professional identities prior to and since engagement in a faculty learning community?

Q2: What aspects of a faculty learning community inform contingent composition faculty members' pedagogical development?

Q3: What connections can be made between contingent composition faculty members' professional identity and pedagogical development?

When I began this study, I had, in retrospect, a somewhat idealized understanding of professional identity development in that I assumed it to be ever-increasing as one continue in a profession.[5] In other words, I imagined it as a linear, ongoing development, like a river in that it only flows in one direction, from origin to endpoint. I hadn't imagined it to be a push and pull, a rise and fall, and thus more like a tide than a river. As this study shows, professional identity development was not ever-increasing, as I had presumed, but was indeed ever-changing. How contingent composition faculty members understood their professional identity depended on their position in a social configuration

[5] Grounded theory requires a researcher to be open to what emerges in the data, which necessitates an absence of bias toward other established theories. For this reason, grounded theory methodologists advocate against the researcher conducting a review of the literature prior to engagement in the study, as this can lead to analysis of the data through the lens of other established or "received" theories and thus can "contaminate" emerging categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 37). Rather, they suggest conducting a review of the literature after data analysis has been conducted so as to ascertain whether the "new theory can be joined with received theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 152). As I conducted this study in accordance with this methodological practice, I did not review literature on theories related to professional identity until late in the study.

of participation and on their interactions with others in this configuration. There were multiple professional contexts within the larger institution, each of which involved a different social configuration and thus a different participation system. The contexts in which contingent composition faculty members participated, the extent to which they participated, when and how they participated, and with whom they participated, all informed their professional identity development. In this way, professional identity was dependent on a multitude of conditions and experiences to which contingent composition faculty members ascribed meaning.

In this dissertation, I refer to the faculty learning community as a *supportive* context in that it supported the professional nature of their work. Within this supportive context, contingent composition faculty members were full participants and thus experienced a sense of membership and a nurturing of their professional identity. Contrarily, within institutional contexts outside of the faculty learning community, which I refer to as a *structural* context in that it represented the larger structural conditions of their work, contingent composition faculty members were not full participants and thus neither experienced a sense of membership nor a nurturing of their professional identity.

When concurrently positioned in both the supportive and the structural context, contingent composition faculty members experienced somewhat of a push and pull between opposing participation systems; however, findings indicated that the supportive context was able to sufficiently nourish their sense of membership and associated professional identity to the extent that it largely compensated for the structural context's deficiencies. Contingent composition faculty members, in other words, reframed their

professional identities as aligned with the sense of membership they gained in the faculty learning community despite the struggle to identify as professionals outside of it.

Had I only collected data from the semesters in which contingent composition faculty members participated in a faculty learning community, this dissertation would have likely read as more hopeful, as it would have focused on what contingent composition faculty members gained through their participation in faculty learning communities. However, having followed participants up to two semesters out from their participation, and having learned that much of what they gained was later lost, this dissertation reads, admittedly, a little less hopeful. As I discuss later in this dissertation, the support, the recognition, the collaboration—these attributes that I theorize in this study as that of membership—did not, for the most part, continue past the endpoint of the faculty learning community. Likewise, because professional identity was dependent on the conditions and experiences to which contingent composition faculty members ascribed meaning, and without much carry-over from the supportive context to the structural context in subsequent semesters, what professional identity they had developed in association with the sense of membership gained in the supportive context was not retained in that state but was instead reframed in response to the conditions of and their experiences within the structural context. This suggests that supportive identities are temporary.

Thus, although faculty learning communities are an effective way in which "universities can support new faculty and give them the tools and support to thrive and succeed," particularly contingent faculty who are often isolated and marginalized by the

institutions at which they are employed (Bond, 2015, pp. 8-9), this study concludes with the assertion that long-term membership and professional identity for contingent composition faculty members may be more effectively achieved through transformation of labor conditions such that contingent composition faculty members are continually (rather than temporarily) recognized and engaged as full participants and professional members of the university. As a means of looking forward with some hope, this conclusion is supplemented with a recommendation, framed both by this study's emergent theory and institutionalization theory, that the faculty learning community model be repurposed as that which focuses not on research related to teaching and learning to professionally develop its faculty, but as that which focuses on research related to labor and institutional reform to transform the conditions that otherwise systematically impede this professional development.

* * *

Because this study explored the lived experiences of contingent composition faculty members, and because it revealed insights into the injurious labor conditions that govern their work, this study reveals the need for writing programs or the larger departments in which these programs may be housed to better support this marginalized faculty body. This includes administrative decisions with regard to pay and course load, as these material conditions are inherently tied to contingent composition faculty members' ability to effectively design and deliver their courses, and inherently tied to their ability to identify as professionals in relation to their work. As this study shows, even well-regarded models of the professional development like the faculty learning

community cannot negate overriding labor conditions that suppress professional identity in the long term. As such, this study makes the aforementioned recommendation to consider the faculty learning community model as a potential means of mobilizing for systematic change.

This study was not quantitative and thus cannot contribute to a statistical understanding of contingent faculty; however, it does provide much needed contingent voice on matters pertaining to their positions, their professional status, and their associated professional identities. Indeed, Kezar and Sam (2013) point out that while many studies rely on anecdotal or secondary evidence, "very few studies on contingent faculty incorporate their voices" (p. 58). These voices are incorporated as representations of the ways in which contingent composition faculty members understand their professional status, which Levin and Montero Hernandez (2014) assert is lacking adequate coverage in the literature (pp. 532-533).

Although Hubball and Albon (2007) acknowledge that there is a lack of formal theories associated with faculty learning communities, they point out that contemporary approaches to understanding faculty learning communities do so by way of Wenger's *communities of practice* (p. 121). Cox (2013) suggests that the faculty learning community is a "special type" of community of practice in that, although short-lived, it is a system of membership structured around knowledge, community, and practice (pp. 18-19). Faculty learning communities that serve contingent faculty have been referred to as *flexible communities of practice* because of the adaptations and accommodations that must be made to ensure their participation considering the "complex and multifaceted

realities" of their labor conditions and thus of their professional lives (Webb et al., 2013, pp. 232-233). This study offers an interpretive, substantive theory that furthers comparisons between faculty learning communities and communities of practice.

Organization of Chapters

In this first chapter, "Introduction to the Site and the Study," I discussed the field's concerns about the lack of professional status associated with writing instruction, as well as a resulting focus on professionalization models. In doing so, I reviewed literature on contingent composition labor and faculty learning communities as relevant to the research site's adaptation of this professional development model for its contingent composition faculty members. I identified the lack of research on contingent faculty's involvement in faculty learning communities as the need to which this study responded, and I established the study's arc—from its initial questions to its conclusions.

In the second chapter, "Collecting, Coding, and Conceptualizing," I begin by introducing grounded theory as this study's methodology, with a leaning toward the constructive approach as it pertains to theory development. I then (1) outline the data collection process with explanation of the document data and the semi-structured interview data collected, (2) outline the data analysis process with explanation of the coding methods that served the constant comparative analysis, and (3) outline the theory generation process with explanation of the diagramming that elucidated the study's emergent theory.

In the third chapter, "Theory of Contingent Membership and Identity," I present this study's findings as support for an interpretive, substantive theory about contingent

faculty membership and professional identity. In doing so, I incorporate statements from participants that are representative of themes across the sample. These themes support a relationship between institutional membership as a branch of professional status and contingent composition faculty members' professional identity that, while negotiated through the intermediary of the faculty learning community, was thereafter constrained by their contingent conditions.

In the final chapter, "Comparative Theories and Conclusion," I strive to validate the emergent theory through comparisons to communities of practice as it relates to membership and belonging, and through comparisons to related theories of learning and identity. These comparisons support an argument against the supportive context as capable of providing contingent composition faculty members with long-term membership and identity when such is continually lacking in the structural context. As a means of looking forward, I turn to institutionalization theory to recommend how the faculty learning community can serve as a mobilization unit for change in labor conditions.

CHAPTER TWO: COLLECTING, CODING, AND CONCEPTUALIZING

> We compositionists have not studied our research methods as social practices in themselves. Our methodologies too often remain traditional, patriarchal, and exclusionary. We tout composition as a democratic discipline, but we maintain a researcher-practitioner hierarchy that can be seen in the marginalization of teacher-researchers and graduate students. . . . In contrast, grounded theory is self-consciously critical. Through triangulation, analytic recursiveness, and inclusion of subjects as agents, it invites others into our disciplinary conversations. As an empirical and naturalistic methodology, it offers us a timely opportunity—a means of grounding our theory in our practice (Neff, 1998, pp. 132-133).

Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that privileges the interpretation of data without theoretical presuppositions. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed this methodology as a means of generating theory such that it is "'accurate' in fit and relevance to the area it purports to explain" (p. 224). Theory is generated through a systematic process in which codes are generated, categorized, and conceptualized. The emergent theory is thus unified with and grounded in the data rather than selected in advance and applied by way of hypotheses (Glasser & Strauss, 1967, p. 33). Since their 1967 work, Glaser and Strauss split in their ideological positions as to whether theory is "discovered" through the data. Glaser retained this objectivist stance while Strauss came to understand theory as "constructed" rather than discovered.

Although this study drew from different approaches to grounded theory at different times, it was most closely aligned with the constructivist approach. Having studied under both Glaser and Strauss during her doctoral studies, Charmaz (2006)

worked to modernize grounded theory methodology and became a leading proponent of constructivist grounded theory. Unlike the objectivist approach to grounded theory, the constructivist approach emphasizes the importance of context and the role of the researcher. With regard to context, the constructive approach views the studied phenomenon as situated and recognizes that situations are governed by “hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). This emphasis on context allowed for me to investigate the complexity of contingent composition faculty members’ professional realities as situated both within a professional development context and within a structural hierarchy encompassing that context. With regard to the researcher, the constructive approach views the resulting theory as a particular researcher’s interpretation, and encourages reflexivity on part of the researcher with regard to acknowledgment of their role in this interpretation. Interpreting the complex connections between contingent composition faculty members’ understanding of their professional identity development during and following their participation in faculty learning communities thus required not only careful attention to participant perspectives and the professional contexts in which these individuals were situated, but also careful attention to my connection to these participants and to the aforementioned contexts.

My positionality was complex due to the multiple capacities in which I have served George Mason University: initially as a graduate student and graduate instructor and later as a full-time non-tenure-track faculty member and composition program administrator. While I recognized that these roles allowed for a rapport with study participants and a sensitivity to their experiences, I also recognized that these roles

shaped my perspectives and situated knowledge. They were at once asset and liability. Charmaz (2006) notes that while all researchers are influenced by their experiences and associated preconceptions, it is important to be careful about assumptions and to ensure that all assertions are generated by, rather than imposed upon, the data (p. 68). I thus heeded the recommendation to engage in critical reflexivity throughout the research process. This reflexive process, which entailed being mindful of the predispositions and situated knowledge I brought to each stage of the study and documenting such in memos, was particularly important during data analysis. As I sought to interpret participant realities by understanding the lens through which participants were constructing reality, I continually strived to reflexively acknowledge the lens through which I was doing this interpretive work. Data analysis was thus an inductive process in which participants' contextually-bound realities were interpreted by a researcher whose interpretation of these realities was also contextually-bound.

Sampling and Data Collection Process

The nature of this study necessitated nonprobabilistic (nonrandom) sampling of participants. This type of sampling is "the method of choice for most qualitative research" because it focuses not on quantifying for statistical generalizations but instead on discovering and understanding for theoretical generalizations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). Sampling was purposive and homogeneous in that it was limited to a small population with defining characteristics: sixteen contingent (part-time adjunct and full-time non-tenure-track) advanced composition faculty members who participated in one of the three faculty learning communities offered in 2016-2017.

There were two sampling stages. The composition program initiated the first stage with a request for consent at the start of each faculty learning community. The consent form provided participants with information about the purpose and nature of the data collection, the risks and benefits of their voluntary participation, and the measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Of the sixteen contingent composition faculty members who participated in the three 2016-2017 faculty learning communities and who were thus eligible to participate the study, eleven provided informed consent and are identified in this study by number. One contingent composition faculty member who participated in two faculty learning communities is identified as Participant 9a/b (see Table 1).

Table 1 Participant Profile and Associated Community

Participant Profile			Community
Participant 1	Female	Part-time non-tenure-track	S 2017: Course Design and Scaffolding
Participant 2	Female	Part-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Inquiry Project
Participant 3	Female	Part-time non-tenure-track	S 2017: Course Design and Scaffolding
Participant 4	Female	Full-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Analysis Project
Participant 5	Female	Part-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Analysis Project
Participant 6	Female	Full-time non-tenure-track	S 2017: Course Design and Scaffolding
Participant 7	Male	Part-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Inquiry Project
Participant 8	Male	Full-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Analysis Project
Participant 9a	Female	Full-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Inquiry Project
Participant 9b	Female	Full-time non-tenure-track	S 2017: Course Design and Scaffolding
Participant 10	Male	Full-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Analysis Project
Participant 11	Female	Full-time non-tenure-track	F 2016: Discipline Analysis Project

I initiated a second sampling stage with a consent process for follow-up data collection at the start of the 2017-2018 academic year. For contingent composition faculty members to be eligible for this second stage, aside from having participated in

one of the faculty learning communities the previous year, they had to be scheduled to teach advanced composition course that fall. This requirement was necessary to ascertain development following participation in a faculty learning community. Three participants did not meet this eligibility requirement (Participant 3, 6, and 8), as they did not teach at the university that semester; thus, the second sampling stage involved data collection from eight of the total eleven participants.

Data collected during the first sampling stage included open-ended qualitative surveys and participant-authored reflections, which accounted for participants' experiences in the faculty learning communities, as well as iterations of available course documents (syllabi and/or assignment prompts) from the eleven participants, which served as comparative documentation of curricular revisions influenced by participation in the faculty learning communities. Data collected during the second sampling stage included additional iterations of available course documents from eight of the eleven participants, which served as comparative documentation of curricular revisions made in semesters following their participation in faculty learning communities, and semi-structured interviews with four of the eleven participants, which served as a means of better understanding their larger professional stories.[6]

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[6] While the eight eligible participants in the second sampling stage all contributed course document data, only half consented to being interviewed (two did not respond to interview requests and two declined). It's worth noting that the two participants who declined did so for reasons associated with the contingent nature of their positions. One had initially consented but later declined due to their teaching load not affording the time to participate. The other declined due to the potential for professional repercussions should their comments about professional identity, which they understood to be intertwined with their contingency, allow for deductive disclosure. I reminded this participant of the safeguarding measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity as described in the consent form, which included the removal of all identifying information, and also of their right to retract statements from interview transcripts that they believed may result in deductive disclosure, but ultimately could not ally their apprehension.

The open-ended qualitative surveys were distributed by the composition program at the end of each faculty learning community. Surveys in both quantitative and qualitative research seek to uncover variations in a target population; however, variation in a qualitative survey is one of topical and perspectival diversity rather than numerical distribution (Jansen, 2010, para. 7). The qualitative survey does not allow for investigations of social interaction, as observations might, but instead "evaluations" of social interaction through participant accounts (Jansen, 2010, para. 21). The composition program sought to gather an accounting of the faculty learning community experience so as to gauge the extent to which the facilitation of these communities could be improved. The qualitative survey, as an evaluative method, was thus deemed appropriate.[7]

As a supplement to the survey, the composition program also requested, at the end of each faculty learning community, that participants reflect on the extent to which key features of the faculty learning community (scholarly readings, group discussions, and peer review sessions) influenced their professional development. As there were no guidelines for the reflection aside from this request to reflect on their development, each reflection was unique, ranging from matter-of-fact accounts to more personal storytelling. The reflection data prompted for and thus served the second of my three research questions ("What aspects of a faculty learning community inform contingent composition faculty members' pedagogical development?"). Some participants discussed their pedagogical development in conjunction with their professional identity development in their reflections, which allowed for this method to also serve the first research question

[7] See Appendix A for the survey protocol.

("How do contingent composition faculty members describe their professional identities prior to and since engagement in a faculty learning community?") and, as a result, also the last of these research questions ("What connections can be made between contingent composition faculty members' professional identity and pedagogical development?").

While course documents collected at the start and end of each faculty learning by the composition program demonstrated the extent to which participation in a faculty learning community influenced pedagogical changes, it did not demonstrate the extent to which these changes were retained in subsequent semesters. For that reason, I collected available course documents for use in participants' advanced composition courses in the semester(s) following their faculty learning community participation (see Table 2).

Table 2 Collected Course Documents

Participant	FLC Start Collection	FLC End Collection	Follow-up Collection
1 - (F) Part-time non-tenure-track	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule	Fall 2017 Syllabus
2 - (F) Part-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus Assignment Prompt	Assignment Prompt Spring 2017 Schedule (Partial)	Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule
3 - (F) Part-time non-tenure-track	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule	Fall 2017 Schedule Assignment Prompt	[ineligible]
4 - (F) Full-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt	Assignment Prompt	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule
5 - (F) Part-time non-tenure-track	Spring 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt	Assignment Prompt	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule
6 - (F) Full-time non-tenure-track	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule	Spring 2017 Schedule Assignment Prompt	[ineligible]
7 - (M) Part-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt 1 & 2	Assignment Prompt 1 & 2	Spring 2017 Schedule Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule
8 - (M) Full-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt	[ineligible]
9a - (F) Full-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus Assignment Prompt 1 & 2	Assignment Prompt 1	Spring 2017 Schedule
9b - (F) Full-time non-tenure-track	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule	Spring 2017 Syllabus Assignment Prompt 1	Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt 1
10 - (M) Full-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt	Assignment Prompt	Spring 2017 Syllabus/Schedule Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule
11 - (F) Full-time non-tenure-track	Fall 2016 Syllabus/Schedule Assignment Prompt 1 & 2	Assignment Prompt 3	Spring 2017 Schedule Fall 2017 Syllabus/Schedule

Grounded theory necessitates research methods that result in rich data collection, which Charmaz (2006) asserts should "reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" (p. 14). This study necessitated an additional research method to further triangulate data on participants' pedagogical development.[8] Semi-structured interviews were determined to be the most suitable method for this purpose.

