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First Class Teachers, Second Class Citizens: A Mixed Methods Investigation of the  
Predictors of Organizational Commitment Among Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Melissa Altman

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Strategic Leadership Studies

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This dissertation is dedicated to Simon. You believed in me, no matter what.  
p.s. I miss you.

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...to my daughter, and my best friend, Amber. “But Bill Jr., he was a DAREDEVIL!”

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## **Abstract**

This mixed methods study explored the experiences with, as well as the levels of and predictors of, organizational commitment amongst non-tenure track faculty (NTTF) members. 652 NTTF members from mid-size public comprehensive university with a teaching focus in the SACSCOC accrediting region received a confidential electronic survey measuring organizational sense of belonging, dependence on NTTF income, level of underemployment, and engagement with the faculty development center. Control variables included demographic characteristics, length of time in a contingent position, type of appointment (FT or PT), discipline, and possession of a terminal academic degree. The dependent variable was affective organizational commitment measured using the nine-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Commeiras, & Fournier, 2001). The quantitative data (N=200) was analyzed using multiple linear regression, and results of the quantitative strand were used to select participants in qualitative interviews. Both organizational sense of belonging and teaching in a STEM discipline correlated with affective organizational commitment. Data from nine qualitative interviews were analyzed alongside the quantitative results using constant comparative coding. Six themes emerged, including evidence that NTTF members consistently exhibit commitment to student learning and development. University-wide faculty development was found to boost NTTF organizational sense of belonging. Leadership implications are discussed, and specific policy recommendations to better integrate NTTF into the collegium are offered.



## Chapter One: Introduction

Contingent faculty appointments are proliferating at all levels of the academy, and it is inarguable that these positions have profoundly changed the nature of “the faculty.” Currently, more than two thirds of faculty members in U.S. higher education are in contingent appointments, and this number continues to grow (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Despite regular articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* decrying the abhorrent labor conditions and blatant exploitation that the growing numbers of adjuncts face (e.g., Hanlon, 2019; Kroik, 2019), the Humboldtian model of a full-time tenure-eligible professional who divides her time between research, teaching, and service still dominates discussions about ‘faculty.’ Though this model came to prominence in higher education in the United States in the post-WWII era, tenure-eligible positions actually constitute a minority today.

Contingent faculty appointments vary widely. Often called nontenure-track faculty (NTTF), these appointments range from part-time to full-time, they may have single semester contracts or be appointed for several years, and they often focus on teaching duties to the exclusion of research responsibilities. Despite this range of differences all contingent faculty share a fundamental condition—the ambiguity of being off the tenure track—that differentiates them from the appointments occupied by their tenure-eligible peers, who may be tenure-track or have already received tenure. Although the proportion of faculty members who are contingent varies by institutional type and by discipline, these positions have been prevalent at all levels of the academy for more than twenty-five years (Gappa, 1984; Gappa, 2000; Shulman, 2019).

## **Drivers of Growth in Non-Tenure Track Faculty Appointments**

The shift towards contingent faculty appointments has been steady but not necessarily strategic, driven primarily by fiscal pressures, decentralized management, and short-term instead of long-term planning (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015a; Zhang, Liu, & Ehrenberg, 2015). Decreased state funding coupled with rising costs has increased the financial squeeze on public institutions. Skepticism about the value of higher education has increased, coupled with the criticism that colleges and universities focus too much on research at the expense of the teaching and learning of undergraduates. The increased utilization of contingent faculty members is seen in part as a response to these criticisms about the costs and value of higher education (Frye, 2017).

This increase is sometimes discussed in academic circles as a short-term tactic employed in response to particularly tight financial times rather than an intentional long-term strategy. When policymakers discuss contingent faculty appointments, it is often to urge the academy to return to more full-time tenure-eligible faculty (TEF) appointments (Besosoa et al., 2010; June, 2009). While the growth in contingent faculty appointments may have originated largely as a stopgap measure in tough financial times, all signs suggest that these positions will continue to make up the bulk of the faculty. Contingent faculty positions are the majority of what makes up today's faculty, and they are here to stay.

## **Consequences of this Trend**

Gehrke and Kezar (2015a) note that the shift toward these types of appointments was not driven by an evidence-based understanding of what kind of faculty roles best serve teaching and learning. Little is known about how contingent faculty appointments

impact what happens in the classroom, let alone how this shift is affecting institutions themselves, the faculty as a whole, or society at large. The list of unanswered (and sometimes largely unasked) questions about the experiences, practices, and outcomes of contingent faculty is long (Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019). Student questions include what practices contingent faculty use in the classroom, how faculty interact (or don't) with students outside of the classroom, and how contingent faculty appointments impact learning, grades, retention, and graduation. Questions pertaining to faculty and institutions include workforce practices (hiring, training, turnover, qualifications), faculty performance (quality of teaching and/or other responsibilities), implications for the dwindling number of faculty occupying tenure-eligible positions (e.g., will they each take on a larger load of university service obligations? Or will they give this work over to university administrators, thereby declining not just in numbers but also in influence?) organizational development effects, departmental and college implications, and long-term sustainability. Beyond the questions raised about what happens within the world of higher education, there are bigger questions of the impact of this faculty transformation on society at large. If most faculty members have short-term gigs with only teaching responsibilities, what will happen to the academy's role in knowledge creation? What about the role of higher education in meeting the needs of the public via community service?

One frequent response from higher education stakeholders when the increase in contingent faculty labor is acknowledged is to assume the trend sounds the death knell of higher education as we know it. The call to reinstate 'traditional' tenure-eligible appointments is often accompanied by assumptions that contingent faculty members are

less qualified, less motivated, and less capable than tenure track and tenured faculty members. This commonly adopted deficit approach expects contingent faculty members to perform poorly in the classroom, lack dedication to their students and their institutions, and generally serve as a drag on the academy. An example of an analysis adopting this approach is Charfauros & Tierney's 1999 look at the utilization of part-time faculty in higher education, which frames its inquiry around the question "How might a college or university improve the performance of a rapidly growing cadre of its instructors?" (p. 141). These assumptions are problematic first because they are exactly that—assumptions—but also because they obscure important variations across contingent roles and the motivations of the individuals who occupy those roles, as well as disciplinary and institutional differentials. Deficit assumptions have taken the place of evidence-based research to determine who contingent faculty members are, what they do, and what factors influence their experiences and performances (Kezar & Sam, 2010). In lieu of this 'sky is falling' approach, much more empirical research is needed.

### **Factors Shaping the Organizational Commitment of Non-Tenure Track Faculty Members**

The individuals occupying contingent faculty appointments do so for many reasons, ranging from intrinsic motivation to give back in the professional field where they work full-time (e.g., nursing or accounting) to a desire to use their adjunct teaching as a step on the path to a full-time tenured position in the academy (Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Differences in how contingent faculty members experience being off the tenure track stem from the structure of their appointments (e.g., part-time versus full-time, or semester versus 2-year contract), the discipline in which they serve (e.g., humanities

versus hard sciences), institutional factors (e.g., campus climate), and departmental conditions (e.g., integration with or isolation from tenure-eligible peers), as well as their individual aspirations and motivations. Maynard and Joseph's (2006) research on underemployment suggests that matching faculty aspirations to level of employment may significantly impact a faculty member's experience of their position. For example, a part-time adjunct may be fully employed in their vocation such as nursing or law and teach a clinical course once a year. Alternatively, a contingent faculty member might desire a full-time tenure track position, creating a large mismatch between his current position and the position he desires. One problem plaguing the body of research around contingent faculty members is inconsistent attention to these significant distinctions in the contingent experience.

An area regarding contingent faculty appointments that has attracted some attention is labor conditions. When researchers do examine the conditions under which contingent faculty members perform their duties, they discover a range of factors that may impair their ability to fully contribute to the university's core mission of teaching and learning, including but not limited to "limited or no input to department decisions, no job security, notification within days of teaching, limited or no benefits, significantly lower salary, limited or no clear guidelines about their work, no promotion or career track, lack of respect from colleagues, limited or no professional development," etc. (Kezar & Sam, 2014, p. 426). Some NTTF lack access to administrative support, computers, basic office supplies, or even desk space (Charfauros & Tierney, 1999; Gappa, 1984 & 2000). Both material and social working conditions impact NTTF members, and the two types of labor conditions may even combine to magnify social

issues such as sense of belonging, collegiality, respect for expertise, or full integration into the faculty.

### **Why Non-Tenure Track Faculty Organizational Commitment Matters**

Models of faculty classroom performance suggest that affective factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment should have a significant impact on classroom conduct and student outcomes (Kezar & Sam, 2011). Organizational commitment has often been considered reciprocal; to the degree that employers invest in employees, employees will reciprocate with a commitment to the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Applied to contingent faculty, this theoretical lens suggests that contingent faculty members should be less committed due to the lower investment that the institution places in their positions. The deficit approach to contingent faculty consequently assumes that they will exhibit a lower organizational commitment than their tenure-eligible peers, yet little research has actually measured the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members. Further, little is known about the way that contingent faculty members experience the conditions under which they work or how they make meaning around the structure of their appointments and the opportunities these appointments afford them to contribute to the institutional mission (Kezar & Sam, 2011).

The assumption that all contingent faculty members will exhibit a lower organizational commitment (with accompanying lower level of classroom performance and reduced student outcomes) ignores important distinctions across appointment types and labor conditions. In fact, some studies show that these faculty members may be even more dedicated to classroom performance than their peers on the tenure track (Maynard & Joseph, 2008; Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011). Other research suggests that full-time

NTTF may be more similar to their tenure-eligible peers (Umbach, 2007). And amongst part-time faculty, those who teach in clinical fields (where the part-timer may actually work full-time within a profession or clinical setting and teach ‘on the side’) may actually foster increased interest in future courses in their disciplines (Bettinger & Long, 2005).

The reciprocal theory of organizational commitment (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979) seems to be what critics have in mind when they take a deficit approach to contingent faculty. Based in the notion of loyalty, this understanding of organizational commitment suggests that workers will be more committed to their organizations if they see that their organization has made a substantial investment/commitment in them. Given that institutions of higher education are not investing in NTTF (at least not at the levels that they do for tenure-eligible faculty members), this model predicts a lower level of commitment from the NTTF member to his/her institution. Inherent in this deficit approach is the idea that the lack of commitment from the institution is driven by an inherent lack, or deficit, in the individuals who occupy the non-tenure-track appointment themselves. If achieving tenure is the pinnacle of a faculty career, then those who don’t achieve it must not measure up in some way, the reasoning goes.

Yet other researchers have adopted a different approach to conceptualizing and measuring organizational commitment amongst faculty that may be better suited to capturing what matters to these professionals (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016; Barnes, Agago, & Coombs, 1998; Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2006; Lawrence, Ott, & Bell, 2012). One approach that has promise is Meyer and Allen’s (1991) affective organizational commitment (AOC). AOC is the desire to work with a particular

organization. This concept has particular resonance for the performance of contingent faculty members.

Measuring affective organizational commitment in contingent faculty is an important step but it is insufficient for understanding the way that various forces impact the experiences of NTTF. Given the growing majority of faculty members who are now off the tenure track, understanding their organizational commitment and their experiences is critical in supporting their contributions across higher education. By following the survey measure with semi-structured qualitative interviews, the proposed mixed methods study aims to give voice to this important, diverse, and marginalized majority who does so much of the teaching labor in higher education.