Classic grounded theory recommends that a researcher first conduct unstructured interviews, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe as "open-ended conversations during which respondents are allowed to talk with no imposed limitation of time," and then conduct focused semi-structured interviews (p. 75-76). Constructivist grounded theory recommends conducting either unstructured or semi-structured interviews, but suggests that either method should be "intensive" in that the researcher should continuously probe for more in-depth exploration of topics (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). Surmising that the classic approach would impose too greatly on contingent composition faculty members' time, I had intended to instead follow the constructivist approach, with my initial research design calling for a series of intensive semi-structured interviews to occur over the course of a semester; however, when participants responded apologetically

[8] There is debate as to whether triangulation in interpretive studies is an effective validation measure, as it assumes there is "an underlying objective reality which can be converged upon" (Scotland, 2012, p. 12); however, I'd argue, as Creswell (2003) does, that validity in qualitative research is not a test of whether findings are objectively true, but instead whether they are subjectively accurate (p. 195). The most explicit effort for triangulation in this study involved the comparison of survey, reflection, and interview data (as participant accounts of their pedagogical changes) and course document data (as planned or implemented pedagogical changes). This triangulation does not stand in this study as a determination of objective truth but instead as a determination of interpretive verification. I concede that another researcher privy to the same data may have interpreted this data differently.

to my recruitment efforts, citing the amount of time such interviews would require as their reason for declining, I realized that the constructivist approach, too, imposed too greatly. As a contingent composition faculty member with a heavy course load myself, I empathized and adjusted my research design accordingly, reducing the method to one semi-structured interview conducted through email, which would allow for participants to respond over time at their convenience.

Semi-structured interviews focus on some predetermined questions and, in that way, allow for comparable data across the sample, while also allowing for flexibility with regard to participant-specific questions and follow-up. Although lacking the interaction of a face-to-face interview, the semi-structured email interview protocol I created for this study sufficed in "promot[ing] a conversation" through follow-up replies (Creswell, 2012, p. 219). Careful to be sensitive toward participants' time, I asked for permission to follow-up when I desired clarification or elaboration, and probed further only once given consent to do so. This sensitivity extended to the final question, which was adapted per participant and was designed for clarification or elaboration on selected statements the participant had made in either the survey or the reflection that had been collected at the end of the faculty learning community.[9]

Coding Dichotomies and Revealing Hierarchies

Data analysis in grounded theory begins with coding. Codes are assigned to segments of data in an effort to provide a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" and thus provide a connection between data and meaning (Saldaña,

[9] See Appendix B for the interview protocol.

2016, p. 4). While all approaches to grounded theory advocate for a tiered coding process, the number, names, and order of the coding stages depends on the researcher's study and their selected approach to grounded theory. Typically, the process begins with an initial stage in which the data is coded, moves toward one or more focused stages in which these codes are synthesized into categories, and ends in one or more final stages in which these synthesized categories are analyzed for interpretation of an overarching theme. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this process as a "progressive building up" from the data to an emergent theory such that this theory is *grounded* in the data (p. 35).

I began with a primary elemental method referred to as *descriptive coding*. The descriptive coding method alone does not allow for much, if any, insight into participant perspectives; instead, it is a method of using basic nouns to extract meaning from the data, in this case line by line, such that the topics inherent in the data were made explicit. The purpose of this coding method is to gain an overview of the data. Because I wanted to familiarize myself with the existing data collected by the composition program (the surveys and reflections, in particular), as well as to review the interviews I had conducted, I determined this to be an appropriate coding method with which to begin. However, in addition to familiarizing myself with the data, I also wanted to describe the data in this initial run-through with as little interpretation from me as possible. For that reason, I supplemented the descriptive coding method with a secondary elemental method referred to as *in vivo coding*. This method involved developing codes that were extracted verbatim from the data, thus explicitly calling attention to participant voice. I used this method when a particular word or phrase seemed to stand out. For example, Participant 1

stated that the substandard pay associated with her part-time non-tenure-track position "makes [her] feel like a volunteer." This phrase, *feel like a volunteer*, stood out as particularly poignant and was thus coded verbatim. Charmaz (2006) describes in vivo codes as "symbolic markers of participants" (p. 55). As such, this coding method provided more participant perspective than descriptive coding alone could, and provided a closer, more neutral read of the data.

Charmaz (2006) recommends that a researcher should start by defining "what is happening in [the] data first" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 68). Working with these two elemental coding methods allowed for me to heed this recommendation. Because the goal was familiarity, I didn't move forward to a second stage of coding with these methods. Instead, after completing the initial cycle, I reflected on the developed codes and wrote reflexive memos. While I understood that interpretation was the fundamental process in this study, and that my interpretation would be colored by my lens, I also understood the necessity of heeding grounded theory's call to be reflexive about this interpretation, particularly considering my positionality. Writing memos thus provided a means of understanding the potential for my coding to be influenced by my "interests, positions, and assumptions" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 188). These memos also provided a means of understanding the data as a whole and seeing, across the sample, particular patterns.

* * *

One prominent pattern—the ways in which participants spoke in binary terms or otherwise insinuated a dichotomy—paved a way forward in my analysis, as it prompted me to perform a second review of this data with a coding method designed for the

exploration of contrast. The versus coding method is categorized as an *affective* method in that it explores subjective qualities of the human condition; versus codes, which are constructed as *x vs. y*, are applied to that which reveals dualities, conflicts, or power struggles (Saldaña, 2016, p. 137). I developed and refined versus codes in a first round, categorized and recategorized them in subsequent rounds, and conceptualized them as three moieties in a fourth and final round.

In grounded theory, the first round of coding is often referred to as *open coding* or *initial coding*. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe this first round as the process of (1) closely examining a data segment (a line, a paragraph, etc.) and applying a code that captures its essence, (2) closely examining the next data segment and, if the same conceptually, applying the same code (while looking for variations in properties and dimensions), or, if different conceptually, applying a new code, and (3) creating, simultaneously, a list of codes and a list of properties and dimensions (p. 197). I followed the process described in that I moved line by line through my data to add codes, to describe these codes, and to create a list of these codes and their descriptions. The properties and dimensions of a particular code, captured in the description, served as the inclusion criteria, which evolved throughout the coding process. In other words, when a segment of data aligned with a previously developed code, it was coded as such; however, if it added certain properties and dimensions, I had to determine whether these qualities enhanced the code and thus should be added to the inclusion criteria or whether these qualities altered the code and thus warranted the development of a new code. In this way, codes were developed and refined simultaneously.

Unlike the elemental coding method with which I had begun the data analysis, which had resulted in an ever-increasing number of codes as I moved from one piece of data to the next, the constant development and refinement in which I engaged throughout the first round of versus coding resulted in a reduced number of codes as I moved from one piece of data to the next, modifying and synthesizing accordingly. Ultimately, this process resulted in twenty-six refined codes (see Table 3).

Table 3 Versus Codes

Best Practices Given vs. Constructed	Curriculum Design as Joint vs. Solo Effort
Comp/Rhet vs. Other Discipline	Feedback as Frequent vs. Minimal
Comp/Rhet vs. Other Expertise	Feeling Confident vs. Insecure
Comp/Rhet Research vs. Teaching	Feeling Encouraged vs. Ambivalent
Compensation as Unfair vs. Fair	Feeling Included vs. Isolated
Contingent vs. Tenured Hiring	Instructor Learning as Difficult vs. Effortless
Contingent vs. Tenured Job/Status	Professional Identity vs. Professional Development
Curriculum vs. Course Goals	Professional Identity vs. Student Learning
Curriculum vs. Student Learning	Reflecting as Frequent vs. Minimal
Curriculum as Academic vs. Real-World Applicability	Skill Breakdown vs. Combination
Curriculum as Academic vs. Real-World Influence	Student Learning as Difficult vs. Effortless
Curriculum as Sequenced vs. Disconnected	Time vs. Teaching Load
Curriculum as Unreasonable vs. Reasonable	WPA as Savior vs. Admin

After completing the first coding round, I began a second round in which I reconfigured and categorized the developed codes so as to produce a “metasynthesis of the data corpus” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 234). There are various ways of conducting a second round; in this study, I adhered to the process known as code mapping. In this process, first round codes were analyzed and reconfigured according to certain commonalities amongst them such that they became grouped into categories, and then, in subsequent rounds, “condensed further into the study’s central themes or concepts” (Saldaña, 2016,

p. 218). Code mapping typically uses gerunds when titling a category in an effort to demonstrate the larger process shared by each code group. Attempting to understand what these codes represented with regard to a "sum greater than its parts" involved some level of "creativity and imagination" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 235). After sorting and resorting my codes, I distilled the twenty-six codes into eight processes (see Table 4).

Table 4 Versus Categories

Connecting Identity to Instructor and Student Learning	Rethinking Practice to Enhance Student Learning
Developing Competence Amid Contingent Conditions	Supplanting Isolation with Collaboration
Negotiating Instructor Motivation and Learning	Understanding Oneself as "Other" in the Field
Redesigning Curriculum to Enhance Student Learning	Understanding Oneself as "Other" in the Institution

In a third round, I recategorized these eight categories further. The categories in which contingent faculty understood themselves as "other" were grouped together and recategorized as "Institutional and Disciplinary Treatment of Contingency." The categories in which contingent faculty spoke of their learning, competence, and collaboration were grouped together and recategorized as "Professionalization of Contingent Faculty Members." And the categories in which contingent faculty spoke of connections between their development and their students' learning were grouped together and recategorized as "Professionalization's Perceived Influence on Students."

In a fourth and final round, I conceptualized these three categories as three moieties, phrased in versus terms (see Table 5).[10]

[10] See Appendix C for a list of all initial codes (with descriptions) as transformed into moieties through the process described.

Table 5 Versus Concepts

Institutional and Disciplinary Treatment of Contingency	→	Tenured Conditions vs. Contingent Conditions
Professionalization of Contingent Faculty Members	→	Contingent Conditions vs. Professional Development
Professionalization's Perceived Influence on Students	→	Professional Development vs. Student Learning

This conceptualization revealed a hierarchy in which participants were straddled, with their understandings of themselves as professionals affected by those with the most power (tenured faculty), which, in turn, affected those with the least power (students). Reflecting on this in memos left me with a number of questions, all of which seemed to circle around the nature of a professional as understood by contingent composition faculty members. These questions prompted me to return to the data and compare statements across the sample that spoke to this.

Participants' Perceptions of a Professional

Charmaz (2006) describes theoretical coding as "lend[ing] form to the focused codes" collected such that they conceptualize the relation between substantive codes in ways that allow for a coherent, analytic story to move "in a theoretical direction" (p. 63). In identifying contingent composition faculty members' perceptions of a professional as a central gathering point for the data analysis, I had begun the prerequisite work of theoretical coding; however, at this stage, in an effort to hone in on the dimensions and properties of that central category, I chose to selectively code using a process more akin to thematic analysis, as this process provided a way to explicitly explore the dimensions and properties of what is essentially an identity category. The purpose of thematic analysis, which Saldaña (2016) refers to as *themeing the data*, is to explore "a participant's psychological world of beliefs, constructs, identity development, and

emotional experiences," and, as such, is typically used in phenomenological studies (p. 198). This method involves "comparable reflection on participant meanings" drawn from participants' statements on a particular concept or incident, for which the researcher had prompted through "carefully planned questioning techniques" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 200).

While the reflections provided some insight into how participants perceived the concept of a professional, the interviews I conducted contained the richest data, largely due to the design of one set of seven questions in the protocol. This set, particularly the final two questions, had been originally developed to serve the first of my research questions: "How do contingent composition faculty members describe their professional identities prior to and since engagement in a faculty learning community?"

1. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a professional in your field?
2. To what extent do you believe the composition program might understand a professional differently?
3. To what extent do you believe the English department might understand a professional differently?
4. To what extent do you believe the larger field might understand a professional differently?
5. How do you contend with any differences in this understanding of a professional?
6. How would you describe your sense of professional identity prior to the learning community?
7. In what ways, if any, has this sense of professional identity changed since the learning community?

The first five questions had not been designed to explicitly serve the research question but were instead designed to ensure that I understood what the participant's sense of a professional was so that I could better understand the relation between that and their associated sense of professional identity prior to and since the faculty learning community. Had this set only included the final two questions, I would have had to presume what the participant understood a professional to be; thus, the first five questions were designed to avoid such presumptions. Fortuitously, their design also served the thematic analysis such that no new data needed to be collected.

The first round of themeing the data involved searching, line by line, for references to the concept of a professional. I made three decisions about how I would theme the data to effectively capture this concept: (1) I would only theme explicit references rather than what I presumed to be discussion of a professional, (2) I would cull thematic statements "directly from the participants' own language" by using in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016, p. 200), and (3) I would not engage in a process of synthesis and reduction as I developed these thematic statements. In this particular method of data analysis, redundancy, as an indicator of frequency, allowed for me to determine thematic significance. A total of forty-four thematic statements were developed in this first round, each of which responded to "A Professional is…" (see Table 6).

Table 6 Raw Thematic Statements

a graduate of studies in and a current researcher in a particular field	compensated as "commensurate with the work or the expertise required"	"involved in research, teaching, or writing about" comp/rhet
a member of a "rigorous, important, and necessary" discipline	compensated such that they "feel like a professional" rather "a volunteer"	knowledgeable of research and bases their teaching on such
a member of a "well-funded" department	compensated with "respect for [their] abilities and time"	knowledgeable such that they "enrich students' time in [their] classes"

a “part of the community” such that they feel a sense of belonging	confident in approaching students, which “affects their students’ ability to learn”	not on a “very different (and lower) tier than tenure-track faculty”
actively interested in all fields that formed “the world [their] students will inherit”	confident and thus not scared “to take a chance” or of “looking silly or inept”	not seen by the university or by society as a tradesperson
allowed to participate and thus included “in the department’s activities”	constantly developing their professional identity	prioritized in the wider university community
an active academic with no significant employment lapse	curious and always wants to “improve [their] skills”	recognized by the university
an “active researcher” (whether published or not)	engaged in “pedagogical practice”	supported in “interactive [and] social” professional development
“an agent for making a positive difference in the learning of [their] students”	given opportunities for “professional development and growth”	taken seriously as a researcher and teacher in a serious discipline
an author of articles and presenter at conferences	given opportunities “to discuss theory and teaching practices with colleagues”	treated as “a member of the university”
appropriately compensated for their work, knowledge, and expertise	given opportunities to share research with colleagues “to improve their teaching”	treated as a professional by “peers and other university faculty”
attentive to research such that they provide valuable information to students	given opportunities “to share with colleagues”	treated with “professional respect”
aware of why, what, and how they teach, and “what [they] have to offer as a teacher”	informed by research such that they “teach using evidence-based strategies”	united in a common goal with colleagues and supported in “reach[ing] it together”
“committed to the same project” as their colleagues	instructional faculty “heavily involved in research and writing about the field”	valued by the field
“committed to [their] profession”	invested in and cares about “the content and teaching methods” used in their classes	

The second round of data-themeing, like that of versus coding, involved a process of categorization. As I was working with a considerable number of statements, this process required much time and contemplation. Statements were sorted and resorted as I worked to comparatively analyze and categorize them. The encompassing statements I developed were repeatedly revised and refined until I was confident that they comprehensively represented the raw statements. Ultimately, I was able to represent the forty-four raw statements in six refined statements (see Table 7).

Table 7 Refined Thematic Statements

A Professional is Appropriately Compensated	A Professional is Invested in Students
A Professional is Confident and Respected	A Professional is Recognized in a Department
A Professional is Eager to Learn	A Professional is Recognized in a Discipline

These six statements served as support for three theoretical constructs developed in a subsequent round. The statements related to respect and compensation were grouped together, as this lack of sufficient compensation often equated to a lack of respect for participants' work, and thus generated the first construct, "Professional=Respect." The statements related to recognition were grouped together, as both were about a sense of belonging, and thus generated the second construct, "Professional=Membership." And the statements related to learning and students were grouped together, as this growth in knowledge often correlated with what participants could provide to students, and thus generated the third construct, "Professional=Growth" (see Table 8).[11]

Table 8 Theoretical Constructs

A Professional is Confident and Respected & A Professional is Appropriately Compensated	→	Professional = Respect
A Professional is Recognized in a Department & A Professional is Recognized in a Discipline	→	Professional = Membership
A Professional is Eager to Learn & A Professional is Invested in Students	→	Professional = Growth

This conceptualization suggested that external validation as a professional (respect and membership) was more prominent than internal validation as a professional (growth).

* * *

Until this point, I had analyzed all collected data with the exception of the course documents. Bowen (2009) asserts that documents are prime for "tracking change and development" and that, when "drafts of a particular document are accessible, the researcher can compare them to identify the changes" (p. 30). I treated the iterations of

[11] See Appendix D for a list of all thematic statements as transformed into theoretical constructs through the process described.

course documents as artifacts to be interpreted as a visual whole so as to facilitate a holistic comparison across the iterations. To inform my interpretation of a participant's course documents, and to gain a fuller understanding of their pedagogical and larger professional story, I referred to their statements in the survey, reflection, and interview, thus drawing from the whole of their data set. Because the interviews provided the richest data and were thus key to understanding each participant's pedagogical and larger professional story, I focused on the four participants for whom I had interview data: Participants 1, 2, 4, and 9a/b.

The approach I followed for course document analysis was akin to that of narrative research. Lieblich et al. (1998) explain that in narrative research, the researcher "enters an interactive process with the narrative and becomes sensitive to its narrator's voice and meanings," a process that they suggest is aligned with grounded theory in that such reading allows for the generation and refinement of theoretical statements (p. 10). In this way, it promotes what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as a researcher's *theoretical sensitivity* (p. 46). Of the types of narrative research articulated by Lieblich et al. (1998), I determined *holistic-content* to be the most useful mode for understanding the larger professional story presented in the reflections and interviews in light of the course documents developed (p. 13). The process for reading content in accordance with the holistic-content mode involves five steps:

1. Reading and rereading to determine patterns and an overall focus of the story
2. Noting impressions throughout the story
3. Determining the overall focus of the story as suggested by frequent themes

4. Color-coding and reading themes in the story
5. Following the themes in the story and noting conclusions about these themes (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 62-63).

As mentioned, I read a participant's survey, reflection, and interview data while referring to their course documents such that themes were determined from the whole of each participant's data set. This method of analyzing multiple documents to understand a larger story is not without precedent. Keats (2009), when writing about what she refers to as *multiple text analysis*, asserts that moving beyond a participant's spoken or written account to other modes of voice, such as visual data, can "expand a researcher's opportunity to better understand the complex narrative participants construct" (p. 181). In this case, working with each data set revealed shared understandings amongst participants as to what professional status entailed, of the extent to which their participation in a faculty learning community provided access to this status, and of how their professional identities were reframed accordingly (see Table 9).

Table 9 Predominant Themes of Interviewed Sample

Participant	Themes	Narrative Support
1 - (F) Part-time/ Adjunct	Membership: Recognition Respect: Compensation	The faculty learning community allowed for her to feel recognized (no longer anonymous and expendable but visible and valuable) and to recognize others as colleagues. This promoted a sense of institutional membership that contributed to her professional identity development. However, turnover was such that nearly everyone she had come to recognize as colleagues left the university in semester(s) following the faculty learning community. Loss of membership, compounded by her poor compensation as an adjunct, curbed her professional identity development.
2 - (F) Part-time/ Adjunct	Membership: Support and Collaboration Respect: Security	Peer encouragement in the faculty learning community supported her development, as did engagement in activities she deemed *professional* (discussing research, collaborating with others), which promoted a sense of institutional membership that contributed to her professional identity development. Since the faculty learning community, time constraints prevented her from continuing to engage in these activities. Her professional identity thereafter was largely defined by the lack of job security and the lack of advancement provided to her as an adjunct.

4 - (F) Full-time/ Non-tenure-track	Membership: Recognition Respect: Expertise	The faculty learning community meetings were set in accordance with participant schedules, which allowed for her to feel recognized and included, neither of which she felt in the larger structural context, as contingent faculty were typically excluded (either through lack of expectation or lack of invitation) from functions and activities therein. The lack of expectation for engagement with research outside of the faculty learning community, as well as a lack of associated time, hindered her ability to develop expertise and further develop as a professional.
9a/b - (F) Full-time/ Non-tenure-track	Membership: Support and Collaboration Respect: Expertise	Participating in two faculty learning communities provided her with a supportive environment over the course of her first year in which she felt protected and in which she could collaborate on curricular revisions. As her background was in literature, she had struggled to identify as a composition professional. After a year of teaching and of engaging in discussions about research relevant to this teaching, she began to identify as a professional, but time constraints prevented her from developing expertise, and she continued to align herself more with literature than with writing studies.

This method reinforced my understanding that what changes participants had made to their course documents were but tangential to their more complex and shifting perceptions of themselves as professionals in relation to what professional status was afforded to them through this work.

Theory Development Process

Throughout the data analysis, I engaged in grounded theory's constant comparative method, which refers to the process of coding and analyzing simultaneously to generate theory that is "integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 103). More specifically, this process entailed comparing codes to determine shared properties for the purpose of categorizing, comparing categories to determined shared properties for the purpose of conceptualizing, and ascertaining which concepts were core to the emerging theory and which were irrelevant. While memos assisted throughout much of the data analysis to work through comparisons of codes and connections between categories, I found diagramming to be more useful for piecing together the overall connective tissue. Indeed, diagrams are frequently used by grounded

theory methodologists to "tease out relationships while constructing their analyses and to demonstrate these relationships in their completed works" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 117). The diagram I incrementally built throughout the data analysis depicts the relationship between the moieties developed through versus coding (represented in the diagram by solid boxes), the theoretical constructs developed through data-themeing (represented in the diagram by dotted boxes), and the core constructs associated with this relationship as reinforced by the narrative research (see Figure 1).[12]

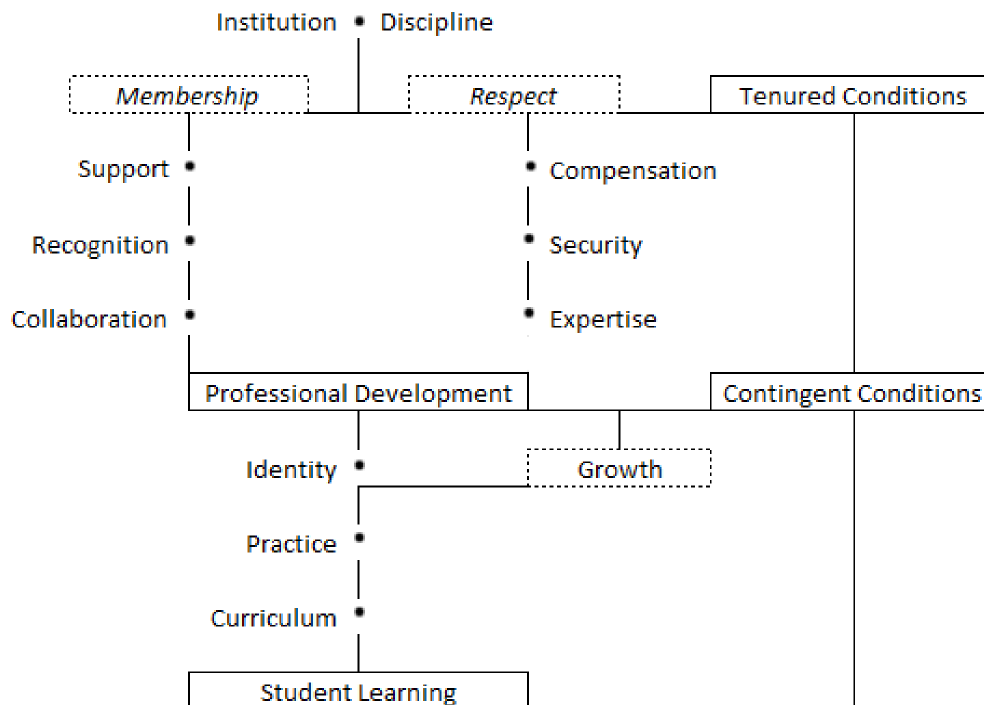

Figure 1 Professionalization Context A

[12] As discussed earlier in this chapter, the three moieties developed through versus coding were (1) Tenured Conditions vs. Contingent Conditions, (2) Contingent Conditions vs. Professional Development, and (3) Professional Development vs. Student Learning. The three theoretical constructs developed through data-themeing were (1) Professional=Respect, (2) Professional=Membership, and (3) Professional=Growth.

This diagram demonstrates (1) how contingent composition faculty members understood two professional status markers (respect and membership) as directly associated with tenured faculty members (with only the membership branch accessible to contingent composition faculty members through professional development), and (2) how contingent composition faculty members understood the third professional status marker (growth) as directly associated with student learning (and not exclusively gained through professional development).[13]

While the diagram represents the whole of the data analysis, it does not represent the emergent theory due to a lack of theoretical saturation on certain constructs. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define *theoretical saturation* as the point at which additional data does not lend to any further development of categories (p. 61). I had reached theoretical saturation on core constructs (namely, the professional status branches of membership and respect, and the relationship between contingent composition faculty members' professional development and their professional identity); however, I had not reached theoretical saturation on less relevant constructs (namely, the relationship between professional identity and student learning). Because that relationship was beyond the scope of the emerging theory, I heeded the suggestion that additional data collection was unnecessary for "categories already saturated or for categories not of core value to the theory," and proceeded to develop an interpretive, substantive theory based on that which was of value to the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 73).

[13] The purpose of this section is to explain the diagramming that aided in the process of developing theory. In the next chapter, I unpack the data that supports the findings referred to in this section.

Depicted as opaque in Figure 2 are saturated categories not of core value to the theory (that associated with respect and tenured conditions) and unsaturated categories beyond the scope of the study (that associated with growth and student learning).

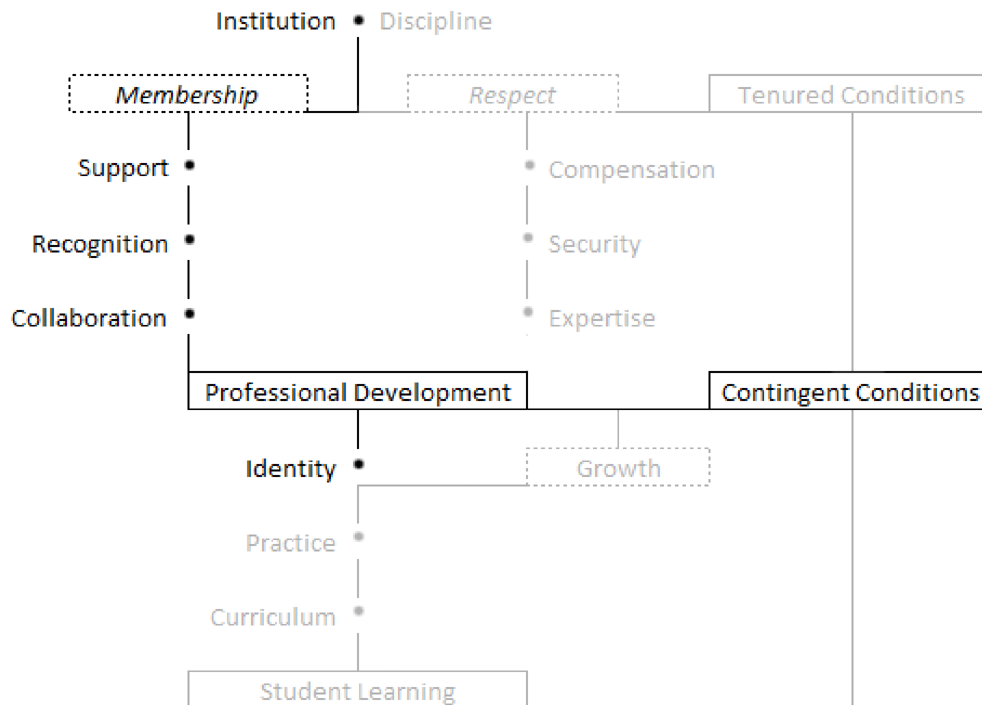

Figure 2 Professionalization Context B

What stands out in this depiction, and thus what serves as the framework for the interpretive, substantive theory generated in this study (as forecasted in the previous chapter and as supported in the next chapter) is (1) the relationship between institutional membership as a form of professional status and contingent composition faculty members' professional identity, and (2) the intermediary of professional development (in this case, faculty learning communities) that allowed for contingent composition faculty

members to access this sense of membership and associated identity. When this intermediary was not present (and thus, when contingent composition faculty members no longer had access to a supportive context within the larger structural context of their work), that sense of membership and associated identity was not sustained, as their contingent conditions diminished the extent to which they continued to identify as professional members of the institution.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY OF CONTINGENT MEMBERSHIP AND IDENTITY

> While the term 'contingent' describes positions in which faculty members teach on short-term contracts with low pay and little or no job security, inadequate office space, and challenging curricular and professional conditions, the idea of contingency fails to capture the true complexity of positions located off the tenure track (Schell, 2017, p. x).

The development of contingent composition faculty members' professional identities is hindered by their labor as a stopgap solution and, likewise, by the insecurity of their positions; by problematic hiring practices that do not provide time to effectively develop their courses; by substandard compensation that is incommensurate with their work; by the way their positions, and composition itself, is understood in the university; and by the burden of their workload, which does not allow for time to engage in a sustained relationship with research and thus develop disciplinary expertise. In nearly every way, then, contingent composition faculty members are blocked from having professional status within the larger structural context of their work.

Faculty learning communities cannot change these conditions; however, they can serve as an intermediary between these conditions and a sense of professional status related to institutional membership. In this chapter, I introduce the interpretive, substantive theory regarding the aforementioned relationship between membership and the professional identities of contingent composition faculty members as mediated through the faculty learning community. To ground the theory, I incorporate statements

from participants that represent themes from across the sample. To allow for better explication of the theory, I conflate the program, department, and larger institution as a structural participation system associated with contingent conditions, which canopies the supportive participation system associated with a faculty learning community.

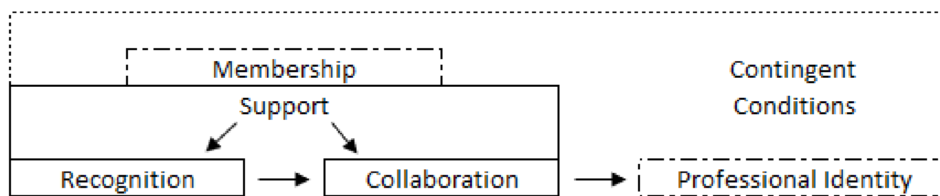

Figure 3 Theory of Contingent Membership and Identity

As depicted in Figure 3, when contingent composition faculty members are provided with a regular, supportive context in which they are encouraged to develop as mentors to each other (support), and when participants therein are recognized as professionals with valuable perspectives (recognition), they feel confident in their ability to collaborate on research-informed revisions to practice (collaboration), and likewise feel confident in themselves as members of a professional community (professional identity). Because membership and identity developed through the supportive context are influenced by the structural context, particularly upon the completion of the supportive faculty learning community context, these elements are enclosed by a dashed and dotted line that signifies their connection to both contexts.

Although still subject to their contingent conditions while participating in a faculty learning community, the sense of membership that contingent composition faculty

members acquire from the faculty learning community supplants some sense of their otherness. In that way, when contingent composition faculty members are situated in both the supportive and the structural context, the supportive context can provide for that which they are deprived in the structural context. However, upon completion of the faculty learning community and thus when contingent composition faculty members are situated firmly within the structural context, what they had acquired therein is subject only to the structural context and begins to buckle underneath the weight of conditions that do not continue to recognize, much less nourish, membership and professional identity.

Because the faculty learning community cannot be divorced from the larger institutional structure in which it is situated, I first discuss the ways in which professional status is hindered by contingent conditions. Next, I discuss the scope and depth of the membership provided through participation in faculty learning communities, as well as the conditions under which this membership occurs. I then discuss the nature of professional identity as constructed through this sense of membership and as thereafter influenced by the aforementioned contingent conditions.

Contingent Conditions as Structural Context

Because both part-time and full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members were contracted by the university, with the former on semester contracts and the latter on annual contracts, they understood their labor as a stopgap solution and thus understood themselves as outliers rather than *real* members of the university—those with tenure and thus job security. This was especially true for part-time non-tenure-track

faculty members whose contracts were largely contingent on enrollment predictions, which meant that any unexpected decrease in enrollment may result in nonrenewal or termination of their contracts. For that reason, they were often on edge, unsure of their standing, and subsequently unsure of their worth.

> I am an adjunct professor and my association with the university is based on a series of contracts signed each semester to teach English 302. . . . Adjuncts feel insecure. We never know semester to semester if we are going to rehired. We are grouped together in our little room . . . and the cast of characters is constantly changing (Participant 2).

While some themes that emerged in this study pointed to increased confidence amongst contingent composition faculty members as associated with their participation in a faculty learning community, this confidence was in reference to how contingent composition faculty members felt about their teaching rather than how they felt about their positions. It seemed, regardless of their participation in a faculty learning community, that their insecurity about the fragility of their positions remained. That Participant 2 spoke of the shared adjunct faculty office's "constantly changing cast of characters" indicated to me that, either because of labor conditions or otherwise, adjunct composition faculty members did not stay long in their positions and thus that the shared adjunct faculty office had a proverbial revolving door. Due to the high turnover, Participant 2 stated that it was difficult for adjunct composition faculty members "to measure success on anything beyond longevity."

This understanding of themselves as expendable laborers was exacerbated by their perceived invisibility, as was evidenced by their lack of representation or their misrepresentation in public-facing university communication. The provost's webpage on contingent faculty, for example, describes the university's adjunct faculty body as comprised of those who "offer professional expertise that is outside of the experience of most full-time faculty members, and provide students with examples from their profession, which helps build practical connections between the subject matter and their chosen careers" (George Mason University). This description suggests a homogenous group not motivated by financial needs but by a desire to bestow upon students the professional and practical knowledge they gained through full-time professional employment outside the university. This may be an accurate representation of part-time non-tenure-track faculty members in engineering, but it is not an accurate representation of part-time non-tenure-track faculty members in the humanities, for whom teaching was their primary employment (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 51).[14]

Invisibility was also evidenced by the lack of contingent composition faculty members' inclusion in the professional activities of the English department. This was true for both part-time and full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members, and thus served as further demarcation between the contingent and the tenure-stream faculty body. Participant 4 said that contingent composition faculty members felt like they were "on a

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[14] The typology formulated by Gappa & Leslie (1993) categorizes adjunct faculty who hold full-time professional positions outside the university as *specialists, experts, and professionals*, and those retired from full-time professional positions outside the university as *career-enders* (pp. 49-54). Contrarily, adjunct faculty with financial motivation to teach, as they do not hold full-time professional employment outside of the university but instead desire to teach full-time, are categorized as *aspiring academics* (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 54).

very different (and lower) tier than tenure-track faculty" as based on "rules about our participation (and exclusion) in the department's activities," such as governance. Doe et al. (2011) suggests that participation in governance could provide contingent composition faculty members with "voice, representation, and recognition," but that what participation they were allowed "seemed spurred by a kind of tokenism, their roles limited to being a sole representative on department committees or to serving on segregated contingent-only committees" (p. 440). Kezar and Sam (2013) attribute a lack of representation of contingent faculty in governance as evidence of an overt hierarchy (p. 57).

The hiring practices for contingent composition faculty members served as further evidence of this overt hierarchy. Contingent faculty (whether part-time or full-time non-tenure-track) were not sought a year in advance like tenure-stream faculty members. There was no time investment on their behalf. They were not provided with campus tours or opportunities to meet and dine and converse with other faculty. Part-time non-tenure-track faculty members, in particular, were not even given much of a choice in their schedule, as the nature of their last-minute hiring necessitated that they be assigned to what course sections remained.[15] Kezar et al. (2019) argue that these practices send a message to contingent faculty that "their participation in the academic environment is impermanent, unnecessary, tangential, supplementary—*adjunctive*" (p. 79).

The practice of hiring contingent composition faculty members just before the start of a semester did not allow them sufficient time to effectively develop their courses,

[15] A study conducted by a team of graduate students on contingent faculty at George Mason University found that thirty-three percent of those surveyed were hired two weeks ahead of the semester's start, and that twenty-five percent were hired just one week ahead (Allison et al., 2014, p. 4)

which was particularly problematic for new hires unfamiliar with the courses to which they had been assigned. Participant 9a/b, for example, had taught first-year composition while pursuing her graduate studies in folklore, but she had been hired (as a full-time non-tenure-track faculty member) to teach advanced composition, which she had never before taught, and had but two weeks before the start of the semester to figure out how.

> I accepted my job with two weeks to prepare to teach English 302 for the first time. I was literally thrown in the deep end. . . . [The composition director] met with me for several hours to give me an overview of what English 302 was (I literally had never even sat in on a class or read a syllabus before) and what assignments were expected of me. [She] answered multiple questions over email in the two weeks that I was developing my syllabus. She also read over my syllabus and course calendar that I developed during the first week of classes and gave brief feedback (Participant 9a/b).

While Participant 9a/b's statements speak to the problematic hiring conditions of contingent faculty (and to the extent to which the field, despite its professionalization, was still contingent in that it relied on faculty without credentials in the field to teach its cornerstone composition courses), they also speak to how these conditions imposed a significant time investment on part of composition administrators in that short pre-semester window to familiarize new contingent faculty with the courses they would be teaching and with the ideologies and policies of the composition program, department, and larger university. Participant 9a/b said that she "entirely relied" on the advice of the composition director during that two-week window, as time constraints prevented her

from doing otherwise. In this way, last-minute hiring practices arguably prevent contingent composition faculty from having much autonomy with their course design.

> Ideally, I would have been hired several months prior so that I could read some pedagogy, do some research, talk to faculty, and read sample syllabi and assignments. . . . It ended up being an excellent semester, but I did a tremendous amount of work to get it that way (Participant 9a/b).