### **Research Questions, Purpose Statement, and Variables**

Three research questions drive this mixed methods study. The first is descriptive, driven by the lack of actual measurement of organizational commitment among non-tenure track faculty members. The second question addresses a range of factors that could predict affective organizational commitment and addresses the quantitative strand. The final question will be addressed by the qualitative strand of the design. The questions are:

- What levels of organizational commitment do contingent faculty members exhibit?
- What predicts the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members?
- How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences with, as well as the levels of and predictors of, organizational commitment amongst non-tenure track faculty



members. The target population is drawn from a mid-size public comprehensive university in the SACS COC accrediting region. Confidential electronic surveys will be administered via email to all campus faculty off the tenure track. The independent variables of interest are organizational sense of belonging, dependence on NTTF income, level of underemployment, and engagement with the faculty development center. Control variables include demographic characteristics, length of time in a contingent position, type of appointment (FT or PT), discipline, and possession of a terminal academic degree. The dependent variable is affective organizational commitment, measured using the nine-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Commeiras, & Fournier, 2001).

The quantitative data from the surveys will be collected and analyzed using multiple linear regression as the first strand of the mixed method analysis. Qualitative interviews will follow in order to explain the quantitative findings. The quantitative measures will be used to determine predictors of organizational commitment as well as to select participants for interview during the qualitative phase.

To fulfill this purpose, this study progresses through four additional chapters. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework guiding this research and then reviews the extant literature. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology utilized. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the two strands. Chapter 5 discusses the implications and offers recommendations for practice.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

The following chapter establishes the lens within which the proposed study will be conducted as a four-part theoretical framework. The four basic concepts are refutation of the deficit approach to understanding the non-tenure track phenomenon, Kurt Lewin's person-environment theory, a review of affective organizational commitment as evolved from organizational commitment more broadly, and a strategic leadership approach to change management in higher education. The framework is designed to explain how the proposed study fits into a broader understanding of social phenomenon. Following the theoretical framework is a review of the academic literature around the non-tenure track faculty trend.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework guiding this inquiry has four bases. First, it questions the assumptions of the deficit approach commonly adopted to understand the phenomenon of non-tenure track faculty hiring. Secondly, it is grounded in the idea that to explain human behaviors and attitudes we must understand both the person and the context. Next, it engages the idea of affective organizational commitment, or desire to work for a particular organization, as a way of understanding the relationship between non-tenure track faculty members and their employing college or university. Lastly, it draws on what is known about strategic leadership and change management in the unique sector which is higher education. Each of these is explored below. Taken together, the concepts articulate the theoretical framework that grounds the proposed study.

## **Refuting Deficit Assumptions**

One common way of explaining the behavior and attitudes of non-tenure track faculty is what Kezar and Sam (2011) call the ‘deficit approach.’ When researchers approach complex societal problems from a deficit approach, they tend to focus on persistent problems, note unmet needs, and foreground what is missing; this contrasts with a ‘strengths-based’ approach which focuses on opportunities, notes assets, and foregrounds tools and strengths available (Bensimon, 2007). The commonly taken deficit approach is driven by a belief that the faculty members themselves fundamentally lack the qualifications and/or abilities to acquire a tenure-eligible position. It suggests that non-tenure track faculty members will be less committed, less capable, and perform less well than those who occupy tenure-eligible positions. It also assumes that appointments off the tenure track will necessarily be less effective for the stakeholders and institutions being served than tenure-eligible appointments.

The proposed study questions these assumptions. While acknowledging that the growth in NTTF appointments is a significant trend in the higher education sector, this inquiry rejects the assertion that appointments off the tenure track, or the individuals who occupy them, represent a problem to be solved. Instead this inquiry is grounded in the understanding that non-tenure track faculty members have become central to the core academic functions of teaching and learning, and consequently argues that we should seek to understand how to most effectively utilize these appointments and individuals. Focusing on the question of commitment in non-tenure track faculty members, the proposed study seeks to investigate the major factors influencing the desire of non-tenure track faculty members to work for their college or university.

### **Person Plus Context**

To understand how we can identify those major factors, the second key conceptualization comes into play. The proposed study assumes that to understand human attitudes and behaviors we must study both the characteristics of the people involved and the specifics of the context, or environment, in which that person is situated. This theory was brought to prominence by psychologist Kurt Lewin, who insisted on the “interrelatedness of the person and the environment” (Deutsch, 1992). The factors of interest for the proposed study fall into two categories: factors inherent in the person themselves or that the person brings to their NTTF appointment, and factors that come from the organizational context in which the individual holds her non-tenure track faculty appointment. Factors of the first type include demographic characteristics (e.g., race or gender) as well as the experiences and credentials that individuals bring to their appointments (e.g., dependence on NTTF income). Factors from the organizational context include compensation, contract terms, or working conditions (e.g., departmental culture). Both personal characteristics and contextual factors, as well as the interplay between the two, will affect the development of affective organizational commitment in non-tenure track faculty members. As a consequence, both must be considered when trying to understand how that commitment is developed and maintained (or not).

### **Organizational Commitment**

The last concept that grounds this inquiry is the concept of affective organizational commitment, or the desire to work for an organization. The broader concept of organizational commitment from which affective organizational commitment evolved can be linked to the study of loyalty and even today is sometimes operationalized

as ‘intent to leave’ or ‘intent to stay.’ Historically loyalty to one’s employer was considered a good quality to have. Concerns about the cost of turnover including recruitment, hiring, and training focused interest on identifying predictors of commitment to one’s employer. While measuring predictors of turnover itself can be quite difficult, since the employee who leaves is not available to answer questions about his reasoning, intent to leave is easier to measure. Researchers have found that expressed ‘intent to leave’ correlates reliably with actual turnover, making it a concept that can provide valuable insights into the reliability of the workforce (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Organizational commitment has obvious implications for intent to leave and for turnover, but it goes a step further than retention and is intended to tell researchers about performance while on the job, as well as intent to stay or leave. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) argued that organizational commitment has three factors:

- 1) A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values;
- 2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and
- 3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (p. 4).

This notion of organizational commitment is considered relatively stable and less variable than related attitudes such as job satisfaction.

Drawing on a rational approach to understanding human behavior, the Mowday et al. conceptualization of organizational commitment is reciprocal in nature: the degree to which an employee is committed to her organization is expected to mirror the degree to which the employing organization has committed to her, the employee. Commitment to the employee is evidenced by investments such as salary, benefits, job security and

stability, professional development opportunities, and opportunities for advancement, among others.

### **Affective Organizational Commitment**

Meyer and Allen (1991) built on the Mowday et al. understanding of organizational commitment by focusing on the distinction between commitment attitudes and commitment behaviors. They define organizational commitment as “the worker’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). They argue that organizational commitment as a psychological state actually consists of three separate and complementary components that are both interdependent and separate from each other. These three components are a desire to be part of an organization (affective attachment to the organization), a need (perceived costs of leaving the organization), and an obligation (a responsibility or requirement to stay with an organization). Affective commitment refers to “employees who are part of the organization because they want to be; hence, one would expect them to be present at work and motivated to perform their best” (Meyer & Allen, 1997; cited in Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012).

### **Why Investigate Affective Organizational Commitment Specifically?**

The theory of organizational commitment suggests that a myriad of outcomes should be associated with organizational commitment in faculty members. For example, if commitment indicates a willingness to make additional efforts, then contingent faculty members with higher organizational commitment should be more willing to put hours into their teaching and may spend more time interacting with students, activities which should result in better student learning outcomes. In the case of NTTF appointments,

drivers of reciprocal organizational commitment such as tenure are missing. Despite this lack of organizational investment from their institution, a large number of individuals serve in the growing number of contingent faculty appointments across the United States. Consequently, how can we understand the desire of these contingent faculty members to work for their organization, that is, their affective organizational commitment? This inquiry focuses specifically on affective organizational commitment among non-tenure track faculty members because there is reason to care about the desire of NTTF members to work for their college or university, especially when a reciprocal understanding of organizational commitment suggests that NTTF may not exhibit organizational commitment at all. Understanding the characteristics and conditions that impact desire to work for their institution of higher education can inform academic decision making and may lead to improved conditions for NTTF as well as better utilization of these appointments by institutions.

### **Strategic Leadership in Higher Education**

The fourth concept that undergirds the theoretical framework of this study is strategic leadership and change management in a higher education context. Change management and leadership must attend to the specifics of context; there is a consensus that the higher education sector is unlike other sectors (Birnbaum, 1989; Buller, 2015; Eckel and Kezar, 2016). In the section that follows I review the major characteristics of the higher education context and consider the implications of the proposed research for strategic leadership.

Higher education features dual sources of authority that work together within the organization (Birnbaum, 1989). Bureaucratic or administrative authority that is vested in

the president/administration and the board is the kind found in more traditional hierarchical organizations. It is derived from the organization's structure and vested in the legal rights and responsibilities of the president and board, including the power to "set direction, control and monitor budgets, develop institution strategy, hire and terminate employees, develop and implement policies, and assess progress towards objectives and priorities" (Eckel & Kezar, 2016, p. 170). The professional authority, or academic authority, vested in the faculty derives from the expertise required to perform the institution's core functions of teaching and research. The two types of authority are both structurally and qualitatively different. The resulting leadership process is often described as shared governance, but Eckel and Kezar argue that "in reality there exist two types of authority" (p. 170). Effective leadership requires the influence of both types of authority, a challenge because the two are often seen as inherently in conflict: "...administrators become identified in the faculty mind with red tape, constraints, and outside pressures that seek to alter the institution" (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 7).

Arguments have been made that the shared governance model is ineffective and wasteful, and that universities could be run more efficiently by moving away from dual authority and centering the administrative and legal authority vested in the executive governing branch (i.e., the president and board of trustees). Taylor (2013) points out that universities and colleges function today in a "marketised external environment" where relying exclusively on shared governance may make institutions less agile, less flexible, and less competitive (p. 80). Birnbaum (2004) notes that critics of the shared governance model argue that universities ignore market influences in the external environment at their peril and predict dire consequences if institutions do not shift toward a model that



emphasizes administrative hierarchy. These arguments about shared governance seems to hinge on the question of the purpose of higher education. Are universities social institutions which hold education as an end in itself? Or are they rational organizations which use education as a means to increase utility and maximize production? Birnbaum (2004) points out that this academic versus market distinction is not a new argument, but goes on to argue that attempts to undermine shared governance frequently do not succeed in better institutional decision-making. Further, he argues that being less flexible and nimble is not necessarily a disadvantage for colleges and universities, as this resistance to change can insulate them from short-term political and financial drivers. Shared governance may be inefficient, but it is ultimately shaped by and suited to the purposes of higher education, which are “not to create products but to embody ideas” (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 18). If the mission and vision of the institution centers on the role of education in civic life, public service, and knowledge creation, shared governance is not only necessary, it is wholly effective.