This lack of time to effectively develop her course suggested to Participant 9a/b that composition was viewed by the university as less important and less respected than other fields of study, and by extension that she, too, as a contractual laborer in composition, was less important and less respected.

> Composition is regarded as less rigorous, important, and necessary for students than other areas of study, we are poorly-funded compared to other departments, and the needs of the department and its instructors are clearly not prioritized in the wider university community. Our research and work are taken less seriously and I suspect it's not even seen as a discipline (Participant 9a/b).

In the academic year following the faculty learning communities under study, the same year that I was following up with former faculty learning community participants, a recently-formed university-wide task force to study contingent conditions presented initial findings to the campus. The task force's presentation revealed that full-time non-tenure-track faculty members in the English department—the majority of whom taught composition—were among the lowest paid of all full-time non-tenure-track faculty in the

university.[16] This confirmed suspicions amongst contingent composition faculty members about the extent to which the course and those teaching it were valued. I did not ask Participant 9a/b if she had attended this forum and thus do not know whether her statements as quoted above were prompted by the task force's presentation or by her own understandings and experiences. I also did not ask Participant 9a/b as to the extent to which her professional identity was defined by the perceived lack of professional status associated with composition and so can only assert here that her statements suggest, but do not confirm, a connection.

Like Participant 9a/b, Participant 1 was hired just before the start of the semester (one week prior, in this case). She had taken a decade off from teaching after receiving her doctorate in Asian-American literature and felt, because of this lapse, that her professional identity was "in some respects, nonexistent" (Participant 1). Since being hired as a part-time non-tenure-track faculty member, her professional identity was defined by the lack of professional status associated with her position, particularly in regard to institutional treatment and compensation.[17]

> I think being a professional in your field is evidenced by the ways in which you are treated by peers and other university faculty and by the amount of compensation that you receive for your work and for your knowledge and

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[16] Although no records exist for this particular presentation, the raw data on which it was based was pulled from an annual Faculty Senate report on faculty salaries, the most recent of which is available online to internal users. See George Mason University (2019).

[17] An institutional study on faculty satisfaction at George Mason University ranked the university lowest amongst a comparative group of peer institutions with regard to faculty satisfaction with compensation, with only about thirty percent of the university's faculty reportedly satisfied (Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, 2019).

> expertise. . . . I feel that the monetary compensation for my work and expertise shows a lack of respect for my abilities and my time. There are personal reasons why I am not working as a tenure-track professor at a university, none of which speak to my ability to do so, and to be paid so little for such quality work and expertise and education does not make me feel like a professional. It makes me feel like a volunteer (Participant 1).

That Participant 1 used the word *volunteer* speaks to how she perceived her compensation, and likewise her identity as a professional, as seemingly nonexistent. Not being fairly compensated was, to participants across the sample, largely a matter of not being respected as professionals, which thus naturally hindered their ability to identify as professionals. Participant 2 echoed Participant 1's words with her assertion that contingent composition faculty members' compensation was "not commensurate with the work or the expertise required." As Kiefson (2004) argues, the university has come to rely on a cost-cutting management strategy that favors less-expensive labor over more-expensive labor "whenever possible" (p. 147). Participants across the sample seemed torn between competing value systems—one in which they valued their expertise and their education as that of a professional, and the other in which the university seemingly valued only their labor. As I discuss in the following sections, this latter value system, and thus this external validation, stood as more prominent in their perception of themselves as professions than their internal validation.

While the composition program was able to provide relatively generous compensation for contingent composition faculty members' participation in a faculty

learning community, the program had no power to alter contractual pay. Thus, no matter the extent to which a contingent composition faculty member (either part-time adjunct or full-time non-tenure-track) engaged in professional development, there would be no change to their position or their associated pay. In fact, engagement in these initiatives was explicitly categorized in contingent faculty members' annual evaluation portfolio as *uncompensated activities*.

As teaching was the primary responsibility of contingent faculty, their course loads did not tend to allow for time to do anything but teach. For that reason, while most part-time non-tenure track faculty members aspired to be full-time non-tenure track faculty members, some, like Participant 2, resigned themselves to the part-time position because it allowed some control over course load. The full-time position, contrarily, required a course load of four sections each semester. Participant 2 said, "If I tried to do four sections, I'd need a teaching assistant to help me get through the grading. It's just so much to read." She had, in previous semesters, taught three sections of advanced composition but had felt "frazzled by the workload," which had made her doubt her competence (Participant 2).

> I thought I was inept in how I handled my courses, but I think it's the system. So, I cut back to two sections and it's been a great change. I have more time to reflect on my teaching. I have more time to plan and grade and evaluate how the semester is going (Participant 2).

For Participant 2, compensation was seemingly less important than the ability to effectively teach. It is likely that she had reached what Kezar et al. (2019) call a "lack of

opportunity to perform," which is when circumstances associated with "contingent faculty's working conditions prevent them from educating to their potential" (p. 99). In Participant 2's case, she seemed to understand that requiring that many writing courses put too much of a burden on faculty, and thus that it was this requirement, rather than her ability to handle the requirement, that was at fault. Limiting herself to two sections allowed for the time and energy needed to effectively teach; however, that also meant that the part-time non-tenure-track position served as both "the beginning and endpoint" of her career, as there was "nothing to aspire to in terms of promotion" (Participant 2). Larson (2016) confirms this unfortunate truth: "The truth is that adjunct teaching is rarely a road to anything other than more adjunct teaching" (p. 165).

Unlike part-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members, full-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members were provided with a promotion pathway that, while not resulting in tenure, did result in increased compensation; however, this pathway only applied to those with terminal degrees. Participant 4 was a full-time non-tenure-track faculty member who had been teaching composition at George Mason University for many years. She had worked toward a doctorate in medieval literature but had not completed the degree; as an ABD (all but dissertation), she did not qualify for promotion of any kind and thus received, and would continue to receive, base pay.

Because she held a full-time position, she did not have the choice in course load that Participant 2 had in the part-time position. Teaching four sections of advanced composition each semester wore down on her. Several of her survey responses, as well as much of her interview, referenced the lack of time provided in her schedule to engage in

activities not directly related to managing her course load, particularly professional development opportunities offered by the university. For example, she spoke of a reading group offered in which she had participated "until things became too hectic later in the semester," and also spoke of other support offered but noted that the majority of those opportunities were "scheduled when [she was] teaching" (Participant 4). For this participant, the largest impediment to professional status (as defined by engagement in research and professional activities) was time.

Time, for contingent composition faculty members, meant struggle. Struggle for time to keep atop a pile of student writing that was ever-growing, to provide effective feedback, and to return that feedback so that it could be considered by students before their next step in the writing process was due. Struggle for time to design lesson plans that did all of the things: serve course goals, bridge reading and writing assignments, promote active learning, enact what they knew to be best practices. Struggle for time to attend to student emails about assignments or policies or missed class lessons, about family members dying or technology failing, about grade boosts or extra-credit opportunities. Struggle for time to eat, to rest, or to spend with family without feeling guilty about that pile of student writing that had not yet been reviewed, or that lesson plan that had not yet been designed, or that student email that had not yet been answered. These struggles were prioritized because they were immediately demanded.

Contrarily, redesigning curriculum and reading research such that this redesign connected theory to practice, because this was not immediately demanded, remained perpetually on hold. Kezar et al. (2019) refer to the lack of time to engage in necessary

curricular revision as one of the many ways in which contingent faculty's working conditions result in the aforementioned "lack of opportunity to perform" (p. 99). Indeed, Participant 4 said, "There have been a number of occasions where I wanted to develop a new assignment or research a particular problem but didn't because of those time/workload constraints."

This was true not only for Participant 4 but for most other participants, as well. Participant 11, for example, had not made changes to her discipline analysis project in over a decade: "I had been using [the assignment] since 2003, and I was ready for a change." Likewise, Participant 10 spoke of how he had identified a problematic unit in his advanced composition course several years prior, but because his course load did not allow for time to rethink and redesign that unit, he had resorted, in the years since, to "putting 'band-aids' on that section of the course."

> In a perfect world there would be time for more such experiences. I would like to imagine a lighter teaching load to allow time for more research and curriculum development, preferably with the luxury of doing so with other instructors (Participant 4).

Participants across the sample spoke of the need for time to conduct research to create evidence-based curricular revisions. In fact, when asked in the survey about what they found most valuable about their faculty learning community experience, nearly every participant listed reading research and/or discussing research with their colleagues. Additionally, engagement with research was cited by all interviewed participants as an attribute of a professional. Read together, their statements represented a shared

understanding that while it was important for their professional and pedagogical growth to update themselves on the growing knowledge of their field and thus develop their expertise, they lacked sufficient time to do so.

> It's important to stay current and engaged in your field—which is sometimes harder to do during than academic year than I'd like to admit because of our teaching and workload (Participant 6).

It seemed that time was somewhat of a missing link between agentive and passive professionalism. Doe et al. (2011) confirm that the "magnitude of the teaching and grading responsibility" in labor-intensive courses such as composition does not allow for time to engage in research or other professional activities that have the potential to secure "a better professional future with advancement and recognition" (Doe et al., 2011, p. 435). Indeed, the participants in this study lacked the time needed just to read research, much less produce it so as to achieve such a future.

That this significant work, integral to how contingent composition faculty members build expertise, design and deliver their courses, and identify as professionals, was considered a luxury for which they did not have time, exemplified the tragedy of contingent realities. These constraints, in addition to all that has been previously discussed in this section, represent how the larger, structural conditions of contingent work served as impediments to professional status, as these conditions were not associated with a professional, but with a laborer.

Penrose (2012) identifies three attributes that constitute a university professional: (1) one who possesses and continues to develop their knowledge while working to further

the field's knowledge, (2) one with certain rights and privileges, such as having voice in policy and curriculum, and (3) one part of an inclusive network of learning and collegiality (pp. 113-117). While the faculty learning community served as a supportive, context within the larger structural context, it could only, for the most part, provide contingent composition faculty members with the lattermost of these professional attributes. With regard to the first attribute, the faculty learning community was only able to provide some familiarity with research, as one semester did not provide enough time to develop disciplinary expertise or produce research themselves. Likewise, with regard to the second attribute, the faculty learning community was only able to provide some ownership over (their own) curriculum, but no ownership or input into programmatic curriculum or policy.

Despite the faculty learning community only comprehensively providing for the third attribute, that alone—because it allowed for support, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration that contingent composition faculty members did not have in the structural context—was sufficient in promoting a sense of membership and thus a sense of themselves as professionals. In the three sections that follow, I discuss the attributes that I've conceptualized as constituting membership. In the final section, I discuss the connections between this membership and contingent composition faculty members' professional identity both during and following their participation in faculty learning communities.

Membership as it Relates to Support

Support refers to that provided for contingent composition faculty members through careful coordination and facilitation of faculty learning community meetings. Support occurs when meetings are set in accordance with contingent composition faculty members' schedules, and when they are facilitated such that participants therein are encouraged to openly communicate and overcome stumbling blocks in their learning.

As an initial means of coordination, the administrative facilitator selected meeting dates and times based on polls that identified participants' shared availability. While this may seem to be an obvious method for scheduling meetings, it was accommodative of contingent composition faculty members' schedules in ways that most professional development opportunities offered by the larger university were not, as these other opportunities typically operated on preset schedules to accommodate a larger cross-disciplinary, cross-rank population. In the previous section, for instance, when referring to the time constraints that contingent composition faculty members experienced, I discussed how Participant 4 was unable to participate in much of the professional development offered by the university because these opportunities were often scheduled when she was teaching or scheduled during particularly hectic weeks. As contingent composition faculty members themselves, the administrative facilitators understood the time constraints associated with teaching writing courses and thus scheduled meetings that not only took into account when each participant taught, but also when most contingent composition faculty members would likely be conferencing with students or otherwise dealing with a heavier workload than usual.

That said, despite the accommodating meeting schedule, participants across the sample expressed great difficulty with managing the time needed to prepare for and attend these meetings. When surveyed as to what they found least valuable about the faculty learning community, several participants cited this lack of time. Participant 10, for example, said, "Sometimes it was difficult balancing the work required to participate in the learning community and the workload of the semester." Put more succinctly: "Making time for all the meetings" (Participant 5). Similarly, when surveyed as to whether they would recommend that others participate in a faculty learning community, Participant 4 said, "It is difficult to find the time for the meetings when teaching 4/4, but I believe we need to do more of this." Other participants echoed this sentiment.

> Absolutely. I think all of us should be doing more of this. I will say that I found the workload somewhat hard to handle during the crazy school year, so perhaps doing this over the summer or on a smaller scale might help. At the same time, I wish we had more time to peer review and actually implement these changes, with the support of the faculty learning community along the way. I could see this being a yearlong program, but also having smaller opportunities to simply read and discuss scholarship (Participant 6).

With regard to the shape of the meetings, the administrative facilitator designed a learning sequence for the faculty learning community that served the community's focus, selected writing studies research for each meeting in that sequence, and designed writing prompts that asked participants to reflect on the research in advance of each meeting. That an administrative facilitator had completed this backend work was also perceived by

contingent composition faculty members as supportive.[18] Participant 8 stated that effective coordination of meetings, coupled with the agendas that the administrative facilitators prepared and distributed in advance of each meeting, "simplified the process for everyone, showed respect for our time, and prevented surprises."

Clausen et al. (2009) suggest that support is not only provided through "flexible scheduling" of faculty learning community meetings, but also through the facilitation of "open communication" therein (p. 448). The administrative facilitators worked to provide a supportive space that promoted both open communication and encouragement such that participants were able to "move outside their comfort zone" and transform their knowledge (Petrone & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2004, p. 65). This support was particularly important because of participants' lack of familiarity with the field's research, which again represented the dichotomy between the field's tenured researchers and contingent instructors.

> The readings were more challenging than I had expected, which was disconcerting until we discussed as a group that most of us were English majors with concentrations in literature, not composition and rhetoric, and since we were not part of the intended audience of these scholarly articles, the concepts and terminology in these readings seemed awkward and somewhat disorienting at times. [The administrative facilitator] pointed out that this is how our students feel

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[18] While composition program administrators were also contingent composition faculty members, as mentioned, they were provided with course releases for their administrative duties, which included providing professional development for composition faculty; thus, that they completed this work, rather than the participant, and that they then took a backseat during the faculty learning community itself, provided time for participants to focus solely on their own learning.

when they encounter the scholarly articles we assign in English 302, so this perspective gave me a new appreciation and empathy for my students and their experiences with my assignments" (Participant 11).

I discuss how the faculty learning community recognized participants' disparate backgrounds as having value in the next section. Pertinent here, with regard to support, was that participants were not admonished for their lack of familiarity with writing studies research, but instead encouraged past their discomfort. By analogizing the situation such that participants would understand, the administrative facilitator operated in a supportive manner that engaged participants in a "dialogue that [was] respected and non-threatening" (Clausen et al., 2009, p. 448).

Also relevant is that the group discussed their respective backgrounds amongst themselves and identified the problem as one of audience, with the administrative facilitator stepping in only to offer that helpful analogy. In each faculty learning community, the administrative facilitators refrained from "getting engaged in the deliberations and decision-making" and instead only stepped in to provide feedback or to keep the discussion focused (Petrone & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2004, p. 66). This resulted in what Participant 1 called "real learning" amongst colleagues, which she distinguished from top-down expectations.

> [The faculty learning community] gave me and the other participants a chance to talk about some of the theory behind teaching composition and come to an understanding of best practices on our own. Instead of just understanding what the university expected of me as an employee and an English 302 instructor, I was

able to come to a real understanding of why I was using the techniques I was using and think about other techniques that might be even better than the ones I was currently employing. . . . Besides the real learning that I was able to participate in, being able to meet with more experienced colleagues was incredibly beneficial (Participant 1).

The *real* learning to which she referred, as opposed to that which she thought she would have to accept as university expectations, was provided through the opportunity to hold discussions with those who shared her status—discussions in which they collaboratively synthesized research, sorted out perspectives that connected theory to practice, and formed a supported consensus of best practices amongst themselves. The learning that she seemed to value was thus agentive and socially constructed.

Mezirow (1991) suggests that transformation in one's learning can be facilitated so long as the facilitator "does not attempt to force or manipulate learners into accepting his or her own perspective but instead encourages learners to choose freely from among the widest range of relevant viewpoints" (p. 225). The faculty learning community was not a transmission model that aimed to regulate what should be done in place of what participants had been doing, and that expected participants to passively absorb that pedagogical regulation. It was instead a supportive space in which participants engaged in discussions about a wide range of viewpoints without being told what to think, and in which they debated the merits of applying those viewpoints to practice without being told that they must.

There was a sense of agency in Participant 1's statements with regard to this claim over her own learning. As described earlier in this chapter, the structural context controlled most aspects of contingent composition faculty members' practice and the extent to which they could identify as members of the university. Engaging in this *real* learning seemed to provide Participant 1, and others across the sample, with the membership they lacked outside of the faculty learning community. Unlike the marginalization they experienced in the structural context, they composed the very fabric of the faculty learning community. As such, they participated in conversations on disciplinary knowledge, engaged in shared decision-making, and contributed to problem-solving initiatives on matters directly related to their practice. The faculty learning community was, in this way, a small professional community in which they were treated as members, situated in a larger professionalization context in which they were outliers.

Membership as it Relates to Recognition

Recognition refers to that provided for contingent composition faculty members through acknowledgement of their voice, value, and visibility in faculty learning community meetings. Recognition occurs when diverse perspectives—particularly from participants with different educational and experiential backgrounds—are welcomed and respected, and when participants identify and unify as colleagues such that these relationships constitute a collegial peer community.

In the last section, Participant 11 was cited as acknowledging that most of the participants in her faculty learning community did not have backgrounds in writing studies. This was true for participants in all three faculty learning communities, most of

whom had backgrounds in literature or creative writing. In fact, according to a CCCC report, nearly two-thirds of those teaching composition hold degrees outside of writing studies (Ruggles Gere, 2009). The administrative facilitators at this research site strived to nurture a "climate of mutual respect and trust with the ultimate goal of allowing each person's voice to be heard" and, to that end, openly recognized participants' various backgrounds as that which allowed for valuable perspectives (Petrone & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2004, p. 66).

> Because I am a literature major, it was great to meet with rhetoricians who helped me approach the teaching of composition from another perspective while also recognizing that my approach had value and brought something different to the table. I left feeling validated and encouraged in my teaching, not as though I had to conform to a certain "right" way to conduct my classes and teaching (Participant 1).

As I discussed in the last section, Participant 1 saw the *real* learning in which she engaged in the faculty learning community as distinct from that which she described here as "a certain 'right' way." She did not say "*the* right way," but instead "*a certain* right way," which I interpreted as her acknowledgement that there was no one right way, but that there may have been ways preferred by the composition program, which she appreciated not having pushed on her. While Participant 1 was encouraged that her approach was valued, she also recognized that other approaches had value and was grateful to learn from those in the faculty learning community with a writing studies background. That there was this open environment in which all perspectives were

recognized allowed for Participant 1 to feel comfortable in the faculty learning community and somewhat less overwhelmed by being new to a course, new to a university, and “not steeped in composition theory.”

Likewise, Participant 9a/b stated that because she was able to learn from a variety of perspectives, she was able to “see the learning goals of English 302 in a new way.” These perspectives, which she understood were formed from experience with the course that she did not have, promoted a better understanding of the course and the ways in which she could design assignments to serve its goals.

However varied these perspectives were when it came to approaching the teaching of English 302, they were less so when it came to participants’ struggles with contingency and workload. Because the constraints of their labor impeded their teaching, sometimes resulting in the aforementioned “lack of opportunity to perform” (Kezar et al., 2019, p. 99), these shared struggles often arose in conversations between participants during the faculty learning community meetings.

> Honestly, probably the primary way in which the faculty learning community discussions are useful, is in promoting solidarity and support among peers in a traditionally solitary professional position. It is valuable to me to have a forum where I can share my fears and frustration, in addition to my needs and my goals, with others who have been in my shoes. There is personal, emotional value in this, which is useful for my own well-being. But the value is also professional—I am a better instructor, for example, knowing that grading 88 papers in two weeks is in fact a tremendous undertaking. This awareness gives me permission to talk to

my students about it, to create space in my personal and professional schedule for it, and to find ways to streamline the grading process to reduce some of the stress and difficulty of grading (Participant 9a/b).

In the faculty learning community, their sense of themselves was, in this way, externally validated through peer-based recognition while also agentively co-constructed. In the structural context, because contingent composition faculty members largely worked in isolation, there was not an opportunity for most to have these sorts of discussions and thus not an opportunity for external validation. Kezar et al. (2019) state that without these opportunities, "contingent faculty must hope (if they have the time for concerns about growth) to find individuals around them who are willing and able to share insights and invest time in time" (p. 100).

Participant 2 had received specialized mentorship like that described when she was first hired as part-time non-tenure-track faculty member. The composition program director, who had taught a section of first-year composition that semester, had invited Participant 2 into the class as an observer.

> I watched almost the entire course. After each class she'd walk back to [her office] and I tagged along. We talked about what went well and what didn't. It was extraordinarily valuable. She was very generous giving me her time. I try to stay in touch with her . . . I consider her a friend but I'll never be half the instructor she is (Participant 2).

Despite having taught for many years since that first semester during which she had received this specialized mentorship, and despite the mentorship itself, Participant 2

did not feel recognized. She said that she had "limited contact with the English department" and seemed to lack any type of relationship with the institution at large until she joined the faculty learning community, which allowed for her to "feel more like a member of the university instead of an adjunct" (Participant 2). Her phrasing in this statement implied a direct contrast between membership and contingency.

In the structural context, as discussed, contingent composition faculty members felt anonymous and isolated. Contrarily, in the supportive context, they were recognized and included in a sanctioned, but also co-constructed capacity. Cox (2004) argues that the faculty learning community combats isolation, particularly amongst teaching faculty, as it provides them with "a strong network of support and collaboration" akin to that associated with research faculty (p. 6). As I argue here, for contingent composition faculty members, the barest form of recognition—to quite literally be recognized as an individual and a colleague—mended isolation.

> I am grateful for the networking opportunities the [faculty learning community] provided me. I now have colleagues that I recognize and that recognize me, and we can commiserate with each other about the challenges of teaching this course and help each other find solutions to these challenges (Participant 1).

Recognition, in this way, was not just about acknowledgement of their voice and value, but also of their visibility. Participant 1 had a face and a name amongst these participants, and this recognition—reciprocal in that she also now knew their faces and names—seemed to provide her with a sense of membership amongst a small group of

supportive colleagues with whom she could "commiserate." They were no longer anonymous and ignored, but known and welcomed.

> I was so very grateful to be a part of the [faculty learning community] this semester so that I had friends that I could ask advice of both during our meetings and outside of meetings over email and chats in the hallway (Participant 9a/b).

Participant 9a/b's statement suggested that the relationships built upon the recognition established within the faculty learning community were not confined to that context. They could contact their colleagues. They could pass them in the hall and each would stop to talk to the other. They were no longer unknown. They belonged. As Participant 9a/b said, "The faculty learning community was really helpful in making me feel like a part of the community, like I belonged here." Other participants spoke of this membership as a network—one significant to their stability and success.

> This experience has reminded me that I have colleagues that truly care and are there to support me going forward, which I think is the most comforting realization I could hope for. Building community and having a network of support is so important. I feel like I have the support I need and people to help when I need them (Participant 7).

I interpreted Participant 7's statements as implying that these relationships constituted an enduring network of support such the participants could call on and confer with these colleagues in the future. I wish I could state that this was indeed an enduring network, but unfortunately, like the support I discussed in the last section and the

collaboration I discuss in the next section, these features of membership did not, for the most part, outlast the endpoint of the faculty learning community.[19]

Membership as it Relates to Collaboration

Collaboration refers to that provided for contingent composition faculty members through opportunities to apply research, test curricular ideas, and receive feedback in faculty learning community meetings. Collaboration occurs when both support and recognition has been established such that participants are comfortable in discussing their ideas and that of others, and encouraged to develop these ideas both on their own and with others.

There is a vulnerability at stake when faculty members assume the role of learners. Engin and Atkinson (2015) refer to this vulnerability as a "crisis of confidence," which they describe as that experienced by faculty members when they understand that they lack necessary knowledge (p. 168). They add that this experience was particularly "frustrating for faculty who were experienced educators" (Engin & Atkinson, 2015, p. 168). I posit that this is likely doubly so for contingent composition faculty members who are dealing both with a crisis of confidence in their experience as educators and in their experience with writing studies because of labor conditions that do not easily allow for such confidence in either.

As discussed in an earlier section, Participant 11 had found the reading of unfamiliar research challenging, which was "disconcerting" until others in the faculty learning community expressed the same. That they then worked together to understand

[19] I discuss the reasons for this fleeting sense of membership in the last section of this chapter.

the research through a sharing of perspectives, and with assistance from the administrative facilitator when necessary, allowed for them to engage in the sort of social interactions involving conversations “about the knowledge domain” that is integral to providing a foundation for the building of disciplinary expertise (Wardle & Scott, 2015, p. 78). And that they were successful in this endeavor indicated to me that the faculty learning community had established itself as a supportive space in which their voices were valued such that they could be honest in their discussion of research with regard to how they were understanding certain concepts. This support and recognition, as I argue in this section, is likewise needed for effective collaboration. Indeed, Cox (2004) states that “the importance of collaboration in consultation and group discussion on individual members’ projects and on achieving community learning outcomes hinges on group members’ ability to work with and respond to one another” (p. 19).

Participant 9a/b spoke of a supportive context as requisite for collaboration. She had been particularly fearful of significantly overhauling a major unit in her advanced composition course but had grown convinced, through discussions with others on the assigned research and on their teaching, that her current discipline inquiry project was “an artificial task” (Participant 9a/b).

> What students learn through critical and rhetorically-aware reading and analysis in their disciplines is that arguments are based on evidence generated through experimentation and/or research performed by experts. Asking students, therefore, to create an argument based on their perspective on a problem, not actual

> evidence, is a strange and counterproductive way to introduce them to the ways that knowledge is generated within their fields (Participant 9a/b).

As such, she comprehensively dismantled and rebuilt her discipline inquiry project, changing both its scope and shape such that it was no longer an argumentative text, but a literature review.

> On my own, these tasks are daunting, but having the faculty learning community made me feel more confident because I knew I could ask my peers for their feedback, their advice, their opinions on what I was doing. It made me feel protected from making any really terrible decisions, and like I was capable of changing my course without getting overwhelmed (Participant 9a/b).

That she felt "protected" signified to me that the faculty learning community had effectively served as a space in which she felt supported enough to engage in significant curricular revision. Cox (2013) asserts that the structure of a faculty learning community "creates a social fabric for learning with the development of trust and energy to encourage risk-taking" (p. 19). This sense of trust was evident in Participant 9a/b's statement; she seemed confident that her colleagues' feedback would steer her away from any poor pedagogical decisions, and as a result she was able to engage in a sort of *risk-taking* by constructing an entirely new curricular unit.

Her colleagues collaborated with her on this overhaul of her discipline inquiry project and offered helpful feedback that may have allowed for her to avoid mistakes that she would have otherwise had to experience to learn and, in this way, may have helped her to develop faster than she would have on her own.

> They were able to highlight for me the places in my calendar that feel too cramped for time, and helped me to arrange the assignment due dates to give students more breathing room. They also noticed areas that students might struggle with understanding difficult or new concepts, places where I needed to slow down and allow time for explanation, instruction, and class discussion so that everyone is comfortable with the concepts. I think something I tend to do is assume that students can "get" an idea after one lesson, which is of course unrealistic. My peers helped me to see where I needed to add more instruction and support for students grasping complex concepts (Participant 9a/b).

As with Participant 9a/b, participants across the sample spoke of how receiving a variety of perspectives allowed for them to see stumbling blocks in the timing of their plans, gaps in their delivery, and other potential areas of revision. These perspectives provided them with insights others had gleaned from research or from experience, insights that might not have otherwise been considered.

> The positive feedback I received was both encouraging and helpful. However, at this point, my assignment was mostly a list of steps of how to do the assignment, and probably the most helpful feedback I received was from [Participant 5], who very nicely wrote in the margin: "So what?" I asked our group, "What is the point of this assignment? What are we supposed to ask of our students in terms of a thesis?" Some members had different ideas of whether to use a thesis-driven assignment, but I personally felt this was a necessity. I knew I had more work to do. Discussions with [the administrative facilitator] were invaluable in completing

> my assignment; additional email discussions with [Participant 8] were also helpful in making final changes to the assignment (Participant 11).

Participants spoke of their resulting curricular projects as having greatly benefited from collaboration, as their work was more connected to research, more connected to course goals, and more connected to student learning.

> By framing the development of a course assignment using backward design, I was able to better understand the connection between my learning objectives for English 302 and the students' perception and engagement with the material. . . . Since the course objectives had been changing here and there over the years, I realized I was just plugging in assignments to meet the new goals without considering the overall student experience. The scholarship and this community helped me shape this assignment much better (Participant 10).

For most contingent composition faculty members, their pedagogical practices had been developed insularly—through experience, through the occasional workshop, and through pedagogical advice or materials that they had picked up over the years. This sort of knowledge has been referred to as "ubiquitous tacit knowledge," which is a combination of "popular understanding" (beliefs about writing, for example) and some specialized training (Wardle & Scott, 2015, pp. 77-78).

> I am not a composition/rhetoric major, but I am teaching my students the research skills I used extensively as a student to write a thesis and a dissertation and that I use now in my professional conferencing and publishing (Participant 1).

Participant 1's statement began with an acknowledgement that she lacked expertise in writing studies, and thus that her teaching was informed by her ubiquitous tacit knowledge. This type of knowledge transforms to degrees of expertise through extensive interactions with research and conversations with others about this research (Wardle & Scott, 2015, p. 78), which is provided through the faculty learning community. Contrarily, a workshop, because it is of brief duration and often functions as a transmission model, does not provide for those sorts of extensive interactions necessary for developing disciplinary expertise.

> I knew my disciplinary project was inadequate. It was based on someone else's that had been passed around in an English department workshop, and it was basically a fill-in-the-blanks worksheet asking students to list key figures in their fields, a few controversial issues, major publications, etc. I am sure students forgot what they'd done as soon as they completed it. I counted it for 5% of their overall semester grade, which illustrates how little I valued it (Participant 5).

Few contingent composition faculty members spoke of how their pedagogical practices had been informed by research in the past, and those who did spoke of engaging with research as a means of curricular problem-solving, as their contingent conditions did not afford them time to engage with research to the extent needed to build disciplinary expertise.

> While research for lesson-planning involves a certain level of engagement with scholarship, this research is usually very specifically problem-oriented, whereas the readings we did for [the faculty learning community] were ones I might not

> have chosen on my own. I feel better educated in the field of composition pedagogy than this time last year. . . . [Before the faculty learning community] I felt that my knowledge was moderate—but now, it I think it was very limited. I think I was far less aware of the discipline of composition as a whole, and how much new information is generated regularly (Participant 9a/b).

Through participation in the faculty learning community, their pedagogical practices transformed such that these practices were largely, rather than minimally or not at all, informed by research, which ultimately, as I discuss in the next section, contributed to their professional identity development.

Professional Identity in Dual Contexts

As discussed in Chapter 1, when I began this study, I had thought of professional identity as a linear, ongoing development; however, findings indicated that it was instead dynamic and based on what meanings contingent composition faculty members ascribed to the changing conditions and experiences of their professional lives. In this case, contingent composition faculty members participated in two contexts—a supportive context (faculty learning community) and a structural context (contingent conditions)—that provided opposing conditions and experiences to which they ascribed meaning.

In earlier sections, I discussed how the faculty learning community promoted a sense of membership through support, recognition, and collaboration. In this section, I discuss the association between that membership and professional identity with regard to the ways in which contingent composition faculty members reframed their professional identity through what meaning they attributed to the supportive context, and the ways in

which they reframed their professional identity again when that supportive context came to an end and they were subject only to the structural context.

* * *

In the section on membership as related to support, I discussed the ways in which the coordination of the faculty learning community meetings and the encouragement therein were perceived as supportive and inclusive gestures. That the composition program had coordinated a supportive context for contingent composition faculty members was, on its own, impactful on their sense of membership and the associated ways in which they understood themselves to be professionals.

Participant 1, for example, said: "I think that being able to take advantage of learning and training opportunities makes me feel like a professional, and helps my professional story move forward instead of move sideways." It seemed, based on this statement, that the very act of providing contingent composition faculty members with the opportunity for professional development represented professional inclusion and membership and, by extension, external validation that they were professionals. To then engage in the professional development opportunity allowed their professional stories to "move forward," as Participant 1 stated, which I interpreted as professional growth both with regard to practice and to identity. In this way, contingent composition faculty members agentively framed themselves as professionals by way of acknowledgement, and developed as professionals by way of participation.

During the faculty learning community, the administrative facilitators promoted this development by encouraging contingent composition faculty members to move out

of their comfort zones or otherwise overcome stumbling blocks in their learning, as previously discussed. By treating contingent composition faculty members as professionals rather than laborers by encouraging rather than dictating their learning, the administrative facilitators nurtured participants' confidence in themselves as professionals.

> Being able to discuss theory and teaching practices with colleagues in the faculty learning community provided me with the confidence to approach my students as a professional, and I feel that in turn helped them learn from me. I feel that administrators don't understand how an instructor's professional identity or lack thereof actually affects their students' ability to learn (Participant 1).

Participant 1's statements implied a certain dichotomy. She said that the faculty learning community as a supportive context provided her with confidence in herself as a professional and thus helped to develop her professional identity. She also suggested that "administrators," presumably those of the larger structural context, did not understand the importance of professional identity—a lack of understanding that I interpreted as equivalent to a lack of supporting. The dichotomy between the supportive context and the structural context was such that her professional identity was nurtured in the former in ways that it was not in the latter. In that way, the supportive context arguably offset the deficiencies of the structural context.

When the faculty learning community came to an end, and thus when contingent composition faculty members no longer had a foot in both contexts, they no longer had access to the features of support that had promoted their sense of membership and thus

their associated sense of professional identity. The features of support previously discussed—the careful coordination and facilitation of meetings in which participants were consistently encouraged—were no longer a part of their professional lives, as these meetings did not continue thereafter.

> In a job that offers little room for much else during the school year, it was nice to carve out some time each month to read scholarship, reflect on what I gained from it, and discuss those findings with my colleagues. . . I enjoyed having the opportunity to talk teaching with the members of my faculty learning community on a regular basis (Participant 6).

When I spoke with participants in semesters following their participation in a faculty learning community, they naturally talked about the experience in past tense, but they also talked about nearly everything they had gained through that experience in past tense, as well. Participant 6's statement, for example, suggested to me that she no longer had the opportunity to regularly "talk teaching" with others. Indeed, Participant 9a/b said that, in the structural context, contingent composition faculty members did not have opportunities to interact "and learn from one another." She added, "It's hard to develop a professional identity on your own without anyone's feedback except your students" (Participant 9a/b).

As Participant 9a/b's statement suggested, without the supportive context, participants reframed their professional identity thereafter by way only of their students. They no longer had rich interactions or discussions with others in which they could talk about their pedagogy; they were isolated once again. What they understood of themselves

as professionals was, like before the faculty learning community, in reference to their classrooms—their persona, their practice, their course evaluations.

* * *

The second attribute of membership, recognition, which at its barest referred to basic familiarity amongst colleagues, seemed as though it would be, logically, a lasting feature of the faculty learning community experience. In the section on membership as related to recognition, I discussed the ways in which the faculty learning community had acknowledged contingent composition faculty members' voice, value, and visibility. I argue here that the sense of membership this recognition provided allowed them to reframe their professional identities in accordance with that beyond the walls of their classrooms—with colleagues, with the department, and in Participant 2's case, with the larger university.

> I appreciated the recognition by the university that I am a working professional who cares about the content and teaching methods I use in my classes. This has been a good experience for me and helped me develop as a professional (Participant 2).

Participant 2's statement suggested to me a certain affirmation, as though her understanding of herself as a professional was externally validated by the university through her association with the faculty learning community, which also suggested that perhaps she had doubted the extent to which the university had recognized her as a professional prior to her participation in the faculty learning community. Considering that this participant had defined her relationship with the university as "based on a series of

contracts signed each semester," and that she had not felt "like a member of the university" until participating in the faculty learning community (Participant 2), it was quite likely that it was indeed a matter of affirmation supplanting doubts, which again suggests the extent to which external validation (being recognized as a professional) is more prominent in their perception than internal validation (recognizing oneself as such).

For other participants, it was not a matter of affirmation that they were professionals so much as it was about affirmation that they existed. In the structural context, contingent composition faculty members were often under the impression that they were "not members of the professional communities in which they work" because they were isolated from each other and because they were not often recognized by their "tenure-track 'colleagues' passing in the hall" (Penrose, 2012, p. 109). Contrarily, in the supportive context, they *were* recognized and thus no longer faceless, no longer just names on a course list, no longer passing strangers in the hallway—though were still likely passing strangers to tenured faculty. But because of peer recognition, they began to see themselves more like professionals rather than laborers. They were known to and familiar with each other, and this familiarity evoked a sense of membership. Participant 7 envisioned this membership as a network of colleagues to which he belonged.