In addition to the dual sources of authority, the higher education context is loosely coupled. Loose coupling refers to weak connections between individual units, both between units themselves and between the units and the central administration. This structure makes central coordination slow and inefficient while promoting innovation and adaptation at the local level (Eckel & Kezar, 2016, p. 171). Loose coupling reduces the influence of administrative authority while bolstering the influence of decentralized professional authority at the departmental and college level. It also allows opportunities for individual units to adopt practices or goals that differ significantly from each other, or that may actually even be at odds with each other, or with the central administration.

Birnbaum points out that this is not necessarily because the institution hasn't identified its central goals but "rather that they simultaneously embrace a large number of conflicting goals" (p. 11). Consequently, universities are hard to lead efficiently. "No single organizational design can optimize all legitimate organizational interests; a structure that provides the most effective support for research, for example, will be quite different from a structure that seeks to closely integrate undergraduate teaching activities" (p. 12). In fact, Birnbaum & Edelson (1989) argue that it is a feature of universities and colleges that they are "poorly run but highly effective" (p. 3); in other words, institutions of higher education function effectively *because* they are inefficient, not *despite* inefficiency. Put another way, "No one, really, is 'in charge.' No one, that is to say, accounts for more than a fraction of the ability to influence the shape of higher education" (Schuster, 2003).

What implications does this have for utilizing the proposed research for strategic leadership purposes? One challenge for conducting research on contingent faculty is to identify levers for change within the overdetermined landscape. For example, faculty hiring (including appointment structure) is significantly decentralized in higher education and is impacted by not just institutional context but also by accreditation conditions and by local, state, and federal government factors. Many of the issues that impact the conditions of contingent faculty labor are resistant to change even when that change is initiated at a level high in the administrative hierarchy (e.g., by the provost, president, or board).

In response, the proposed study is designed to address manageable levers that may be used to influence the experience of contingent faculty members. If faculty development can be leveraged to impact organizational commitment amongst contingent

faculty members, it offers a relatively accessible and efficient way for campus leaders at various levels to improve the experiences of this segment of the workforce. Since the structures for supporting educational development are often already in place in the form of a faculty development center, leveraging these resources to serve non-tenure track faculty members may require simple tailoring to the specific needs of faculty members in these appointments. In addition, engagement with the campus faculty development center may offer the potential to improve classroom outcomes for students. Further, studying how level of underemployment impacts organizational commitment can delineate important distinctions in the contingent faculty experience that can inform hiring practices, labor conditions, and policy making. Lastly, by highlighting the voices and experiences of contingent faculty members, this study aims to give both administrative and faculty leaders the information that they need to better support this vital segment of the faculty workforce.

### **Summary**

The theoretical framework undergirding the proposed study rests on four concepts. First, it notes that assuming that contingent faculty members are lacking cannot replace evidence-based research about the characteristics, attitudes, and performances of faculty members occupying non-tenure track appointments. Secondly, it suggests that to understand the factors influencing non-tenure track faculty members it is necessary to explore characteristics of both the individual and the context. Third, it is based on the notion that understanding which factors influence NTTF members' desire to work for their institutions of higher education can have strategic leadership implications. Lastly, the framework relies on the idea that strategic leadership for change management in a

higher education context must leverage the unique characteristics of that context to be effective. The proposed study is built on this four-concept framework

### **Literature Review**

The research that is included in this literature review was selected because it addresses key concepts for understanding how contingent faculty members are being integrated, or not, into the mission and vision of institutions of higher education. Empirical findings are emphasized when they are available, as characterized by peer reviewed articles, followed by conference papers or dissertations when journal publication has not occurred. This literature review approaches the topic of contingent faculty from the point of view of various stakeholders, ranging from senior leaders on campus to the point of view of provosts, deans, department chairs, tenure track faculty, and even contingent faculty members themselves. In particular, this review attempts to highlight contingent faculty members voices regarding their experiences and viewpoints when available. A feature of this area of study that very little is known about some facets of contingent faculty experience and service, and this is noted where applicable.

The first section reviews the trends in the growth of NTTF appointments and the evolution of faculty responsibilities, followed by a discussion of the drivers of these trends. The second section addresses the demographics of those who make up the new faculty majority, as well as ways of differentiating types of NTTF appointments. The third section addresses the range of working conditions experienced by NTTF, both material and social. The fourth section addresses the empirical findings on faculty organizational commitment. The final section of this chapter reviews the justification for the inclusion of four predictors in the proposed study: dependence on NTTF income,

level of underemployment, organizational sense of belonging, and engagement with faculty development center.

### **Trends and Drivers**

Contingent faculty members are a growing majority in institutions of higher education of all types across the U.S. This section provides an overview of the current and historical utilization of contingent faculty members in higher education in the United States.

**Trends.** The rise of NTTF appointments is both longitudinal in nature and consistently relevant. Recognition of the contingency problem itself is not new in the academy. Thirty-five years ago, Judith Gappa noted that survey research indicated part-timers handled 28% of all undergraduate instruction and exceeded two hundred thousand individuals (1984, p. 2). In the past fifty years, part-time faculty appointments have increased five times faster than all types of full-time faculty appointments (Frye, 2017). Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster, 2016 note that these part-time faculty alone accounted for 43% of all faculty positions by 2013 (cited on p. 27). Frye points out that obtaining sector-wide data about the proportion of instruction like that gathered by Gappa in 1984 continues to be difficult today (footnote, p. 27). In addition to the expansion in part-time appointments, full-time NTTF positions continue to proliferate. At research institutions in particular, the percent of faculty in full-time contingent appointments have increased by more than any other faculty appointment type (Kezar, 2012).

**Evolving faculty responsibilities.** The responsibilities included in faculty appointments are not static across the history of U.S. higher education. Faculty roles have evolved along with the structure, reach, and purpose of postsecondary education. Gehrke

and Kezar (2015b) argue the unbundling of faculty responsibilities that is happening today is part of this historical trajectory of changing faculty roles, and that such unbundling and rebundling has happened several times over the course of U.S. higher education. Early forms focused on the faculty member as a comprehensive tutor and mentor, responsible for teaching across disciplines throughout a student's career as well as for aspects of everyday life (*in loco parentis*). As faculty appointments professionalized and began to specialize into disciplines, responsibilities for student life and other extra-curricular activities like advising slowly were transferred to student affairs professionals.

The Humboldtian model of faculty responsibilities divided between teaching, research, and service was embraced in the United States beginning in the 1950s. Alleman, Allen, and Haviland (2017) argue that three increasing trends drove the adoption of this model of the faculty role—the number of students accessing higher education, the number of doctoral degrees awarded, and the availability of federal research dollars. These forces transformed the faculty ideal from that of the gentleman scholar to that of the scientist (Parsons 1968 cited on p. 25), and this ideal persists today, despite the proliferation of new models of faculty expertise that don't match. As the reach of higher education expanded during the post WWII GI Bill period, an even greater emphasis was placed on faculty research via funding mechanisms like federal grants and business collaborations, a trend that reinforced the notion of faculty member as scientist researcher. Alleman, Allen, and Haviland (2017) point out that this model of what constitutes 'faculty' is often accepted as universal, when in fact the duties of faculty members have been highly contextualized within era, sector, and institutional type.

Discussions of the expansion of non-tenure track faculty appointments sometimes use a deficit model (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015b) that loses track of this historical evolution of faculty roles. Even when viewed through the lens of historically evolving faculty appointments, however, there is no question that the current shift to tenure-ineligible faculty appointments is a significant change that has far-reaching implications for students in each classroom as well as the broader institution of higher education.

**Drivers.** Financial constraints are the basis of most of the key drivers of the growth trend in NTTF appointments. “The slowly deteriorating financial situations at most colleges and universities have led to an increasing reliance on a contingent academic workforce” (Zhang, Ehrenberg, & Liu, 2015, p. 23). Frye (2017) argues that the academic employment context mirrors broader U.S. (and even global) employment trends toward what is sometimes called the “gig economy.” Driven by increased market competition, technological advances, changing consumer demographics, and the need to reduce costs and increase workforce responsiveness, higher education institutions across the sector are restructuring academic employment away from the tenure-eligible model of long-term employment and stability towards a variety of other, more flexible approaches. Forces that Frye (2017) identifies as contributing include decreases in government funding at the state and federal level, growing concerns about college spending particularly on faculty, and competition from other forms of educational delivery such as online programs and for-profit institutions.

Academic capitalism, “market-like behaviors such as competition for research grants, university-industry partnerships, differentiated tuition, and other revenue-generating activities” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997 cited in Frye, 2017 p. 29), came of age

along with the rise of the researcher-faculty model and persists as a fiscal constraint on institutions today. This set of “profit” motives rewards faculty research expertise but has also given rise to the critique that institutions of higher education “focus too much on research and scholarly pursuits at the expense of undergraduate teaching” (Gillen, 2013, cited on p. 29). The exponential increase in hiring of contingent faculty positions is in part a response directly to this critique, since these NTTF appointments regularly focus on teaching to the exclusion of other activities. Consequently, academic capitalism is both a driver of the need for contingent faculty members, who are often hired to teach classes in the place of the grant recipient researcher-faculty, and a contributing factor to the ways that NTTF labor is devalued in the academy. This two-tier (or three-tier) valuation of faculty labor is discussed in more detail below under labor conditions.

In addition to financial drivers, Frye explores the policy and legal contexts which may be driving the increase in contingency as well. Federal policies that impact higher education include the 1986 Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) that abolished the mandatory retirement age and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010. ADEA increased institutional uncertainty about turnover and increased reluctance to create new tenure-eligible positions, and the increased ACA requirements for health coverage for all full-time employees made hiring part-timers more attractive.

The expansion of NTTF appointments and reduction in tenure-eligible appointments are not the result of an intentional plan to restructure the faculty in response to the broader financial context (Frye, 2017; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Research on factors that influence deans’ decision-making around NTTF hiring found that deans feel pressured to utilize more contingent faculty appointments than they feel are good for their



institutions (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015b). This sample of nearly 300 participants is considered nationally representative and includes 50% mid-size institutions (2,000 to 10,000 students). Despite the short-term intentions driving the increases in various types of NTTF appointments, they have accrued into a long-term restructuring of the academic workforce that may change the fundamental nature of higher education for the foreseeable future.

### **Demographics and Differentiation**

Faculty appointments off the tenure track differ in a range of significant ways. Known as lecturers, instructors, or adjuncts, or as temporary, contingent, sessional, or teaching faculty, there are as many types of appointments with varying terms and accompanying working conditions as there are names for contingent faculty positions. Differentiating between appointment types and a range of significant characteristics inherent in the individuals who serve in these roles is important for understanding how NTTF contribute to their institutions. Differentiation factors include demographic categories, degree of employment in higher education (from part-time adjuncts who teach one class on a semester basis to full-time NTTF with multi-year appointments to part-timers who work at multiple colleges or universities), level of underemployment (which connects appointment type to individual qualifications and aspirations), disciplinary distinctions, type(s) of institution served, and the range of responsibilities assigned to particular appointments. The following section explores what research has found about these distinctions, as well as what is known about the labor conditions that adhere to various categories.

**Demographics.** McNaughtan, García, and Nehls (2017) explore the demographic characteristics of contingent faculty. Research shows that contingent faculty members are more likely than their tenure-eligible peers to be women, to be white, to have earned their terminal degree from a less selective institution, and to have taken five years or more to earn that degree (Kezar & Sam, 2010; McMahon & Green, 2008; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2009, cited p. 10). McNaughtan et al. utilized data from more than 3,000 institutions across the U.S. utilizing the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) for 1993-94 and 2013-14. The researchers analyzed the prevalence of contingent faculty (including full-time and part-time) across institutional type and sector, considering sex, race, and citizenship. The findings show the largest growth in contingent faculty is in public institutions and doctoral institutions. Women outnumber men in every racial category, and Black, Hispanic, and American Indian faculty are disproportionately represented at lower level institutions (associates institutions like community colleges) compared to Whites and Asian Americans.

Despite the popular conception that disciplines in the humanities house the largest number of NTTF appointments, current research suggests that education, fine arts, and business have larger numbers with close to 50% of faculty in each case (Kezar & Sam, 2010). In fact, contingent faculty “span the disciplines and serve at institutions of all types” (Levin & Shaker, 2011, p. 1463 cited in McNaughtan, et al. p. 11). Further, women faculty are more likely than men to be in tenure-ineligible positions and, if they hold a doctorate, to be among the least satisfied individuals in their profession (Harper et al., 2001 and Waltman et al., 2012 cited p. 29 of Alleman, Allen, & Haviland, 2017).

**Differentiation.** A major theme in the literature about NTTF appointments is the distinction between part-time and full-time faculty members. A quick look at journalistic characterizations of contingent faculty reveals a narrative around part-timers who work at multiple colleges or universities and face abhorrent labor conditions and insurmountable financial hardships (Hanlon, 2019; Kroik, 2019). This dramatic narrative clearly doesn't capture the full range of NTTF experiences and conditions, and it reinforces a deficit approach to NTTF members. However, empirical research does show important distinctions between NTTF employed part-time at their institutions and full-time non-tenure track faculty members.

Leslie and Gappa (2002) analyzed two databases to draw a profile of part-time faculty at community colleges including who they are, what they do, and how they differ from their full-time colleagues. While no notation is made regarding the tenure-eligibility of full-time faculty used for the comparison, since community colleges generally do not grant tenure it seems fair to assume that part-time contingent faculty are being compared to full-time contingent faculty. A national survey of 2,000 community college faculty members at 114 institutions conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges is one source; the second database is the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty from 1992-93. Demographic findings show that part-timers are as likely to be male or female but may vary more in age, with a larger proportion being over 65 and under 34. Length of experience at their current institution is higher for part-timers, suggesting they are a stable component of the faculty workforce in community colleges with considerable teaching experience on average. On average, part-timers have achieved slightly lower levels of education, but the difference is slight enough not to raise concerns

about quality or qualifications. 51% of part-timers report working elsewhere in nonteaching jobs, a proportion which reflects the subset of adjuncts who are full-time professionals in their fields. The authors report that “there is little in these data to suggest that the popular image of part-time faculty as underqualified, nomadic, or inadequately attentive to their responsibilities has any validity. To the contrary, the portrait that emerges shows part-time faculty in community colleges to be stable professionals with substantial experience and commitment to their work” (p. 62). The study reports that part-time faculty members appear to be generally satisfied with their jobs.

Another important differentiation between NTTF members is the relationship between the individual’s aspirations and their appointment type. Leslie and Gappa (1993) explored how NTTF members’ individual faculty aspirations might impact their experiences in NTTF appointments, and their work has been used throughout the literature on contingent faculty. Joseph and Maynard (2008) built on this work by differentiating NTTF members by their degree of underemployment. Ott and Dippold (2018) used the distinction between voluntary and involuntary to survey part-time faculty for predictors associated with aspirations to be more fully employed.

Leslie and Gappa (1993) created a typology of contingent faculty members to capture the varying motivations and investments held by individuals who occupy these appointments. They propose four different types of contingent faculty members based on the reason that these individuals are serving as contingent faculty members. Career enders are retired or near retirement and are happy to teach in part-time positions as supplemental income, professionals or experts are fully employed within their vocation and teach part-time on the side, aspiring academics are faculty members who desire full-

time tenure-eligible appointments and teach in contingent positions as a stepping stone, and free lancers prefer to work simultaneously at several different part-time occupations.

Joseph and Maynard (2008) explored whether all part-time faculty members were underemployed. Drawing from research on employment and labor, they conceptualized that there would be important differences in investment and motivation in those part-timers who only wanted part-time employment to those who were aspiring to be full-time academics. They argued that those who wanted full-time tenure-eligible positions were likely to have different attitudes, behaviors, classroom practices, and outcomes from part-time faculty who were satisfied with their part-time positions.

Ott and Dippold (2018) used data from a survey of 1,245 part-time faculty teaching for a major community college system in the United States. Drawing on person-job fit theory (Edwards, 1994), the study investigated the predictors of involuntary part-time status (that is, part-timers who preferred a full-time position). Two thirds expressed some interest in obtaining a full-time faculty position. Those with higher levels of recent teaching experience in the community college environment were more likely to express a strong desire for full-time faculty status, as were those who had used more job-related resources. Involuntary part-timers were more likely to indicate economic need and self-identify as African American or Hispanic.

### **Working Conditions**

As early as 1984, Gappa identified six problematic areas of employment practice and argued that “free-wheeling departmental autonomy (with attendant abuses) should be replaced by central responsibility for part-time faculty to insure fair and humane treatment” (p. 5). While that research focused exclusively on part-time NTTF, many of

the issues she identified —selection and hiring process, available support services, communication with peers, accessibility to shared governance, compensation, and job security—continue to be relevant today. In a publication that feels nearly like a parody of her 1984 article in the AAHE Bulletin, Gappa's (2000) chapter in *New Directions for Institutional Research* reprises similar problematic employment practices twenty-five years later, noting that now full-time contingent faculty members share many of the same challenges as their part-time peers. This section will review the research on the working conditions faced by faculty members off the tenure track. While some of the issues persist across classification (part-time through full-time) and level of underemployment, the findings on labor conditions also range widely across type of institution and sector as well as between and within institutions themselves. One major implication of these findings is that the 'deficit' may not be in the actual faculty members; it may be located in the conditions of his/her faculty appointment. For example, it may be located in the structure of the NTTF appointment (an adjunct is not compensated to participate in department committees and consequently cannot contribute), the policies adopted by the institution, the access to material resources (a desk, an office, a computer), integration into the university or departmental community, and so on.

The pieces included in this section of the literature review draw heavily on the voices of NTTF members. While we can survey objective labor conditions (e.g., does the faculty member have a computer assigned) understanding the significance of both material and social conditions requires understanding how NTTF members make meaning around and within their positions and interactions.

**Material conditions.** Issues around compensation range from salary and pay to access to benefits such as health insurance or retirement accounts. This is a place where the evidence points to part-time/full-time status as an important differentiation. The full range of compensation issues exist for part-time faculty, who according to federal law cannot access health insurance benefits. Adjunct salaries are particularly objectionable, impacted by competition created by the shrinking number of academic positions in combination with the abundance of individuals holding a terminal degree (Shulman, 2019). Charfauros and Tierney (1999) cite the abundance of available PhD holders in creating a “buyer’s market” in which bottom fishing drives down salaries and serves the short-term financial and flexibility needs of institutions in lieu of creating sustainable career opportunities for individual faculty members. Though lack of transparency around compensation makes it difficult to know exactly how adjunct salaries stack up against their tenure eligible and full-time NTTF peers, an open source methodology has gathered anecdotal data. Begun by researcher and adjunct faculty member Joseph Boldt, the Adjunct Project uses a web-based fillable spreadsheet at <http://adjunct.chronicle.com/> to collect and compare salaries and duties across the profession of adjunct faculty (June & Newman, 2013).

**Social factors.** One recurring theme in the research on the new faculty majority is the role of relationships. Questions about collegiality, academic freedom, respect, expertise, and status all hinge on the way NTTF experience social facets of their appointments—including their relationships with other individual faculty members (tenure-eligible and those off the tenure track); within their home departments and with their academic unit head; with deans, provosts, and administration; and with their

institutions more broadly. Faculty members report that positive relationships with their departments, institutions, and peers feature heavily in their feelings of job satisfaction (Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, & August, 2012). Material conditions can also impact the way NTTF members experience their relationships and communities. For example, a full-time NTTF member who is paid 50% less per course than her tenure-eligible peer might see this as evidence of lack of respect from the institution. What follows addresses both the material labor conditions and the social conditions that make up the context of non-tenure track employment.

Eagan, Jaeger, and Grantham (2015) explored the link between and differences around physical resources and social factors such as respect. They found that access to both were associated with satisfaction in the workplace for part-time non-tenure track faculty members. Drawing on Maynard and Joseph's distinction between voluntary and involuntary underemployment and on Alderfer's scaffolding of physical and affective needs known as ERG theory, the authors used data from the 2010-11 Higher Education Research Institute survey including more than 4,000 part-time respondents from nearly 300 four-year institutions. Multivariate analysis found that involuntary part-timers (that is, part-time faculty members who would prefer to be working full-time) made up the vast majority of the sample and exhibited significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than their peers who desired part-time status. Further, discipline made a difference in satisfaction, with those working part-time in professional departments (like education, business, etc.) expressing higher satisfaction than their peers in other departments. Additional factors added to successive models found that if part-timers perceived good working relationships with the administration and respect from full-time faculty, these



perceptions negated the significance of the underemployment status, suggesting that Alderfer's model of higher order needs can validly be applied to understanding the experiences of part-time contingent faculty. Particularly relevant to this dissertation is the authors' finding that "Alderfer's (1972) work and the data from this study suggest faculty development is critical for part-time faculty. Campus administrators need to provide ongoing professional development or other types of activities that support faculty's higher-level needs such as self-esteem, growth, and self-actualization. If Alderfer's (1972) theory holds, attempting to increase part-time faculty workplace satisfaction by only providing part-timers with office space may become insufficient, as part-time faculty also seek autonomy, professional growth, and respect" (p. 474).

Questions about status, respect, and relationships permeate the landscape around non-tenure track research, though this focus is often driven by a deficit approach and interpreted in the same light. Charfauros and Tierney (1999) did research that is framed as an example of the deficit approach to part-time NTTF; the article identifies its key question as "How might a college or university improve the performance of a rapidly growing cadre of its instructors?" (p. 141). The authors note that though part-timers' skills and credentials often equal that of their full-time peers, meaning that their lower pay and status are rarely justified by a gap in qualifications, differing value placed on teaching, research, and service responsibilities can result in a "trifurcated faculty system, where part-timers are the bottom or outside tier, off-track full-time faculty are the second tier, and tenured or tenure-track faculty are the core first-tier" (Schuster, 1998 cited on p. 145). Charfauros and Tierney offer what is a frequently recommended remedy to the social issues facing NTTF: greater integration. "With integration comes a stronger sense

of institutional identity, greater participation in other departmental activities (such as curriculum development or student advisement), and greater awareness of the resources available for teaching” (p. 146). Yet the recommendation of further integration identifies the problem (lack of integration due to the nature of the appointment’s teaching-only responsibilities) as the solution. Wanting part-timers who do not get paid to advise students or develop curriculum to engage in these activities as a way to engage them in the broader academic community seems like an elaborate game of blame the victim unless structural changes are made to part-time contingent faculty appointments.