Unfortunately, recognition, like support, did not carry over into subsequent semesters. For example, as previously cited, Participant 1 said that, because of the faculty learning community, "I now have colleagues that I recognize and that recognize me." And yet, of the four participants in her spring faculty learning community (Participant 1, 3, 6, and 9a/b), only Participant 1 and 9a/b taught that following fall. Participant 3 had

left the university; Participant 6 had taken that semester off but returned the following semester. Ultimately, Participant 9a/b would leave the university, too—as would, incidentally, Participant 1. In fact, at the time of this writing, of the eleven participants in this study, six no longer teach at the university. Thus, the colleagues with whom a participant became familiar in the faculty learning community had been halved, and those remaining were likely lost in the increasing anonymity of new contingent composition faculty members hired each semester. That recognition was lost due to turnover, and thus that the supportive networks these colleagues built in that semester of the faculty learning community were essentially dismantled thereafter, was perhaps the most disappointing finding in this study.

* * *

While support and recognition did not last, the practical outcomes of the third attribute of membership—collaboration—*did* last. In the section on membership as related to collaboration, I discussed how applying research, testing curricular ideas, and receiving feedback allowed for a sense of collegiality and membership. The very nature of this interaction with each other also allowed for a sense of themselves as professionals.

> Sometimes it feels like an impossible job to teach this course. The opportunity to sit with colleagues who strive to improve their teaching skills was a relief. It was a great exhalation moment to share research among colleagues who want to produce a better course. That is a true professional moment—when like-minds share a common goal and encourage each other to reach it together (Participant 2).

This "common goal" of improving their teaching by connecting the research they had read to curricular revisions they intended to make was considered, by Participant 2, as a "professional moment." In this way, that they were engaged in a shared endeavor, a common purpose that connected their otherwise isolated practices, united them as professionals. They valued this, as they didn't have the opportunity or the time for collaboration in the structural context.

While collaboration promoted their professional identity through this sense of membership, it also did so through the understanding that collaboration directly served their students, against whom their professional identity was often referenced—likely because in the structural context, as mentioned, their primary interactions were with students rather than with colleagues. Across the sample, participants spoke of their identities as professionals as tied to student learning.[20]

> Identity is really crucial in teaching. Although many of us resist the outmoded "sage on the stage" notion of teaching, we are still standing up there with all eyes on us. Our classes are still molded by our personalities, preferences, and skills. Our identities as instructors are very important to student learning. Developing, understanding, strengthening my professional identity is not personal, it's pedagogical (Participant 9a/b).

[20] It was beyond the scope of this study to trace contingent composition faculty members' professional development in the faculty learning community to student learning. While this study was longitudinal in that it followed contingent composition faculty members up to two semesters out from their participation in a faculty learning community, I collected data only from the participants themselves. Thus, references to student learning stand as participants' perceptions.

The curricular revisions on which they collaborated in the faculty learning community, as based on their understandings and application of research, was perceived as directly providing for students, but so, too, was their growing disciplinary expertise.

> Being professional and remaining so requires attention to current research in the area of composition studies to bring students the best experience possible in my classes. . . . So is an active interest in all fields that comprise the world our students will inherit. I feel the more I know about the sciences, the arts, global affairs. . . will enrich students' time in my classes (Participant 4).

When describing her professional identity, Participant 4 said that she identified as "an agent for making a positive difference in the learning of [her] students." By examining her statement about familiarity with research to enrich students' lives with her statement about a professional as one who makes a difference in students' lives, I was able to infer that enhancing her knowledge of research in ways that could serve students contributed to a sense of herself as a professional. Collaboration, subsequently, allowed for insights into how such knowledge could, in practical ways, serve students.[21]

For example, Participant 4 shared an experience that she had with a student prior to joining the faculty learning community:

> One of my computer science students early last fall shared (more than once) that he was "not happy" with the class and did not understand why we needed to understand genre distinctions. My response included points made in class about

[21] Schulman (1987) would see this as a matter of negotiating pedagogical content knowledge, which he describes as that which "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p. 8).

the importance of audience awareness and that such knowledge would make him a more critical, therefore successful, reader and writer (Participant 4).

After reading the writing studies research assigned in the faculty learning community, and thinking back to that experience, she wished that she had instead discussed how understanding genre would provide him with more "agency and effective participation" in his professional world, as this response would have likely "made more sense to this student" and would have established this learning as having direct value for him. She said that she wished that she had read the research on genre "a bit sooner" (Participant 4).

Through collaboration with others in the faculty learning community, she redesigned her discipline analysis project such that it more clearly served as a means through which students could understand that "genres are how things get done when language is used to accomplish them," which she believed "would resonate with students in its clear appeal to agency and what I have to assume are their hopes to get 'things done' in their work lives" (Participant 4). In this way, she read research that filled what she, in retrospect, identified as a gap in how she had served a student, and she transformed her course documents accordingly, an outcome that she credited to collaboration and to her "reviewers' thoughtful comments" (Participant 4).

Because all of the interviewed participants described a professional as one engaged in research, and because participants across the sample associated their professional identity with student learning, it seemed that a better understanding of research—and what they could directly provide for students through this better

understanding—strengthened their professional identity. Participant 2, for example, when asked about how she would define a professional, said that a professional was one who teaches "using evidence-based strategies." She also said that, because of the faculty learning community, her "teaching is based more on research" (Participant 2). I was able to infer, then, based on these two statements, that the faculty learning community had helped her to develop as a professional to the extent that a professional is defined by their ability to connect practice and theory. I was also able to infer that this connection was limited because her practice was connected only to the specific sampling of research that she had read that semester.

Connecting practice and theory through collaborative efforts on curricular revisions provided concrete results that transferred directly into the classroom. These practical outcomes of that collaboration—changes to course documents, to pedagogical practices—were largely, and often exactly, used in semester(s) following the faculty learning community. What concerns me is the implication that future semesters would likely see no further engagement with research to inform future curricular revisions.

I base this concern on that which I discussed in regard to participants' shared understanding that while it was important for their professional and pedagogical growth to keep updated on writing studies research and continually revise curriculum, they lacked sufficient time to do so because of "the magnitude of the teaching and grading responsibility" associated with writing courses like composition (Doe et al., 2011, p. 438). For example, Participant 2, who I cited earlier as stating that her practice was more connected to research, also said that one of the most valuable aspects of the faculty

learning community was “having someone else curate a set of articles and hand them to me. I would never have the time to search on my own.” This suggested, as previously discussed, that the connection between practice and theory was limited. Some participants, like Participant 4, who didn’t have time to engage with research during the academic year put this work off until the summer; however, because her salary was insufficient, she often supplemented her income with summer teaching, thus limiting her time for such engagement then, as well.

I also based this concern on that which I discussed in regard to the lack of curricular revision with which participants engaged prior to their participation in the faculty learning community. Some participants, as mentioned, had used their assignments for years (more than a decade in Participant 11’s case), even when they knew it to be problematic. Most cited the lack of time afforded through their contingent conditions to “develop a new assignment or research a particular problem” associated with their curriculum (Participant 4). In fact, when speaking to the revisions made to her discipline analysis project through collaboration in the faculty learning community, Participant 5 said: “The bottom line is that this assignment is here to stay.” In this way, while the act of collaboration did not outlast the supportive context due to a lack of time in the structural context, the products of this collaboration *did* outlast the supportive context for that same reason—a lack of time.

In thinking about this, I was reminded once again of Participant 10’s statement regarding how he put “band-aids” on problematic sections of his assignments because of a lack of time to do much else. A similar analogy might be drawn about the faculty

learning community, as it was much like a band-aid on a much larger problem. While the supportive context was perhaps capable of neutralizing the constraints of the structural context on contingent composition faculty members' professional identity, it was but temporary and could not continue to neutralize, much less negate, those constraints thereafter. For contingent composition faculty members, faculty learning communities seemed to provide only a fleeting sense of membership and professional identity based on a semblance of professional status.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARATIVE THEORIES AND CONCLUSION

> It is precisely the undertheorizing of both teaching and writing program administration that have kept (and will continue to keep) efforts to improve material conditions of teachers, or attempts to take teaching and programmatic development seriously, from having a significant impact on the values or structures of higher education (Marshall, 2003, p. 95).

Grounded theory recommends that a researcher ascertain the extent to which their study's emergent theory "can be joined with received theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 152). In accordance with this recommendation, I reviewed communities of practice and associated theories of learning and identity. In the two sections that follow, I establish a baseline justification for each comparison while speaking to the ways in which these formal theories both substantiate and complicate this study's emergent theory. In the first section, I discuss connections between *membership* as conceptualized in this study's emergent theory and *mutual engagement* as a key dimension of communities of practice facilitated through the *engagement* mode of belonging, and the extent to which the learning in which contingent composition faculty members were mutually engaged in the faculty learning community compares to social learning theory. In the second section, I discuss connections between learning and identity, how what I've described as identity *reframing* is complicated by the ways in which contingent composition faculty members relationally repositioned themselves through the *imagination* mode of belonging, and

how this mode, along with their lack of a *trajectory*, impacts their *alignment* mode of belonging.

These two sections support the following claims, respectively: (1) if mutual engagement is comparable to what I refer to as membership, and if mutual engagement must be continually maintained, then membership likewise must be maintained, which suggests that a single, temporary supportive context that does not continually provide for and maintain contingent composition faculty members' long-term membership is insufficient, and (2) if identity reframing is largely facilitated through the *imagination* mode of belonging with regard to what contingent composition faculty members imagine to be the work of tenured faculty members, then their identities are reframed through a reflection of a community of practice that is not their own, which confirms their lack of membership (and trajectory) in the structural context and ultimately their sense of institutional alignment.

In the third and final section of this chapter, as a means of looking forward, I provide two recommendations for immediate ways in which the faculty learning community can better support contingent composition faculty members. I then turn to institutionalization theory, as discussed by leading labor researchers Kezar and Sam (2013), as a means of ascertaining how professionalization can be provided for contingent composition faculty members by transforming the labor conditions that define the structural context of their work. Using this theory as framing, I recommend that the faculty learning community be repurposed such that, instead of participants engaging in research related to teaching and learning as a means of temporary professional

development, they engage in research related to labor and institutional reform as a means of transforming the labor conditions that otherwise systematically impede this professional development.

Mutual Engagement and Social Learning

Wenger (1998) describes communities of practice as having three dimensions: (1) *mutual engagement*, which refers to membership in a community and the interaction of members therein that shape the community, (2) *a joint enterprise*, which refers to the goals of the larger system in which participants are positioned and by which they are influenced, and (3) *a shared repertoire*, which refers to the resources, discourses, and styles shared by participants in their practice (pp. 73-83). Faculty learning communities largely share the same dimensions in that its participants are understood as members of a collegial community who engage in learning so as to enhance their practice, who are influenced by the goals of their larger institution, and who are bound to colleagues in shared discourse and research.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there were several differences between the faculty learning community described in the literature and that examined in this study: (1) whereas faculty learning communities are typically cross-disciplinary and cross-rank, and thus heterogenous, this research site necessitated a community that was homogenous with regard to both discipline (composition) and rank (contingent), (2) whereas faculty learning communities are typically structured over the course of one year, this research site necessitated a shorter duration of one semester to ensure participation from its contingent composition faculty members, and (3) whereas faculty learning communities

are typically local *and* institutional, with members engaged both in learning within the faculty learning community and presenting the results of that learning to others outside of the faculty learning community, this research site did not require its contingent composition faculty members to engage in such presentations.

These differences do not suggest that the faculty learning community model at this research site was any less of a community practice than that at other universities; however, these differences do suggest that, to best serve its contingent composition faculty members, this site had to be flexible in its implementation and facilitation of such a community. This is important to recognize because if I am to establish a comparison between this study's emergent theory and communities of practice, I have to acknowledge not only the grounds for this comparison, but also the limitations. In this case, that a faculty learning community composed solely of contingent composition faculty members is considered a different type of faculty learning community insinuates that it may also be a different type of community of practice, which thus complicates a theoretical understanding of contingent composition faculty members' participation therein, as I discuss in this section and that which follows.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, faculty learning communities that involve contingent composition faculty members have been referred to as *flexible communities of practice* because of the extent to which the complex conditions of their labor dictate their participation in these communities (Webb et al., 2013, pp. 232-233). This study aligns with the literature on flexible communities of practice with regard to the ways in which this flexibility manifests. For example, Webb et al. (2013) suggest that flexibility pertains

to (1) careful scheduling and strategic coordination due to contingent participants' course loads, which corresponds with this theory's conceptualization of *support*, (2) effective leadership that acknowledges and respects contingent participants' strengths, which corresponds with this theory's conceptualization of *recognition*, and (3) interactive engagement amongst contingent participants in seeking scholarly approaches to teaching and learning, which corresponds with this theory's conceptualization of *collaboration* (p. 233). Because support, recognition, and collaboration each contributed to a larger sense of institutional and professional belonging amongst the contingent participants, they were conceptualized in this study as constituting *membership*, which thus stood as the umbrella outcome of contingent faculty involvement in faculty learning communities.

Membership in this study is comparable to mutual engagement, which, as mentioned, refers to community membership and the interactions therein, as facilitated through what Wenger (1998) refers to as the *engagement* mode of belonging:

> The work of engagement is basically the work of forming communities of practice. As such, it requires the ability to take part in meaningful activities and interactions, in the production of sharable artifacts, in community-building conversations, and in the negotiation of new situations (p. 184).

Because this mode of belonging and the larger construct of mutual engagement are synonymous with the support, recognition, and collaboration that constituted the larger construct of membership, it provides a lens through which to both substantiate and complicate this study's emergent theory. For example, Wenger (1998) asserts that mutual engagement is not just a matter of being employed and possessing a title, but that,

instead, “being included in what matters is a requirement for being engaged in a community’s practice, just as engagement is what defines belonging” (p. 74). While this clarifies that contingent composition faculty members do not automatically belong to a professional academic community by the mere fact that they are university employees, it does not clarify what would allow for them to feel professionally inclusive, as defining inclusion in *what matters* is arguably subjective and context-dependent. Through this study, I gained a complicated picture of what inclusion means to contingent composition faculty members at this research site, which ranged from the barest sense of recognition to mutual engagement in professional activities. Because this range of inclusion was not supported in the structural context, as they did not feel recognized or involved in important ways, then, theoretically speaking, they were not mutually engaged in their practice within the structural context of their work but were as such within the supportive context of the faculty learning community.

That said, the faculty learning community is but a short-lived ancillary context to the university and does not represent the university itself—nor does the sense of membership attained therein represent institutional membership. I base this lattermost claim on the requirements that Wenger (1998) describes in relation to mutual engagement—in particular, that mutual engagement requires work in that it must be continually provided for and thus maintained (p. 75). This suggests that what sense of membership a contingent composition faculty member achieves in a faculty learning community is but temporary because it is not maintained in the larger structural context of their work.

Wenger (1998) suggests that this necessary “community maintenance” can be “much less visible” than other aspects of practice and, subsequently, can be “easily undervalued or even totally unrecognized” (pp. 74-75). Indeed, while the practice of teaching and all of the practicalities involved in that practice seem to take precedence in most contingent composition faculty members’ lives, and while writing program administrators may seek professional development models to improve this practice, this understanding of mutual engagement suggests that it is just as important that writing program administrators also seek ways to establish a continual sense of institutional membership amongst contingent composition faculty members lest the lack thereof eat away at both their sense of themselves as professionals and their practice. As discussed in Chapter 3, statements across the sample pointed to connections between participants’ sense of membership in the university, their sense of themselves as professionals, and their practice. As Participant 1 said: “Administrators don't understand how an instructor’s professional identity or lack thereof actually affects their students’ ability to learn.”

Although the study of faculty learning communities as flexible learning communities conducted by Webb et al. (2013) involved part-time non-tenure-track faculty members whose teaching supplemented full-time professional positions outside of the university (whom they referred to as *field practitioners*), and although, as discussed, part-time non-tenure-track composition faculty members were instead largely aspiring academics whose teaching was their sole employment, their study revealed that field practitioners, like the contingent composition faculty members in this study, also gained a sense of membership through faculty learning communities (p. 233). This suggests that

contingent faculty members, whether teaching as sole or supplemental employment, tend to feel isolated, and that this isolation can be temporarily mended through faculty learning communities—or continually mended through transformative working conditions—that provide for engagement and inclusion. This finding is affirmed by Bond (2015), who asserts that contingent faculty "want to exchange information and ideas with others who are experiencing the same issues, such as isolation and feeling uninformed about the workings of their department" (p. 9). Contingent faculty, in other words, desire working conditions that provide for membership through social interactions and social learning. In fact, Knight et al. (2006) found that both part-time and full-time contingent faculty members desire social learning more so than any other type of learning (p. 324).

Wenger (1998) associates learning with meaning (experiencing), practice (doing), community (belonging), and identity (becoming), and thus suggests a theory of learning as social participation (pp. 4-5). This theory builds upon ideas explicated by those who understand learning as based in one's interaction with others, such as Vygotsky (1978), who asserts that learning "presupposes a specific social nature" and, as such, that learning is not just achieved through instruction, but also through collaborative learning and imitative learning, the latter of which refers to how an individual might learn and adapt based on interaction with someone who has a higher level of ability (p. 88). Collaborative and imitative learning translates to that which can be achieved between contingent composition faculty members when provided with opportunities, such as the faculty learning community, to engage with each other. Indeed, it is comparable to what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) refer to as knowledge-in-practice, which describes a

situation in which teachers have "opportunities to probe the knowledge embedded in the work of expert teachers and/or to deepen their own knowledge and expertise as makers of wise judgments and designers of rich learning interactions in the classroom" (p. 250).

Social learning theory posits that individuals "learn most thoroughly" from those with whom they regularly associate (Bandura, 1971, p. 6). This leads to questions as to the extent to which contingent composition faculty members learn considering that they do not tend to regularly associate with colleagues in the structural context of their work, as they are typically isolated both from tenured faculty and from other contingent faculty (Kezar & Sam, 2013, p. 71).

Hubball and Albon (2007) suggest that because contingent faculty members learn in isolation, they have widely disparate pedagogies, which results in "inconsistent learning experiences for students" (p. 121). Having a designated time and space for learning through faculty learning communities that are "grounded in education theory and practice" and "mindful of the disciplinary contexts in which they operate" can facilitate more curricular regularity (Webb, 2013, p. 233). Additionally, faculty learning communities can help broaden their views and build their expertise (Bond, 2015; Furco & Moely, 2012), which is particularly important for contingent composition faculty members who are largely unfamiliar with the field in which they teach because they come from fields like literature or creative writing and because their labor conditions do not afford them time to engage in research.

But, again, the faculty learning community extends but one semester or one academic year. Social learning is thus not ingrained in the professional fabric of

contingent composition faculty members' lives, at least not the type of social learning that was provided through the faculty learning community with regard to regular and intensive conversations with colleagues, collegial engagement in research, and collaborations with colleagues based on those conversations and that research.