**Collegiality and the collegium.** Haviland, Alleman, and Allen (2107) approach similar questions without the deficit frame, focusing on the access full-time but tenure ineligible faculty have to the experience of collegiality, another working condition based in social relationships and faculty integration into the academic community. Per the authors, collegiality is comprised of shared purpose, interpersonal trust, participatory process, and shared identity; it serves a vital function in academia— “In a profession defined by autonomy and discretion, collegiality keeps otherwise autonomous “satellites” (i.e., faculty) in a shared and coordinated orbit” (p. 505). This doesn’t just benefit individual faculty members but also has a substantial impact on the achievement of the institutional mission of teaching and learning. Further, access to collegiality (or its collective noun, the collegium) are important gateways to participating fully in academia that have historically been differentially available to individual faculty members dependent on their identity and status in society more broadly:

Collegiality and the collegium are complex constructs, dependent upon both faculty relationships of a personal and professional nature and a sense of shared purpose or common enterprise. These relationships and purposes are additionally complicated by the status-oriented labor market that arose in the mid-twentieth century, contributing to a splintered, tiered profession. The experience of various

faculty subgroups, particularly women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups, reveal systemic patterns of collection in roles that are traditionally less powerful, less prestigious, and less permanent (Alleman, Allen, & Haviland, 2017, p.34).

Consequently, access to collegiality is important both to the success of the institutional mission and to the careers of NTTF members.

For the study published in *Higher Education*, Alleman and Haviland (2017) conducted interviews with 38 faculty members across two institutions, one a large public research university and the second a master's level religiously affiliated institution where faculty were unionized. Two rounds of coding using NVivo included multiple intercoder reliability checks and member checking to improve trustworthiness. The authors coded in relation to the theoretical framework provided by Bess's (1992) notion of collegiality, as well as around themes that emerged from the faculty employment experiences. The study found that while teaching was the primary expectation of these faculty members (anticipated because interviewees were in teaching roles), some also participated in service, even at a leadership level, and some experienced a tacit expectation of research engagement from their departments or peers. Three main themes emerged as important to the faculty member's sense of collegiality: a sense of social engagement, working together toward a common goal, and having both formal and informal voice within the department. These expectations were most often "fulfilled in their experiences with other NTTF, and more likely to be unfulfilled in the relationships with tenure system faculty" (p. 538).

Full-time nontenure track faculty in this study experienced lower status and lack of respect for their expertise from their colleagues. While some interviewees felt welcomed and supported, others felt marginalized and excluded. The work that these

faculty did was considered necessary and valuable and, in some cases very closely resembled the work of tenure-eligible faculty. Despite this NTTF members' access to collegiality was conditional. Most impacted was NTTF members' access to acknowledgement of scholarly expertise. The authors' note that this is often established via research engagement, something which many of the NTTF appointments do not include. NTTF members felt their tenure-eligible peers did not grant them respect or recognize their expertise in this area, even while they felt students respected their expertise in the classroom. Haviland, Alleman, and Allen argue that this is particularly important because for contingent faculty members to fully contribute to the institution's broader mission of teaching and learning, they need to be fully integrated into the faculty as a whole.

**NTTF voices.** Kezar (2013b) focused specifically on how the social environment of departmental context impacts NTTF experiences. The study centered on how NTTF perceive departmental policies and practices as shaping their performance and their ability to create a positive learning environment for students. More than one hundred faculty interviews within 25 departments across three master's level institutions were conducted (p. 573). Arguing that the experience of working conditions is "best understood locally, within specific institutional and departmental contexts," Kezar utilized a case study methodology (p. 574) that accounted for the particular institutional, disciplinary, and departmental context within which each individual faculty member worked. Interviewees included both part-time and full-time contingent faculty members, and each case functioned at both the departmental level (supportive or unsupportive department) and contract type (tenure eligibility, part-time or full-time status). Key issues

that contingent faculty members identified as negatively impacting the quality of the learning environment included last minute scheduling of courses, the impact of working at multiple institutions, the lack of commitment to rehire contingent faculty, lack of input into the curriculum, lack of learning resources (e.g., professional development and information about institutional goals), obtaining feedback or evaluation, and lack of infrastructure which included issues like lack of office, materials, or technical support. Contingent faculty noted the following as practices or policies that enhanced their classroom performance: availability of departmental orientation and initial support, autonomy in teaching, and having a support person who serves as an adjunct advocate. This large, in-depth qualitative study highlights the voices and experiences of contingent faculty members in a rare way.

A second study utilizing this data addressed how contingent faculty members “perceive and experience support or lack of support within their work environments, particularly their departments” (Kezar, 2013c, p. 1). Drawing on Leslie and Gappa’s (1993) typology of the varying motivations of contingent faculty members, Kezar balanced the number of full-time and part-time interviews and, though it could not be identified previous to sample selection, identified the category for each interviewee according to the four types. “Of the part-timers in the sample, four were career enders; 21 were specialists, experts, and professionals; 19 were aspiring academics; and 14 were freelancers” (p. 12). Among the full-time interviewees, about half wanted tenure-track positions. Coding relied on a grounded theory approach and utilized a constructivist perspective. The author notes that since the original study was not designed to measure construction of support, its focus on a single type of institutional context (Master 1) and

state limit the transferability of the findings. Individual and institutional conditions were identified that impacted faculty members construction of how supportive or not their work conditions were. Comparison groups, life phase, credentials, external employment, and career path were individual conditions that had an impact. On the institutional side, the presence of a union, departmental size, departmental history, relationships, departmental chair, and departmental policy all impacted the experiences of contingent faculty members.

Kezar (2013a) utilized these in-depth individual interviews to develop a qualitative multi-case study to determine how departmental policies and practices shaped the faculty member's opportunities for performance. 107 faculty members representing a range of contract types (part to full-time) were interviewed from 25 departments across three institutions. The constructivist approach to the research emphasized individual meaning-making as a source of knowledge and offered a parsimonious approach to understanding how culture and practice intersected with contingent faculty performance. Four types of departmental cultures emerged from the interviews- destructive, neutral, inclusive, and learning. Part-timers and full-timers largely agreed with each other's perceptions of the departmental culture, though in some cases full-timers seemed to be shielded from some of the negative aspects. The study found that the primary value driving the destructive culture was "active disrespect for NTTF members" (p. 164). "The department chair and most of the tenure-track faculty within departments that have this culture do not feel that NTTF are qualified instructors or professionals" (p. 164). Departments with this culture adopted haphazard hiring practices and offered little or no orientation, socialization, or professional development to tenure-ineligible faculty. In

contrast, “faculty, chairs, and staff in the learning culture typically thought about support for NTTF, not just as an issue of equity but rather tied the support to a commitment to students and the goals of the institution around learning” (p. 175). One practice of learning culture departments identified in the study was access to professional development opportunities for contingent faculty, not just as related to teaching knowledge but also for access to opportunities related to disciplinary content knowledge (p. 175/6).

NTTF members’ feelings that relationships matter is borne out in the research that investigates beyond individuals or departments. Findings suggest that deans significantly impact the resources available and policies pertaining to the labor conditions of NTTF. Gehrke and Kezar (2015a) examined the values of a nationally representative sample of 264 deans utilizing data from the Values, Practices, and Faculty Hiring Decisions of Academic Leaders Survey administered in 2012. Deans felt that NTTF should be supported, indicating that most felt resources such as orientation, office supplies, medical benefits and office space should be available to full-time contingent faculty. Policies providing other benefits were less common for full-time faculty and very few policies made a range of resources and opportunities available to part-time NTTF. Other policies included in the data that were less common included administrative support, structured mentoring, professional development in teaching and research, paid sabbaticals, multi-year contracts, student advising, and institutional governance. Further work by these authors (2015b) found that deans attitudes toward support for non-tenure-track faculty played a significant role in existing conditions for contingent faculty members across a range of areas including formal orientation, medical benefits, family leave, office space,

office supplies, administrative support, structured mentoring, professional development, paid sabbatical, multi-year contracts, committee service, student advising, and participation in institutional governance.

A 2010 qualitative research study identified three themes as central to the experience of contingent faculty via 85 interviews with part-time faculty at a single mid-sized undergraduate institution (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). The themes were receiving outreach, navigating challenges, and developing skills. Both member checking by a part-time faculty member and review by an external expert were used to ensure qualitative rigor. Results of this qualitative study support the other findings detailed here which suggest that part-time faculty may need additional measures than they currently receive to feel supported. Of particular significance for this dissertation is the fact that faculty development centers may be in a good position to have an impact in all three of these areas.

While these studies found that differing motivations (desire for tenure track appointment or only seeking part-time supplemental work) and contract types (full time versus part time) impacted contingent faculty members experiences in the workplace, some common themes run throughout. Collegial relationships and sense of community ranked high amongst factors that improved the contingent experience, regardless of motivation or type of appointment. While structural issues such as compensation and departmental policies had an impact, a sense of respect and recognition of their expertise from colleagues and campus leaders had nearly as great an effect on contingent experiences. These studies show that it's important to understand not just the objective work conditions of contingent appointments, but also how contingent faculty members



experience and understand those work conditions. The proposed study includes a qualitative strand to complement measurement of organizational commitment with contingent faculty members' understanding of the development and experience of that commitment.

### **Empirical Findings for Faculty Organizational Commitment**

The next section of the literature review addresses what is known about faculty organizational commitment, including specifically non-tenure track faculty. It is important to note that organizational commitment has been conceived of (and measured) in a variety of ways by researchers who may not be referring to the same thing but who use the same term. The review of empirical findings below is careful to delineate the way organizational commitment is operationalized for each study.

Some researchers empirically studied the outcomes associated with organizational commitment (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2006). Specifically, Bland et al. studied the impact of appointment type on the productivity and commitment of full-time faculty in research and doctoral institutions. Consistent with the findings of Merriman (2010), Bland et al. found that tenure-eligible faculty had significantly higher incidence of organizational commitment than NTTF. Productivity was also higher amongst tenure-eligible faculty; and they worked more hours than contingent colleagues.

Research into how organizational commitment impacts organizational citizenship behaviors amongst tenure-eligible faculty members was conducted by Lawrence, Ott, and Bell in 2012. Like previously discussed research, demographic variables such as gender did not predict faculty commitment. The authors also found an overall high level of attachment amongst faculty surveyed; 77% indicated commitment for their institution as

based on the response to the statement “If I had to do it all over again, I would still accept a faculty position at this institution. However, the incidence of this type of commitment did not predict organizational commitment behavior (i.e., institutional service). It is notable that this operationalization of the organizational commitment concept differs yet again from the affective organizational commitment that is the dependent variable in the proposed study.