This study suggests that being engaged in social learning is part of "what matters" for contingent composition faculty members to feel engaged in a community's practice and thus feel a sense of belonging and an associated professional identity. Because the faculty learning community provided for this social learning and thus this sense of engagement, belonging, and identity that was lacking in the structural context of their work, I argue that the faculty learning community was not representative of their community of practice in the structural context but was instead, as I discuss in the next section, representative of an imagined professional ideal associated with tenured faculty members' community of practice.

Alignment and Imagination Modes of Belonging

Wenger (1998) states that identities are not only produced through the particular position individuals hold and the practices in which they engage, but also by the positions they do not hold and the practices in which they do not engage (p. 164). In this case, the faculty learning community served as a context in which contingent composition faculty members at once reframed themselves as something they were and as something they were not. In other words, they were engaged and treated as professionals and reframed their professional identities accordingly; however, because this engagement and treatment was temporary and not part of their ordinary position and practices, their professional

identity had to be reframed again, upon completion of the faculty learning community, in response to the marginalization and alienation they would continue to experience in the structural context.

In this way, this study's emergent theory aligns not only with communities of practice but also with identity theory, which understands identity as both of a result of and a response to social interaction (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). Identity theory posits that one's role in a social structure "invokes meanings in the form of expectations" both with regard to their behavior and that of others, and invokes a sense of self through these meanings (Stets, 2000, p. 225). As such, when the contingent composition faculty members in this study moved from a role in the structural context in which they did not receive recognition as professionals to a role in the supportive context in which they did receive this recognition, they had to negotiate the behavioral expectations of this new role and likewise reflexively categorize their identities as members of this group accordingly (Stets, 2000, p. 226). That they then, upon completion of the faculty learning community, did not continue to receive this professional recognition suggests that they dealt with a new set of negotiations and reflexive categorization, which included how they aligned themselves with the university.[22]

Wenger (1998) conceptualizes the *alignment* mode of belonging as an individual's coordination of themselves and their practice with the larger enterprise or

[22] Moving between contexts and developing a professional identity associated with that role change was a process that contingent composition faculty members were cognizant of; they spoke of their professional identity as that which was and would continue to be perpetually redefined based on the conditions of and experiences related to their work. Participant 2, for example, described her identity as perpetually "shifting" in response to certain "pushes and pulls."

institution such that they develop an identity associated with connection and contribution to that institution (pp. 179-195). With regard to a marginalized population like contingent composition faculty members, Wenger (1998) suggests that such individuals may "fold into their practice their sense of marginality with respect to the institution" to "maintain a sense of self they can live with" (Wenger, 1998, p. 78). In other words, those ranked low in an organizational hierarchy may find ways to construct meaning through their work despite their marginality such that their identity is not defined by this marginality. Wenger (1998) suggests that this meaning requires a sense of *trajectory*, which refers to a sense of one's professional identity as progressing toward something—not through a fixed course but instead through one's varying participation in and across communities of practice (p. 154).[23] That said, trajectory is a particularly complicated construct for marginalized individuals.

> Long-standing members can be kept in a marginal position, and the very maintenance of that position may have become so integrated in the practice that it closes the future. . . . In such cases, forms of non-participation may be so ingrained in the practice that it may seem impossible to conceive of a different trajectory within the same community (Wenger, 1998, p. 166).

When an individual understands their trajectory as eventually leading to full participation, they also understand that "improvement in their performance will mean advancement, and they value the fact that advancement is automatic because it gives them some degree

[23] The concept of trajectory thus represents the conclusion I ultimately drew from this study with regard to professional identity, which was not, as I initially imagined, an ever-increasing development, but instead, as this study shows, that which changed as based on ongoing experiences.

of control over their trajectory" (Wenger, 1998, p. 155). Contingent composition faculty members, on the other hand, know that any improvement in their performance would not mean advancement, and thus that they had no control over their trajectory. As Participant 2 stated, "Being an adjunct is the beginning and end point. There is nothing to aspire to for me in terms of promotion." And for non-tenure-track composition faculty members without terminal degrees, like Participant 4, the same was true. Even if Participant 4 had a terminal degree, promotion resulted only in increased compensation and not increased job security or professional membership, as there was no pathway between contingency and tenure. At this research site, and in universities across the nation where contingent faculty represent the majority faculty body, their marginality may have indeed become, as Wenger (1998) states, "so integrated in the practice that it closes the future" (p. 166).

Contingent composition faculty members neither had a definitive trajectory nor a definitive sense of institutional alignment. While they presumably understood their work as necessary for the institution, their statements suggested that they viewed their work not by way of alignment with the university, but instead by way of alignment with their students.[24] This alignment was not exclusive to contingent composition faculty members at this research site. Levin and Montero Hernandez (2014) suggest that, because of their contingent conditions, it was through their relationships with students that contingent faculty members experience "professional value and personal worth" (p. 552).

[24] For example, Participant 11: "All in all, participating in the faculty learning community not only benefited me as a professional, but directly benefited my students." Likewise, Participant 6: "Being part of this faculty learning community reminded me that [engaging in research] is something we must find the time to do if we are to teach this course—and serve our students—well."

Although the structural context perpetually deflated their identities as professionals, the faculty learning community was able to counteract that by providing them with support, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration, as discussed in Chapter 3. For some participants, just being part of the faculty learning community allowed for them to feel recognized as professionals: “I appreciated the recognition by the university that I am a working professional who cares about the content and teaching methods I use in my classes” (Participant 2).

De Weerdt et al. (2006) assert that communities of practice allowed for an important step in the theoretical understanding of social learning in that it argued for learning “as a process of relational repositioning within a community” such that the learning process involves understanding “how we become a member of a community of practice, and how our identity within that community is continuously redefined” (p. 319). In this case, the learning in which contingent composition faculty members engaged in the faculty learning community allowed for them to temporarily reposition themselves from outliers of to professional members of a community, and to understand each other’s professional work such that they were able to relationally understand themselves as professionals. As Wenger (1998) states, learning is not just “an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person” (p. 215). Participant 9a/b spoke similarly with regard to her relational repositioning and sense of becoming:

> It was important to me to interact with other individuals in the same position as me—I learned from those I admired, and also from those that I had my doubts

> about. A way to say this is that working with other individuals in the same role as myself helped me to consider who I wanted to be as an instructor, who I didn't want to be, and what I wanted to accomplish here (Participant 9a/b).

Relational professional identity construction was not limited to a relational understanding of oneself amongst each other, but also between themselves and tenured faculty members through engagement in what they imagined were the professional activities in which tenured faculty members regularly participated. When engaging in collaboration with one another in the faculty learning community, for example, they recognized this as a *professional* activity because they imagined those in tenure-stream positions as actively collaborating in research. As Participant 9a/b said, to be a professional in writing studies, one had to be somewhat involved with teaching but more "heavily involved in research and writing about the field." In this way, they attributed professional meaning to activities with a presumed association with the work of whom they considered writing studies professionals—namely, tenure-track researchers.

As discussed at the start of this section, Wenger (1998) states that identities are not only produced through the particular position individuals hold and the practices in which they engage, but also by the positions they do not hold and the practices in which they do not engage (p. 164). These beliefs that a contingent composition faculty member had with regard to the work of their tenured colleagues suggests that they engaged in what Wenger (1998) calls the *imagination* mode of belonging, which refers to understanding or imagining the work others do in a larger system such that individuals develop an identity associated with participation in broader communities (pp. 176-185).

To return, then, to the idea of the faculty learning community as a reflection of a community of practice not their own, I argue that the faculty learning community provided contingent composition faculty members with a sense of professional membership largely because this context reflected what contingent composition faculty members imagined to be the sort of work in which tenured faculty members regularly engaged, and thus reflected what they imagined to be tenured faculty members' communities of practice rather than their own. While this imagination helped contingent composition faculty members understand their role in relation to those in tenure-stream positions, it did so in ways that actually widened the differences between the two roles, largely because contingent composition faculty members understood the professional activities of the faculty learning community as temporary and thus just a taste of what they perceived to be the community of practice in which tenured faculty regularly engaged. This is insinuated in Participant 4's conceptualization of what may be perceived as tenured faculty members' structural context, which she idealizes:

> In a perfect world there would be time for more such experiences. I would like to imagine a lighter teaching load to allow time for more research and curriculum development, preferably with the "luxury" of doing so with other instructors (Participant 4).

That contingent composition faculty members returned to a system, upon completion of the faculty learning community, in which they did not engage in such professional activities allowed for them to better recognize two disparate participation systems—a system of *haves* and a system of *have-nots*. Indeed, Wenger (1998) admits

that while the imagination mode of belonging can “yield a sense of affinity, and thus an identity of participation,” it can also “result in a reaction of disassociation and a consequent identity of non-participation” because of imagined differences (p. 195). This has been affirmed by Kwok (2018), whose study on contingent faculty found that “cognitive dissonance can arise from perceived inequities compared to tenured faculty,” and that these perceived inequities affect contingent faculty’s sense of worth and sense of “disconnect from the work itself” (p. 11).

The perceived inequities to which Kwok (2018) refers manifest as “social rules about what is work, who does that work, how work is compensated, and how the processes of work reinforces power relations and inequities,” which translates on the ground to a system in which contingent faculty’s *labor* benefits tenured faculty members’ *work* and, in doing so, sustains the latter’s power and status (p. 10), as discussed in Chapter 1 with regard to the dichotomization of the writing studies field. These social rules are reinforced through contracts, which represent a written suggestion to contingent faculty about “what it is appropriate for them to do and about the value placed on skills and abilities” (Abbas & McLean, 2001, p. 345). As such, contracts are psychological in nature in that they represent how contingent faculty members will be treated by their employing institution and represent a relationship in which contingent faculty members have no power (Abbas & McLean, 2001; Kwok, 2018).

Because these inequities largely represent that dichotomization of the writing studies field’s members into that of tenured faculty members and that of contingent faculty members, with only the former as full participants in a participation system that

carries professional status, contingent composition faculty members experience, as mentioned, identities of non-participation and professional stagnancy (Wenger, 1998, p. 195). As Participant 1 said, “Being able to take advantage of learning and training opportunities makes me feel like a professional, and helps my professional story move forward instead of move sideways.” If sideways is professional stagnancy, and if this stagnancy is associated with potential disconnection from their work, which can potentially impact student learning, then it is the responsibility of the writing studies field to research ways to facilitate forward development.

An important statement was drafted in this regard by Cox et al. (2016), referred to as the Indianapolis Resolution, in which they call for more support of labor-focused research because of the potential for this research “to improve both working conditions and teaching practices,” and also call for the actions previously proposed in the Wyoming Resolution (but not followed through on), as discussed in Chapter 1, with regard to formulating measures to ensure institutional compliance with professional standards for working condition (pp. 39-40). In the next section of this chapter, which closes the dissertation, I call for faculty learning communities to study the research of labor and work as a mobilization unit to effect change. This can only happen if labor research is supported and if measures to ensure institutional compliance are in place.

Looking Ahead with Some Hope

This study began with research questions that pertained to how faculty learning communities influence contingent composition faculty members’ professional identity. Engaging in a constant comparative method aligned with grounded theory methodology

resulted in findings that framed professional identity as that influenced by professional status, which was at once provided by the supportive context and precluded by the structural context. As explicated in Chapter 3, this study's emergent theory posits that (1) the structural conditions of contingent composition faculty members' work constrain their participation and membership and likewise constrain their professional identity development, (2) when a faculty learning community is introduced, their professional identity is reframed in response to the support, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration therein, which constitutes a sense of institutional and professional membership, and (3) because professional identity fluctuates as based on ongoing conditions and experiences, it is not wholly sustained after the faculty learning community but is instead reframed again in response to the marginalized conditions and experiences that continued to be imposed by the structural context.

The lens of communities of practice, as discussed in the previous two sections of this chapter, substantiated and complicated the emergent theory. Through this lens, I established the emergent theory's conceptualization of support, recognition, and collaboration as synonymous with the engagement mode of belonging, and thus the larger construct of membership as synonymous with mutual engagement. This substantiation allowed for me to argue that membership, like mutual engagement, must be continually maintained and that a single and temporary supportive context like the faculty learning community that does not provide for continual maintenance beyond its endpoint is insufficient. I also established how the emergent theory's understanding of identity reframing is complicated by an understanding of the imagination mode of belonging such

that contingent composition faculty members imagined the support, recognition, and collaboration provided through the faculty learning community as the professional activities of tenured faculty members. This complication allowed for me to argue that the faculty learning community represented an ideal to which contingent composition faculty members did not have access in the larger structural context but to which they imagined tenured faculty members *did* have access, which reinforced the fact that the field's members were dichotomized in such a way.

This study thus concludes with the assertion that, because the contingent labor conditions that define the structural context has this significant influence on contingent composition faculty members' professional identity, their professionalization should be ingrained in their regular practice through transformative structural conditions rather than intermittently provided through contexts ancillary to their practice. I am not discrediting what was gained through contingent composition faculty members' participation in faculty learning communities. In fact, I remain a strong proponent of faculty learning communities. I am suggesting instead that what was gained was not enough—not enough to withstand their lack of professional status in the structural context, and not enough to say that there is no need to fight for more.

* * *

Before I describe my recommendation for repurposing the faculty learning community as a mobilization unit for structural change, I first recommend two immediate ways in which composition program administrators can facilitate faculty learning communities such that they better support contingent composition faculty members: (1)

by providing contingent participants with both financial compensation *and* course releases for their participation in a faculty learning community, and (2) by working to maintain contingent participants' sense of institutional membership following the endpoint of the faculty learning community.

Of these recommendations, this research site carried out only the first point of the first recommendation: financial compensation. The composition program had been working with a meager budget for years until it secured funding outside of the department by successfully tying its advanced composition course to a university-wide initiative. In this case, the university had just selected a new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that focused on student scholarship. Because the tie-in between the advanced composition course and this particular initiative required that the composition program professionally develop its faculty to implement scholarship-focused changes to the course and that it also regularly conduct assessments of this implementation, the university granted the composition program a substantial annual award, which increased its budget eight-fold. This increase allowed for the composition program to provide each contingent faculty member who participated in one of the three semester-long faculty learning communities with a stipend of one thousand dollars. While this compensation was subjectively generous, and while other composition programs may not have a comparable budget, these programs may look, as this one had, toward alternative sources of funding beyond the department.

Because the faculty learning community requires a great investment of time on part of contingent composition faculty members, and because the materiality of both

money and time are so closely intertwined with their contingency and their sense of themselves as professionals, I strongly encourage writing program administrators to not only financially compensate its contingent faculty participants, but also to secure course releases for these participants. As this study shows, time was a perpetual impediment to professional identity, as it prevented contingent composition faculty members from building disciplinary expertise, from rethinking and revising their curriculum, and from participating in professional activities. With regard to that lattermost point, a number of contingent composition faculty members who had responded to the faculty learning community recruitment emails explicitly cited their lack of time as their reason for declining the invitation. And those who accepted the invitation to join a faculty learning community continually struggled to make the time to effectively participate. Had the composition program secured course releases for its participants, those who declined because of time may have instead elected to participate, and those who participated may not have struggled with time to the extent that they had.

The second recommendation I make pertains to the maintenance of institutional membership following the endpoint of the faculty learning community. This study's findings regarding the dissipation of contingent composition faculty members' sense of membership and professional identity in semesters following their participation in faculty learning communities necessitates, if not transformative change in the structural participation system, then, at the very least, administrative follow-through to facilitate continual participation despite structural constraints.

In other words, I suggest that writing program administrators work to provide for continual maintenance of contingent composition faculty members' mutual engagement, as discussed at the start of this chapter, by including contingent composition faculty members in "what matters" (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). If, as this study attests, membership is part of *what matters*, then writing program administrators should work to offer support, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration in semesters following the faculty learning community to maintain contingent involvement and engagement, and thus continued mutual engagement in their practice. This may entail some form of facilitated networking through online community forums and/or in-person meetups in which faculty learning community participants may continue to regularly and actively discuss new research relevant to their work and otherwise engage with each other. While composition program administrators may not be able to control course loads and thus cannot afford contingent composition faculty members with the time needed for this continual professional engagement, they can and should work to financially compensate contingent composition faculty members for this engagement.

Admittedly, I state this second recommendation with some hesitation because it places the burden of engagement on the contingent faculty member. It asks, in other words, that contingent composition faculty members continually work for their own professional inclusion, which suggests a "professionalization of work in the absence of a concomitant professionalization of reward" (Bousquet, 2004a, p. 18). It stands, in this way, as another makeshift supportive context within a larger structural context that does not value contingent composition faculty members' professional participation. While

these recommendations may provide ways for writing program administrators to work around such a problematic structural context, real change in contingent labor conditions needs to happen systematically and it needs to happen soon.

* * *

Late in this study, when rereading the literature on faculty learning communities, I came across a brief statement made by Petrone and Ortquist-Ahrens (2004) in reference to the roles held by a faculty learning community facilitator: “With a broad knowledge of university politics, policies, and procedures, the facilitator as champion may even be able to provide opportunities to initiate broader departmental and institutional change” (p. 65). There was no explanation or further elaboration, but the statement inspired me to consider what potential there was for the faculty learning community model itself to incite structural change.

I began the investigation into this potential by reviewing the literature on contingent labor—specifically that which pertained to proposals for concrete structural change. After some time, I came to the same conclusion that Schell (1998) had reached with regard to the lack of a consensus on any one solution due to myriad local factors such as “budgetary constraints, institutional type, departmental mission, numbers of contingent faculty, union membership, and the willingness of administrators and full-time faculty to improve working conditions,” all of which “dictate the possibilities of reform” (p. 90). However, with this in mind, and when returning to the statement that incited this investigation, I found that I understood it differently. Petrone and Ortquist-Ahrens (2004) suggest that a faculty learning community facilitator may incite structural change pending

a "broad knowledge of university politics, policies, and procedures" (p. 65). When I first read this, I had assumed that *broad* implied *inter-institutional*, as in knowledge of university politics, policies, and procedures in general, rather than *intra-institutional*, as in that pertaining to a single university and thus contextually-based.

This latter interpretation provided a means of imagining a labor-focused learning community that engaged in research both about institutional reform and about the particular local factors that dictated the possibilities of such reform at its particular institution, and that subsequently acted on this knowledge such that mobilizing for change was not the responsibility of a single facilitator, but instead the collective goal of the community itself. Unlike the faculty learning communities at this research site, which were homogenous with regard to both discipline and rank, I imagine the labor-focused learning community as following the cross-disciplinary and cross-rank model established in the literature such that its participants comprise both contingent and tenure-stream faculty from across the university. This suggestion is based on the possibility of mending, through such cooperation, the dichotomization of the writing studies field discussed throughout this dissertation, which can best happen if all faculty work together. As Marshall (2004) states, it is in the interest of all faculty members—and the larger profession—to do so:

> At the end of the day, we are one faculty. What is good for part-timers is good for full-timers. . . . Full-timers must be educated to appreciate the adjunct conditions and must be mobilized to help improve those conditions as part of a process of

> improving their own, along with the general health of the profession (pp. 117-118).