**Antecedents of organizational commitment.** One of the first studies on organizational commitment in higher education was conducted by Nancy Fjortoft in 1993. Fjortoft researched factors predicting faculty commitment to the institution itself. She did not distinguish between faculty members on the tenure track and off the tenure track, though it appears she focused primarily on instructional faculty (a group which could include both tenure-eligible and non-tenure track faculty). Fjortoft measured the dependent variable by asking respondents to rate a single item on a four-point scale from not important to very important— “How important is my organization to me?” In particular, this researcher was interested in distinguishing between commitment to the institution as a whole and commitment to a smaller unit, namely the department. The item used to measure organizational commitment seems to correspond more to attitude than behavior, and it does not distinguish between desire (that is, affective organizational commitment), need, and obligation. Fjortoft found that lower order factors associated with the existence level of Alderfer’s ERG theory (i.e., satisfaction with salary and working conditions) predict higher OC. Higher rank was also associated with higher commitment. These two predictors fit with a rational reciprocal concept of organizational commitment—when faculty members felt that the institution invested in them via salary

or promotion, they had a higher commitment to the institution. However, this survey of nearly five thousand faculty members found that perception of shared governance, such as faculty felt they had influence on policy and the opportunity to participate in meetings, increased organizational commitment. This higher order finding might suggest that social indicators such as sense of belonging or collegiality may actually contribute more to the desire to identify with one's college or university.

Anthun and Innstrand (2016) explored how job demands and available resources could predict faculty values on “meaning of work” and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was measured using a four-item measure developed by Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg, and Bjorner, 2010 (cited in Anthun & Innstrand) from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire. A sample item is “I gladly tell others about my workplace.” The measure appears to be more closely related to affective organizational commitment than to behavior or need. Approximately 3,000 university employees, slightly more than half of which were in academic positions, responded to the survey. Predictors were grouped differently than the Fjortoft study. Resource variables were things like social support from co-workers, empowering leader, recognition, and job autonomy, while job demand variables included role overload, competency demands, and work-home conflict. All resource variables were positively and significantly related to the commitment in all age groups. The study found that older workers generally had higher levels of both dependent variables regardless of any other factors. Since the survey didn't measure tenure status, it's hard to know how these results might be relevant to the proposed study. However, I include it here because the authors draw on the broad concept of “organizational commitment” in faculty.

A 2010 study also supported the idea that resource variables and job demand factors can impact organizational commitment (Gormley & Kennerly, 2010). This study operationalized organizational commitment using the Meyer and Allen (1991) Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scale. This research on tenure-eligible faculty in nursing found that ambiguity about job role can impact commitment negatively. It's important to note that both resource variables and job demand variables considered in these two studies are connected to relationships, as opposed to material resources such as compensation or office space.

Gutierrez, Candela, and Carver (2012) also explored variables that would be considered in the relational and growth levels of Alderfer's ERG theory. This study also employed Meyer and Allen's (1991) three component model to measure organizational commitment. Their survey of 570 nursing faculty utilized structural equation modeling to analyze the relationship between organizational commitment, global job satisfaction, developmental experiences, work values, organizational support, and person-organization fit. The study did not distinguish between faculty members based on part-time or full-time or by off/on the tenure track, which is a limitation for application of the results to the present study. However, amongst faculty as a whole they found that perceived organizational support, fit between person and organization, and global job satisfaction all could predict organizational commitment. These predictors are a mix of material conditions and social relationships across the full range of Alderfer's levels in ERG theory.

Another early study (Harshbarger, 1989) found no difference in incidence of organizational commitment as measured by the OCQ across demographic variables of

age, race, gender, and race/ethnicity. The study did find that commitment increased as rank increased. Additionally, Harshbarger found that personal investments, support and funding, colleagues, leadership at the institutional and departmental level, shared governance, and institutional standing all predicted higher commitment. This study also identified factors that drive alienation, including personal treatment, psychological environment, and institutional policy. Harshbarger's findings lend support to this study's focus on social relationships as a predictor of organizational commitment. A limitation to the application of Harshbarger's findings is that his work focused on tenure-eligible faculty members to the exclusion (we assume, as it is not discussed) of NTTF.

A fair amount of research addresses the adjunct or part-time subset of contingent faculty appointments. One of these is a 2014 dissertation that replicated Gutierrez et al.'s findings around person-organization fit (Hill, 2014). In addition, Hill found that age, online teaching, and ethnicity were predictive of level of organizational commitment. It's important to note that the institutional context for this study was a regional career college.

A survey study of 188 academics in Beijing China (Jing & Zhang, 2014) looked at how performance mediated the relationship between tenure-eligible faculty members' organizational commitment and their effectiveness. Commitment was measured with a 20-item Organizational Commitment Inventory adapted from Lu (2005, cited in Jing & Zhang, p. 143). This inventory is based on the three-component model of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Though they did not control for tenure status, the researchers found that available resources and personal goals contributed to understanding how performance could mediate the relationship between effectiveness and performance.

Two recent dissertations explored factors impacting faculty organizational commitment for different subsets of contingent faculty. Merriman (2010) focused on adjunct (part-time) sense of belonging and affective organizational commitment as conceived of by Meyer and Allen (1991). She included the control variable of desire for a tenure track appointment and found that adjuncts who were involuntarily in adjunct positions had lower sense of belonging and affective organizational commitment. In general, she found that adjuncts had lower overall levels of both dependent variables than tenure-eligible faculty members. Murphy (2009) explored contingent faculty more broadly (full-time and part-time) and found that institutional practices of compensation, support, and recognition all predicted organizational commitment amongst contingent faculty. Organizational commitment was operationalized in yet a different way using a three-component concept consisting of commitment to teaching, commitment to students, and commitment to the organization. The measures of these components were adapted from items available in the Higher Education Research Institute dataset. Although it seems likely what was measured here might overlap with affective organizational commitment, it is not identical.

**Fragmented and inconclusive findings.** While a large number of these studies have measured concepts related to affective organizational commitment, many are tangential to the actual concept of a desire to work for a particular institution. Further, many do not include NTTF either by excluding these faculty members or not differentiating between based on eligibility for tenure. Consequently, a good deal is still unknown about the way that non-tenure track faculty members desire to work for their institutions of higher education. The proposed study addresses this by measuring

organizational commitment amongst non-tenure track faculty members at a public comprehensive university in the Southeastern United States.

### **Predictor Selection**

The proposed study includes four predictors of faculty organizational commitment: dependence on NTTF income, level of underemployment, organizational sense of belonging, and engagement with faculty development center. All four derive from the preceding literature review. The section that follows delineates why each was selected for inclusion. A lengthier literature review is included in this section for the fourth predictor, engagement with faculty development center, due to the extent of the relevant research on faculty development that is not specific to contingent faculty appointments.

**Dependence on contingent income and level of underemployment.** The existing research suggests that dissatisfaction with both the financial aspects and career opportunities in off the tenure track positions could have an impact on non-tenure track faculty member's organizational commitment. The popular narrative about faculty off the tenure track emphasizes financial hardships (Hanlon, 2019; Kroik, 2019) and economic analyses similarly suggest that part-timers off the tenure track are particularly at risk for inadequate compensation (Shulman, 2019). Charfauros and Tierney (1999) note that Pratt 1997 found that part-time faculty frequently left the profession unless they had an additional source of family income, like a partner with a full-time job (p. 145). The literature thus suggests that those who are not wholly dependent on contingent income, either because they have another source of income or because they are not head of household, may have less need for their contingent positions. While the deficit approach

suggests that NTTF will be less committed, it could be argued that those who are more financially independent of their contingent labor may be free to be more emotionally committed.

Likewise, the literature suggests that there are differences in the contingent faculty experience based on career aspiration. For those who are fully employed at their current level, there is reason to expect their organizational commitment will correspond to that level of employment. Those who desire another type of appointment (either a full-time appointment or even a full-time tenure-eligible appointment) may experience their current appointment and institution differently (Joseph and Maynard, 2008; Leslie and Gappa, 1993; Ott & Dippold, 2018).

**Organizational sense of belonging.** A good deal of the existing research on NTTF experiences suggests that relationship factors have a significant impact on the experiences of non-tenure track faculty members. This literature is reviewed at length in the third section of this chapter. While many concepts are considered in the literature, a large number of them cluster around the idea that those who are more integrated socially into their institution, and the units in which they serve within that institution, are more likely to exhibit positive feelings about their institution (Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Haviland, Alleman, and Allen, 2007; Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller, & August, 2012). Consequently, inclusion of a predictor that measured social integration seems justified for the proposed study. Organizational sense of belonging is a way of measuring the experience of belongingness at school or work and includes four dimensions: connectedness, esteem, efficacy, and supervisor-employee relationship (Merriman, 2010). This concept relates directly to the feelings of being respected by co-



workers (NTTF and TEF) and supervisors, feelings of belongingness to the department and institution, and positive social relationships which the literature suggests are central to the experiences of contingent faculty members.

**Engagement with campus faculty development center.** While there is definitely a thread of concern about contingent faculty members among practicing faculty developers, there is little empirical research on the utilization of faculty development centers by different groups of contingent faculty members. Leaders in the field argue that addressing the needs of adjunct faculty is one of the most important new directions for faculty development, and a top challenge facing faculty development centers (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). Engagement with faculty development is included as a predictor in the proposed study in part because one focus in the field of faculty development is building networks and fostering a sense of belonging. Since the literature on non-tenure track faculty suggests that relational factors such as collegiality, respect, and sense of belonging may have a significant impact on the experiences of NTTF faculty members, faculty development center engagement could have an impact not just on the teaching skills and abilities of contingent faculty members, but also on their integration into the faculty as a whole, and into the broader institution. Further, among a world of predictors that are either cost prohibitive (e.g., compensation or appointment type) or difficult to get traction with (e.g., sense of belonging), faculty development offers a fairly straightforward lever to influence the experiences of non-tenure track faculty. If it is found to predict organizational commitment among NTTF, faculty development initiatives could be pursued by either administrative or faculty leaders, or both.

This section begins by reviewing the role of faculty development in higher education, including faculty development centers. Two books by a group of colleagues including Austin and Sorcinelli report the results of nationally representative research studies. Because there isn't much empirical research published on contingent faculty use of faculty development centers, the section goes on to address two book chapters. Missing are any empirical findings on how contingent faculty members in particular utilize the services of faculty development centers; the author of the proposed study developed a conference poster presentation for the POD Network in fall 2019 that addressed this concern.

***What is faculty development?*** Faculty development initiatives on campus frequently include centers which focus on helping faculty improve their teaching or otherwise advance their careers (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006). As early as the 1970s, the field of faculty development was defined to address “the total development of the faculty member—as a person, as a professional and as a member of an academic community (Crow, Milton, Moomaw & O’Connell cited in Sorcinelli et al. 2006, p. 1). While the role and organizational structure of faculty development centers varies across institutions, Sorcinelli et al. found that the focus on teaching and learning improvement is consistent across centers.

In the 2006 volume, Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach surveyed developers at more than 300 IHEs to explore faculty development programs, faculty developers, current issues and services, and future priorities for faculty development. They surveyed the member POD (Professional and Organizational Development) Network, a professional organization established in 1974 to focus on faculty and organizational

development. The survey was mailed to 999 addresses in 2001; the response rate was close to 50%. The authors acknowledge that not all developers may be members of POD, and that this limits the generalizability of the findings. Still, POD is a long-standing and well-respected professional organization with over 1,400 members across North America, and as such is a substantive subset of developers overall. Key issues identified in the 2006 study included student-centered learning, new faculty development, scholarship of teaching and learning, integrating technology into the classroom, and diversity. Top challenges facing the field of faculty development included balancing the multitude of faculty roles, integrating technology and managing it, interdisciplinary collaborations, and, of particular interest to this study, training and supporting part-time and adjunct faculty.

Beach et al. extended the Sorcinelli et al. work with a new survey administered to POD in 2012, this time via email. The authors attempted to reach a more diverse group of developers by adding the members of the HBCU Faculty Development Network and members of a Canadian developer listserv, for a total of 1,382. The study had a greatly reduced response rate of 28%; this limitation may have something to do with survey fatigue amongst faculty members and campus administrators. Added to the survey was a second phase of about 100 phone interviews to follow up on survey responses. To address the response rate limitation, the authors compared the demographics of the respondents both to the previous survey and to the overall POD network and found the sample to be closely representative of both. The scope of this research covered information about who faculty developers are, as well as information about current priorities, resources, and budgets, in addition to a review of services offered and the

developer view of the future of faculty development. 59% of institutions represented in Beach et al. had a central unit, or faculty development center, the structure that is the subject of the current study. A majority of the respondents indicated that support for adjunct and fixed term faculty was one of the goals of their faculty development efforts.

***Contingent appointments and faculty development.*** This section addresses two book chapters, a published needs assessment, and a poster presentation. The 2010 second edition of *A Guide to Faculty Development* includes only one chapter that mentions the phenomenon of contingent faculty—Tarr’s “Working with Adjunct Faculty Members.” Tarr begins by reprising what is known about contingent faculty members across the faculty as a whole, as well as reviewing the particular demographic characteristics of this portion of faculty. The author argues that faculty developers can have a significant impact on adjunct faculty through integrating them into the faculty community by “including them in programming offerings, welcoming them at events, and providing them with a venue for collaborating with colleagues on instructional matters” (p.351). Special consideration is recommended to scheduling of programs, when to serve adjunct and tenure-track faculty together or separately, reimbursement options, alternative formats such as online offerings, and marketing and communication of programming to adjunct faculty. While this chapter is not empirical research, it does identify some of the possible barriers facing contingent faculty members in accessing faculty development services. It is also notable that while the chapter acknowledges that the majority of faculty members, proportionately, fall within this group, the book itself sidelines discussion of contingent faculty members into this one chapter.

Beaton and Sims (2016) chapter is one of 18 in an edited volume that focuses primarily on the UK, with some considerations of North American scholars and institutions. The authors begin by addressing the range of roles included in contingent faculty. Like Tarr, they reprise Gappa and Leslie's 1993 typology of voluntary versus involuntary contingent status, which highlights the range of different investments and motivations that adjunct or part-time faculty members may have in their appointments. Again, like Tarr, they review the varying findings regarding learning outcomes that correlate with part-time and adjunct faculty appointments. The authors conclude that more research is needed to definitively establish either side of the findings but reiterate the support from faculty development could be highly influential in improving faculty teaching and learning outcomes. The authors argue that not only can faculty development help individual contingent faculty members, support of these individuals is particularly important to produce productive institutional change. While limited by the fact that the chapter is not original empirical research, it is included here because it attempts a current, comprehensive overview of the intersection of faculty development and contingent faculty.

***Open Questions.*** As yet unanswered by the literature is the question: "how are NTTF faculty members utilizing faculty development centers?" A poster presentation of ongoing research by this author at the 2019 POD network addressed this question in relation to the four-year institutions in Virginia. Preliminary findings were that institutions are not tracking utilization by whether faculty members are tenure-eligible or off the tenure track. Extensive search of existing faculty development literature shows that while the books and chapters discussed above demonstrate an understanding of the

need to reach adjunct and other NTTF members, data is not currently available on how this population is currently being served. Conversations during the poster session further supported this conclusion. Since objective data on NTTF use of FDCs is not regularly tracked by most centers, this study proposes to ask NTTF about their subjective sense of engagement with the campus faculty development center.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework guiding this research study and reviewed the extant literature. The trends around non-tenure track faculty hiring were reviewed, and conditions that appear to impact NTTF experiences were discussed. Relevant predictors were identified based on previous research. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology employed in the mixed methods approach employed in this study, including the research approach, study design, participants, techniques for data analysis, and data collection.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of research design, methods, and plan for data analysis in each of the two strands. Procedures used for data collection and data handling are reviewed as well. Institutional review board permission was obtained to ensure all requirements were met and guidelines were followed, and to protect all potential participants from harm. The purpose of this research was to identify the predictors of organizational commitment amongst contingent faculty members at public mid-size university in the SACS COC accrediting region. The three research questions guiding this mixed methods inquiry were:

- What levels of organizational commitment do contingent faculty members exhibit?
- What predicts the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members?
- How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?

#### **Research Approach**

This research is based in a constructivist paradigm. This epistemological approach focuses on how individuals make meaning around their experiences. It understands the world as socially constructed and understands that there will be multiple participant understandings of the phenomenon under study. Individual interpretation is the key to understanding (Creswell, 2003, p. 6), and researchers using a constructivist approach pay special attention to the context in which the individual makes meaning around his or her experiences. Furthermore, constructivism starts from experience and move toward

developing theory, which makes it particularly fitting for the questions this research is addressing.

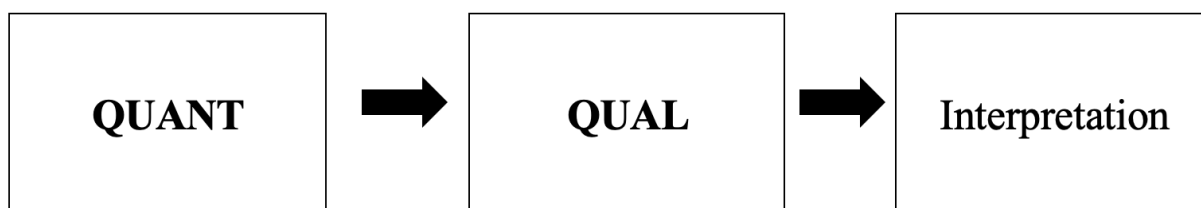
Utilizing a constructivist approach and drawing on the principles of critical theory, this research employed a mixed methods approach known as sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2003). A mixed methods approach is appropriate for this inquiry because the questions being asked are better answered using the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods than by using either alone. While there are a number of theories about faculty organizational commitment, none of them adequately explain the experiences and actions of non-tenure track faculty members. As a consequence, combining data from a quantitative strand and qualitative strand is the best way to understand the predictors of organizational commitment amongst non-tenure track faculty members. This approach also has the strength of centering the voices of NTTF members speaking directly about their own experiences, a perspective sometimes lacking in the ongoing uproar about this faculty trend.

### **Study Design**

The quantitative strand was conducted first to address the first two research questions. The quantitative strand was also used to identify individuals who differ in significant ways to be interviewed during the second, qualitative, phase. This utilization of the quantitative strand to identify participants is known as the participant selection model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Descriptive statistics from the quantitative strand allowed identification of NTTF members with high and low levels of the dependent variable to be included in interviews in the qualitative strand. In addition, results of the regression analysis were used to identify the independent variables of interest to be



investigated during the qualitative phase. The qualitative strand was conducted second and addressed the third research question. The results of the two strands were integrated during the analysis of the qualitative data.



*Figure 1.* Diagram of Sequential Explanatory Design

### **Participants**

The target population was all non-tenure track faculty members (652) at a public, four-year, mid-size university in the SACS COC accrediting region. Due to concerns about garnering sufficient participation from this particularly busy (and possibly undercompensated) target population, participants were offered the opportunity to enter their names into a drawing for a gift card incentive. The invitation explained that participants' data will be kept confidential and participation is fully optional. All data is stored on the university's secure server, accessible only to the researcher. Due to the two-strand mixed methods design, names were collected with survey responses in order to identify potential interviewees. However, the original data file with identifying information was stored separately and securely; the working data was de-identified by assigning code numbers. In addition, all data are reported in aggregate and care has been taken to ensure participants will not be identifiable in results. This is noted in the consent document, and a survey question asks participants to enter their contact information if they are willing to be contacted during the qualitative strand to participate in an

interview. Given the nature of (at least some) NTTF appointments as part of the gig economy, interviewees will be compensated with a small stipend (~\$25) for their time. The researcher received funding from an internal university grant to cover the survey lottery and interviewee stipends as well as funding from the her academic unit to pay for transcription.

### **Sampling and Selection**

The link to the survey was sent in an email to all non-tenure track faculty members. Data was collected using the university's subscription to Qualtrics online survey tool, and the data is stored only in the secure Qualtrics account and downloaded to the researcher's password-protected, university-owned laptop. A reminder email was sent to those who had not responded in one week. Three weeks after the first email, the survey was closed, and data collection was complete. During the open period, approximately 15 faculty members corresponded by email to note difficulties navigating the survey and received a response email. A few faculty members emailed to say that they were no longer non-tenure track faculty members. Several others said that they had never served in a NTTF position—upon conversation we were usually able to identify that they had once served as an adjunct. These participants were subsequently removed from the sampling frame for response rate calculation and qualitative selection.

It is notable that data collection began two weeks after the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic which closed the institution's residential campus and forced all faculty members to transition their face to face classes to an online teaching format. It is likely that such unprecedented upheaval across higher education (not to mention the rest of everyday life) had a significant impact on these results, including impacting the way

that faculty members experience sense of belonging and affective organizational commitment.

Survey data was analyzed using SPSS software. The main quantitative technique used was linear regression. The quantitative results were used to inform the qualitative strand, both to refine the interview protocol and to select interview participants of interest.

The qualitative strand began by selecting participants based on responses of interest on the quantitative strand. Special attention was paid to participants exhibiting outlying levels of the dependent variable, as well as the relationships between variables found in the results of the quantitative strand. Due to the pandemic, the planned face to face interviews were instead conducted using web videoconferencing software Zoom. The recordings were transcribed by Azur, a university-approved vendor. Transcription of the recording was used alongside the researcher's notes. Qualitative data was coded alongside the relevant quantitative responses for the interviewees. The final analysis integrates the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis into a comprehensive interpretation.

Table 1

*Summary of Mixed Methods Design and Protocols*

	Quantitative Strand	Qualitative Strand
Research questions	1.What levels of organizational commitment do contingent faculty members exhibit? 2.What predicts the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members?	3.How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?
Site for research	Online survey delivered by email	Web videoconferencing software Zoom used to conduct interviews virtually (face to face interviews canceled due to pandemic)
Timing	Survey administered first.	Interviews follow survey data collection and analysis.
Participants	Email sent to all NTTF on campus	21 cases identified and contacted; 9 follow up interviews were conducted
Types of data	Survey responses	Transcripts of interviews
Procedures for organizing data	Qualtrics used to collect data; SPSS will be used to analyze data.	Audio files transcribed by an outside company (AZUR); coding utilized pen and paper and MSWord.
Initial data analysis	Descriptives analyzed utilizing SPSS software. Quantitative findings used for participant selection for the qualitative interview phase.	Emergent codes were assigned to units in each transcript.
Advanced data analysis	Multiple Linear Regression Analysis conducted using SPSS.	Codes grouped into themes within each transcript; themes identified across transcripts within groups.
Integration	Final results from each phase were integrated into an overall interpretation of the predictors of organizational commitment amongst non-tenure track faculty.	