I also imagine the labor-focused learning community going further such that it not only comprises both contingent and tenure-stream faculty from across the university, but also comprises staff and students, and would thus be representative of the whole of which we are all part and inclusive of all perspectives within that whole. This suggestion is inspired by what Kahn (2015) states in regard to the interconnectedness amongst those involved in a particular university system:

> Not only are the people who work with us in our programs and on our campuses part of complex systems (and understand I mean that very inclusively: students, administrators, staff, all of us), but they're people (and so are we) whose lives and livelihoods often depend on the health of the environment. And it's really easy to lose sight of how connected we are within that environment (p. 115).

In this way, the labor-focused learning community would work both for the health of the profession as well as the health of the university. As far as what that work would entail and how this work could potentially incite change, I turned to Kezar and Sam (2013) and their discussion of labor reform as possible when based in an institution's "underlying assumptions or norms" to the extent that it becomes "embedded within the culture" of that institution (p. 59). This is the crux of institutionalization theory, which complements communities of practice in that these theories correspond with organizational learning and learning organizations, respectively. Huysman (2002) concedes to the lack of research on the extent to which communities of practice contribute to organizational

learning, but asserts, as I do, that if the goal is action, knowledge produced within a community must be shared and accepted by the larger institution such that it becomes institutional knowledge, which is a process referred to as "collective acceptance" (p. 9). She also concedes that this process of collective acceptance is difficult due to power differentials between the larger institution and the communities therein, and the authority of that institution to determine what is "important to the organization as a whole" and, likewise, what is not (Huysman, 2002, p. 11). Indeed, writing studies researchers who study contingent labor point to the "intensifying sway of neoliberal logics" and austerity regimes that influence institutional decisions as to what is and is not important (Scott & Welch, 2016, p. 4). But the very basis of institutionalization theory is that knowledge must first be collectively accepted before it can be acted upon and, as such, provides a potential lens through which a community can potentially appeal to the values of the larger university by connecting the need for change to the needs of the university itself, thus marketing knowledge for collective acceptance.

Institutionalization theory's first stage, which pertains to that which may be possible to achieve through labor-focused learning communities, is referred to as *mobilization*. This stage employs three strategies: (1) *developing awareness*, which refers to illuminating contingent faculty members' labor conditions and their experiences of isolation, alienation, and marginalization such that these conditions and experiences are known to administrators and faculty of all ranks, (2) *creating a network*, which refers to using communicative modes such as campus listservs or community forums to maintain continuous awareness of contingent faculty members' conditions and experiences, and

(3) *breaking invisibility*, which refers to creating leadership positions for and promoting the worth and expertise of contingent faculty members, as well as creating alliances between contingent and tenured faculty members (Kezar & Sam, 2013, pp. 69-71).

If a labor-focused learning community pursued institutional data on the labor conditions of its university (and of peer and aspirational universities in an effort to make the aforementioned appeals and market its knowledge), and pursued research on labor and institutional reform so as to understand that data in light of what was contextually applicable, it could begin the work of *developing awareness*. Presuming that the labor-focused learning community comprised a cross-section of the university, it would illuminate for tenured faculty members, staff, and students, the conditions that frame contingent faculty members' experiences.[25]

As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature on faculty learning communities suggest that its participants present their achievements to those outside the faculty learning community (Cox, 2004, p. 19). Likewise, the labor-focused learning community could heed this recommendation such that they extend this awareness out to the larger university so as to facilitate a sense of esprit de corps and encourage all within that university system to understand, as Kahn (2015) suggested, their connected livelihoods as

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[25] If, to effect systematic change in the structural conditions of contingent labor, one must start by changing the way the system itself thinks of contingent faculty, then that also includes changing the attitudes of contingent faculty themselves, for as Kezar & Sam (2013) found, some contingent faculty members adopt the institution's thinking with regard to their lack of worth and have to be convinced that they deserve better conditions before they will effectively work for them (p. 71). I saw only hints of this in the data I collected, perhaps the most explicit of which was Participant 2's statement about her heavy course load as leading to feelings of incompetence: "I thought I was inept in how I handled my courses, but I think it's the system. So, I cut back to two sections." Because it is likely that other participants also felt this way but didn't share as much, as they were not prompted to do so, it is important to develop awareness amongst contingent faculty members, too, of what is systematic rather than individual failings.

dependent on the health of the university (p. 115). These presentations could signal the start of an ongoing awareness campaign so as to begin the work of *creating a network*. As Kezar and Sam (2013) assert, “once a community developed awareness, there was an opportunity to capitalize on this attention; creating communication vehicles was a way to disseminate information as well as further unite individuals” (p. 70). As such, presentations could be followed by additional communicative modes to maintain this awareness and to transform the university’s thinking about its labor practices with the third strategy of mobilization, *breaking invisibility*, as its goal.

If a university professional is, as previously cited, (1) one who possesses and continues to develop their knowledge while working to further the field’s knowledge, (2) one with certain rights and privileges, such as having voice in policy and curriculum, and (3) one part of an inclusive network of learning and collegiality (Penrose, 2012, pp. 113-117), and if a faculty learning community can only, for the most part, provide that lattermost dimension of professional status—and only temporarily, then it behooves us to consider how the faculty learning community model can serve to incite structural change and comprehensively provide for all three dimensions of professional status, or, failing that, to consider how structural transformation can be achieved outside of this model. As Penrose (2012) states, “we are aiming not for one of these identities—expert, autonomous agent, community member—but for all of them” (p. 120).

While more research is needed to better understand the potential for a labor-focused learning community and the role it may play in the mobilization stage (or later stages) of institutionalization theory, this recommendation provides some hope that the

faculty learning community can be more than just temporary support, and thus that a contingent composition faculty member's sense of membership and identity in a faculty learning community can be more than just a temporary taste of full participation and membership.

This study contributes to the literature on labor in that it provides for contingent composition faculty members' understanding of their professional status and identity, which Levin and Montero Hernandez (2014) assert is lacking adequate coverage in the literature (pp. 532-533), and provides much-needed incorporation of their voice (Kezar & Sam, 2013, p. 58). More research that attests to contingent working conditions may be useful, particularly open-access research that can incite public support and thus more buy-in and momentum for change, but what is most needed is research that speaks to concrete actions that can be taken to effect this change.

This study took an additional step not explored in most research on faculty learning communities in that it followed participants through a subsequent semester or two following their participation in a faculty learning community, which significantly shaped this study's emergent theory; however, research that goes even further to demonstrate connections to student learning would be particularly useful not only to understand how professional development affects student learning, but also how labor conditions that constrain professional development can affect student learning. It is important to better understand the hierarchy at work in universities with regard to how conditions from the top trickle down to the most vulnerable population, but it is just as

important to better understand how oppositions inherent in this hierarchy can be illuminated as problematic and thus dismantled in ways that incite structural change.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY PROTOCOL

1. In which learning community did you participate?
2. What did you find most valuable about the learning community?
3. What did you find least valuable about the learning community?
4. To what extent did participating in the learning community help you think about your teaching/pedagogical approach?
5. To what extent did participating in the learning community help you think about your course and/or assignment design approach?
6. Please list and describe some of the changes you plan to make to your course and/or assignments after participating in the learning community.
7. Would you recommend participation in a learning community like this one to other faculty? Why or why not, and under what conditions?
8. Are there other types of support, tools, or professional development opportunities that would help you as you teach advanced composition?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Background Information

1. What is your highest degree and in what field?
2. What is your position at George Mason University?
3. How has your educational/professional background prepared you for this position?
4. What motivated you to pursue this particular position?
5. How long have you been teaching advanced composition?
6. What other courses do you teach?

II. Central Information

1. How would you describe your learning community experience?
2. Which aspect(s) of the learning community did you find beneficial and why?
3. Which aspect(s) of the learning community did you find challenging and why?

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4. How would you describe your experiences teaching advanced composition prior to the learning community?
5. What were some of your central or go-to teaching practices in advanced composition prior to the learning community?

6. What philosophies informed your teaching of advanced composition prior to the learning community?
7. How would you describe your familiarity with disciplinary knowledge and instructional practices prior to the learning community?

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8. How would you describe your experiences teaching advanced composition since the learning community?
9. What new teaching practices, if any, have you incorporated in your advanced composition classes since the learning community?
10. What new philosophies, if any, have informed your teaching of advanced composition since the learning community?
11. How would you now describe your familiarity with disciplinary knowledge and instructional practices?

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12. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a professional in your field?
13. To what extent do you believe the composition program might understand a professional differently?
14. To what extent do you believe the English department might understand a professional differently?
15. To what extent do you believe the larger field might understand a professional differently?
16. How do you contend with any differences in this understanding of a professional?

17. How would you describe your sense of professional identity prior to the learning community?
18. In what ways, if any, has this sense of professional identity changed since the learning community?

II. Supplemental Information

1. Of the questions I've asked and responses you've given, which strike you as most important to your professional story and why?
2. What else can you tell me about your professional story prior to, during, and since the learning community?
3. In the [survey/reflection] you wrote at the end of the learning community, you made the following statements: [ ]. Can you tell me more about [ ]?

APPENDIX C: VERSUS CODING CYCLES

<table>
<tr><td>Compensation as Unfair vs. Fair
Participant speaks of their compensation as incommensurate with their expertise and workload vs. that which would be appropriate</td><td rowspan="4">Categorized: Understanding Oneself as “Other” in the Institution</td><td rowspan="7">Recategorized: Institutional and Disciplinary Treatment of Contingent Faculty Members

Conceptualized: Tenured Conditions vs. Contingent Conditions (Moiety 1)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Comp/Rhet vs. Other Discipline
Participants speaks of comp/rhet’s position/status in the university (and the associated treatment of its faculty) vs. that of other disciplines</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contingent vs. Tenured Hiring
Participant speaks of contingent hiring/employment practices vs. tenured (or otherwise secure, steady, and fair) hiring/employment practices</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feeling Included vs. Isolated
Participant speaks of feeling valued/recognized as a member of an academic/professional community vs. feeling disrespected by or isolated from such</td></tr>
<tr><td>Comp/Rhet Research vs. Teaching
Participant speaks of teaching as informed or illuminated by research vs. teaching as informed by assumptions, experience, or limited dips into research</td><td rowspan="3">Categorized: Understanding Oneself as “Other” in the Field</td></tr>
<tr><td>Comp/Rhet vs. Other Expertise
Participant speaks of having a background (education, experience, publications) in another discipline or profession vs. having a background in comp/rhet</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contingent vs. Tenured Job/Status
Participant speaks of teaching duties as including research (on/for teaching) vs. the duties of tenured/research faculty and their professional status in comparison</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>Curriculum as Academic vs. Real-World Influence
Participant speaks of curriculum as influenced by instructor’s real-world interests outside the classroom vs. curriculum devoid of these interests</td><td rowspan="3">Categorized: Negotiating Instructor Motivation and Learning</td><td rowspan="8">Recategorized: Professionalization of Contingent Faculty Members

Conceptualized: Contingent Conditions vs. Professional Development (Moiety 2)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feeling Encouraged vs. Ambivalent
Participant speaks of feeling encouraged or motivated to learn or improve vs. feeling discouraged or ambivalent to learn or improve</td></tr>
<tr><td>Instructor Learning as Difficult vs. Effortless
Participant speaks of understanding their own learning as challenging vs. presuming their (or their colleagues’) learning would be without difficulty</td></tr>
<tr><td>Best Practices Given vs. Constructed
Participant speaks of carrying over assumed or instructed (top-down) best practices vs. understanding such through discussion (“real” learning) with colleagues</td><td rowspan="2">Categorized: Supplanting Isolation with Collaboration</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum Design as Joint vs. Solo Effort
Participant speaks of designing (or redesigning) assignments through discussions with and through feedback by colleagues vs. doing so alone
Participant speaks of having the “opportunity” for curriculum design in the learning community vs. facing the challenge of such alone or without inspiration</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feeling Confident vs. Insecure
Participant speaks of feeling confident and competent as a professional or practitioner vs. feeling insecure or incompetent as a professional or practitioner</td><td rowspan="3">Categorized: Developing Competence Amid Contingent Conditions</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time vs. Teaching Load
Participant speaks of time needed to read, research, or redesign assignments vs. time devoted to duties (grading, feedback, etc.) associated with teaching load</td></tr>
<tr><td>WPA as Savior vs. Admin
Participant speaks of WPA as savior or one whose experience/expertise is unattainable vs. WPA as admin or one whose experience/expertise is attainable</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>Professional Identity vs. Professional Development
• Participant speaks of professional identity as directly connected to professional development vs. professional identity as distinct from professional development</td><td rowspan="2">Categorized: Connecting Identity to Practice</td><td rowspan="11">Recategorized: Professionalization's Perceived Influence on Students

Conceptualized: Professional Development vs. Student Learning (Moiety 3)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Professional Identity vs. Student Learning
• Participant speaks of professional identity as directly connected to student learning vs. professional identity as distinct from student learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feedback as Frequent vs. Minimal
• Participant speaks of providing feedback on process work to facilitate student confidence and/or improvement vs. providing feedback on the product only</td><td rowspan="4">Categorized: Rethinking Practice to Enhance Student Learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reflecting as Frequent vs. Minimal
• Participant speaks of assigning reflections/metacognitive activities throughout the semester vs. assigning such sporadically or not at all</td></tr>
<tr><td>Student Learning as Difficult vs. Effortless
• Participant speaks of understanding their students' learning as challenging vs. presuming their learning would be without difficulty</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skill Breakdown vs. Combination
• Participant speaks of breaking large, complex tasks into smaller, manageable tasks vs. expecting students to do so on their own to accomplish the whole
• Participant speaks of a recursive process replete with active learning activities and built-in practice vs. a linear process lacking formative work and practice</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum as Academic vs. Real-World Applicability
• Participant speaks of curriculum or associated skills as applicable inside university only vs. that which is applicable to students' personal/professional lives</td><td rowspan="5">Categorized: Redesigning Curriculum to Enhance Student Learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum as Sequenced vs. Disconnected
• Participant speaks of assignments as connected in a larger, sequenced curriculum vs. assignments as stand-alone units disconnected from one another</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum as Unreasonable vs. Reasonable
• Participant speaks of teaching or assigning more work than what is possible to accomplish vs. teaching or assigning a manageable workload
• Participant speaks of teaching or assigning work that is challenging vs. teaching or assigning work that is fear-inducing or impossible</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum vs. Student Learning
• Participant speaks of redesigning curriculum as connected to expected student learning vs. understanding student learning as incidental or accidental</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum vs. Course Goals
• Participant speaks of superfluous or "fun" lessons/activities that are loosely connected to course goals vs. lessons/activities that are aligned with course goals
• Participant speaks of understanding ways of facilitating connections between curriculum and course goals vs. experiencing dissonance in regard to such</td></tr>
</table>

APPENDIX D: DATA-THEMEING CYCLES

<table>
<tr><td>… aware of why, what, and how they teach, and “what [they] have to offer as a teacher”</td><td rowspan="11">Categorized:
A Professional is Confident and Respected</td><td rowspan="16">Conceptualized:
Professional = Respect
(Theoretical Construct 1)</td></tr>
<tr><td>… confident in approaching students, which in turn “affects their students’ ability to learn”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… confident such that they are not scared “to take a chance” or of “looking silly or inept”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… not seen as a tradesperson from the perspective of the university and the “wider culture”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… prioritized in the wider university community</td></tr>
<tr><td>… recognized by the university</td></tr>
<tr><td>… taken seriously as a researcher and teacher in a serious discipline</td></tr>
<tr><td>… treated as a professional by “peers and other university faculty”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… treated with “professional respect”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… treated as “a member of the university”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… valued by the field</td></tr>
<tr><td>… appropriately compensated for their work, knowledge, and expertise</td><td rowspan="5">Categorized:
A Professional is Appropriately Compensated</td></tr>
<tr><td>… compensated as “commensurate with the work or the expertise required”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… compensated such that they “feel like a professional” rather “a volunteer”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… compensated with “respect for [their] abilities and time”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… not on a “very different (and lower) tier than tenure-track faculty”</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>… a member of a “well-funded” department</td><td rowspan="8">Categorized:
A Professional is Recognized in a Department</td><td rowspan="14">Conceptualized:
Professional = Membership
(Theoretical Construct 2)</td></tr>
<tr><td>… a “part of the community” such that they feel a sense of belonging</td></tr>
<tr><td>… allowed to participate and thus included “in the department’s activities”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… an active academic with no significant employment lapse</td></tr>
<tr><td>… “committed to the same project” as their colleagues</td></tr>
<tr><td>… “committed to [their] profession”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… engaged in “pedagogical practice”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… united in a common goal with colleagues and supported in “reach[ing] it together”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… a graduate of studies in and a current researcher in a particular field</td><td rowspan="6">Categorized:
A Professional is Recognized in a Discipline</td></tr>
<tr><td>… a member of a “rigorous, important, and necessary” discipline</td></tr>
<tr><td>… an author of articles and presenter at conferences</td></tr>
<tr><td>… an “active researcher” (whether published or not)</td></tr>
<tr><td>… instructional faculty “heavily involved in research and writing about the field”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… “involved in research, teaching, or writing about” comp/rhet</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>… constantly developing their professional identity</td><td rowspan="9">Categorized:
A Professional is Eager to Learn</td><td rowspan="14">Conceptualized:
Professional = Growth
(Theoretical Construct 3)</td></tr>
<tr><td>… curious and always wants to “improve [their] skills”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… given opportunities for “professional development and growth”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… given opportunities “to discuss theory and teaching practices with colleagues”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… given opportunities “to share with colleagues”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… given opportunities to share research with colleagues “to improve their teaching”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… knowledgeable of research and bases their teaching on such</td></tr>
<tr><td>… informed by research such that they “teach using evidence-based strategies”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… supported in “interactive [and] social” professional development</td></tr>
<tr><td>… actively interested “in all fields that comprise the world [their] students will inherit”</td><td rowspan="5">Categorized:
A Professional is Invested in Students</td></tr>
<tr><td>… “an agent for making a positive difference in the learning of [their] students”</td></tr>
<tr><td>… attentive to “current research” such that they provide valuable information to students</td></tr>
<tr><td>… invested in and cares about “the content and teaching methods” used in their classes</td></tr>
<tr><td>… knowledgeable such that they “enrich students’ time in [their] classes”</td></tr>
</table>

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