## Instrumentation and Rigor

The quantitative phase consisted of an online survey that took ten to fifteen minutes to complete. The survey in its entirety is included in Appendix A and a summary of the survey items appears below in Table 4. Demographic questions included age, gender, race, sexual orientation, highest degree earned, appointment type (part-time or full-time), and number of years teaching in a non-tenure track appointment.

Dependence on NTTF income was measured using two items, one that asks about primary employment and another that asks about head of household status. The way the two items were combined to indicate dependence on NTTF income is indicated in Table 2. The independent variable of level of underemployment was determined using both current appointment type and an item asking about desired appointment type. The way this level was calculated can be found in Table 3.

Table 2

### *Combining Items to Determine NTTF Income Dependence*

<u>Primary employment item</u>	<u>Head of household item</u>	<u>Dependent on NTTF income?</u>
Yes	Yes	Dependent
Yes	No	Not dependent
No	Yes	Not dependent
No	No	Not dependent

Table 3

### *Level of Underemployment*

<u>Current position</u>	<u>Desired position</u>	<u>Level of underemployment</u>
PT	PT	0
PT	FT	1
PT	TEF	2
FT	PT	0
FT	FT	0
FT	TEF	1

*Note.* Part-time= PT, Full-time non-tenure track=FT, Full-time tenure-eligible= TEF

Organizational sense of belonging was measured using items drawn from the organizational sense of belonging scale of 38 items adapted by Merriman (2010) from Somers work/school subscale from the Revised Belongingness Scale (1998, cited in Merriman 2010). The scale was adapted by Merriman for research on adjunct faculty sense of belonging and has been used a number of additional times with faculty (Edgren, 2012; Merriman, 2010; Pettengill, 2016). Merriman found good internal reliability for the revised subscale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95); Edgren found the same (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95). The Merriman adapted OSB subscale consists of 38 items. The 34 items adapted from the Somers scale address three factors, connectedness, esteem, and efficacy. Four were added by Merriman to address the concept of supervisor-employee relationship. The items have Likert-scale scoring of 1 to 5, Always True, Often True, Sometimes True, Rarely True, Never True. Four questions (i.e., 11, 16, 25, 29) are reverse scored to reflect negative associations. Due to concerns about instrument length and relevance of some items, the scale was shortened to fifteen items for use with the proposed survey. The reduced number of items were selected because of their applicability to the target population based on the theoretical framework and literature review. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to identify which of the fifteen items loaded onto a single factor representing the affective measure of sense of belonging, and to generate a total OSOB score.

**Dependent Measure.** The dependent variable of affective organizational commitment was measured using a modified version of the organizational commitment questionnaire developed by Mowday et al. 1979, who provided strong evidence for its internal validity of the scale as well as convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity.

Meyer and Allen (1991) refined the concept of organizational commitment to include three concepts and suggested that the OCQ measured two of these three. Further refinement of the OCQ has been conducted by Commearas and Fournier (2001). They used confirmatory factor analysis to test how many factors the full OCQ includes, as well as the reliability and validity of the instrument. The study found that while the full 15-item instrument appeared to include both affective and calculative commitment, the second factor was insufficiently represented. Thus, the authors recommend using the short form 9-item OCQ to measure affective commitment but omitting the fourth item which showed problems under factor analysis. As a result, this study used 8 items. This is the short form of the OCQ, (minus item #4) that performed well under factor analysis and showed reliability and validity to measure affective commitment.

Table 4

*Survey Items*

Type of Variable	Domain	Items
Dependent Variable	Organizational Commitment	Affective Organizational Commitment Subscale -8 items (Commeiras and Fournier, 2001)
Control Variables	Demographics	Age  Gender  Race  Sexual orientation  Highest degree earned  Number of years as NTTF  Type of appointment (FT or PT)
Independent Variables	Dependent on NTTF income	Is NTTF appointment your primary employment? Head of household?
	Level of underemployment	Relationship between current type of appointment and desired type of appointment (part-time, full-time NTT, full-time tenure eligible)
	Engagement with Faculty Development Center	5-point Likert Scale of Not at all engaged to Fully engaged
	Organizational Sense of Belonging	Adapted from Merriman 2010-15 items

**Cleaning and Conditioning the Quantitative Data**

After data collection concluded, the data was cleaned and conditioned. The first step was to de-identify the dataset by assigning each respondent a number and storing the identifying names and email addresses separately from the data to be analyzed using



SPSS 26.0 software. The initial response rate of 223 surveys from a sampling frame of 652 was 34.2%. Listwise deletion was used to eliminate surveys that had been initiated but abandoned partway through (e.g., only questions on the first page or two were answered; the respondent did not visit each page of the survey), resulting in an N of 200 (30.6%). For each of the two scales (AOC & OSOB), the reversed items were recoded. The data were then examined for missing values and outliers.

The overall proportion of missing responses on the 8 items of the dependent variable was 23%. There did not appear to be any pattern to the missing values; it was missingness at random. Two steps were taken to address missingness. First, and as described in greater detail below, factor scoring with mean imputation was done to generate a scale score normed around the mean and standard deviation of the responses. This process compensated for the missing data and provided an aggregate score for each respondent while still preserving all original responses (DiStefano, Zhu, & Mindrila, 2009).

Secondly, attention was paid during the qualitative strand to understanding how interviewees experienced desire to work for their institution and how this might have been problematic in relation to the items of the scale. Ideally this would have been done in face to face interviews by handing the interviewee a piece of paper with the scale items and asking each of them to comment on the items; but due to the fact that all interviews were conducted virtually via video conferencing software this was deemed to time-intensive and disruptive. Instead during the interviews, the interviewer paid attention to how interviewees described their affective organizational commitment and asked follow up questions to try to understand why the scale items might have been problematic. Then

during the coding of qualitative data, the researcher was sensitized to language that might shed light on the scale items by referring back to the specific scale items while assigning emergent codes.

Missing values on individual items were generated using mean imputation, and this process created a single standardized factor score for each respondent. Mean imputation is a method of estimating missing values by replacing them with the mean of the available data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2016, p. 67). The disadvantage of imputing missing values using the mean of the existing data is that it may reduce the overall variance, but both variables appear to still have sufficient variance (AOC  $\sigma^2=1.63$ ; OSOB  $\sigma^2= 0.297$ ; see also Figures 2 and 3).

The standardized factor scores were then used in all analyses. Using the standardized scores presented the advantage that once the regression analysis was complete and the important predictors were identified, it was easy to identify cases that exhibited the relationships of interest (those that were more than half a standard deviation above or below the mean on both scales). Each of the two scale variables had a distribution that approximates normality, see Figure 2 and Figure 3. These figures are in scale units; generated by adding the original mean to each standardized score to place the scale back on its original values.

The dependent variable had a few scores that were significantly more than two standard deviations from the mean with a gap from the other values; these outliers were eliminated. In the case of OSOB, a few scores did fall more than two standard deviations below the mean, but these were retained because the cases themselves are of interest (e.g., faculty who were underemployed by more than one level).

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for each of the scales showed good reliability for studies of this nature. Factor analysis was done to ensure that the items of the scale were unidimensional rather than multidimensional (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2016, p. 614). Both the dependent variable (AOC = 8 items,  $\alpha = .707$ ) and the independent variable (OSB = 15 items,  $\alpha = .919$ ) loaded onto one main factor as theory would suggest; see Table 5 for full item text and factor loadings.

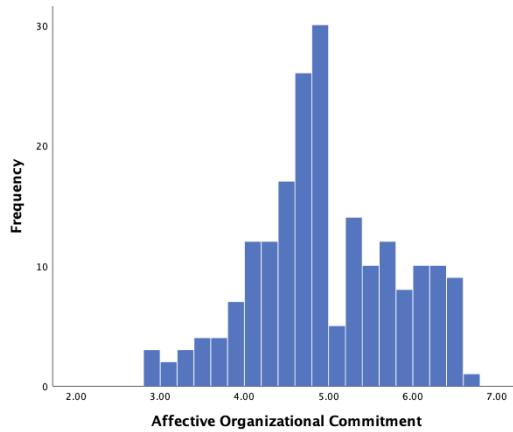


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of Affective Organizational Commitment

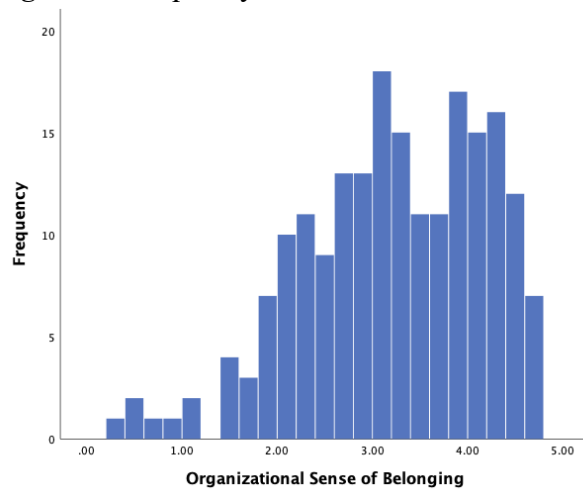


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of Organizational Sense of Belonging

Table 5

*Factor Loadings for Two Scale Variables, Affective Organizational Commitment and Organizational Sense of Belonging*

Constructs and Components	Loadings	Reliability
<u>Affective Organizational Commitment Scale (DV)</u>		
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career at this college.	.713	.707
2. I enjoy discussing my college with people outside of it.	.735	
3. I really feel as if this college's problems are my own.	.422	
4. I think I could easily become as attached to another college as I am to this one.	.549	
5. I do not feel "a member of the family" at this college.	.707	
6. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this college.	.859	
7. This college has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.796	
8. I do not have a strong sense of belonging to this college.	.798	
<u>Organizational Sense of Belonging Scale (IV)</u>		
1. I feel like I fit in with other faculty in my department.	.730	.919
2. Faculty I work with in my department see me as a competent person.	.628	
3. Others in my department offer to help me when they sense I need.	.738	
4. I receive sufficient feedback about my work.	.742	
5. I receive support from other faculty in my department when I need it.	.751	
6. I like the faculty I work with in my department.	.640	
7. I feel discriminated against in my department.	.524	
8. As a faculty member in my department, I feel like an outsider.	.721	
9. Others in my department ask for my ideas or opinions about different matters.	.632	
10. I feel understood by others in my department.	.796	
11. I feel comfortable contacting my department chair if I have the need to do so.	.499	
12. Faculty I work with in my department accept me when I am just being myself.	.767	
13. When I approach a group of faculty coworkers, I feel welcomed.	.798	
14. I am satisfied with the level of supervision I receive as a faculty member.	.602	
15. I view my department as a place to experience a sense of belonging.	.810	

Categorical variables were dummy coded as necessary. Dummy coding allows the inclusion of categorical variables in a regression analysis by comparing parameter estimates between a reference group and each estimated group (Tabchnick & Fidell, 2016). Since only a small number of respondents populated the minority categories for gender, race, and sexual orientation, the categories were collapsed. Gender was dummy coded as male (0) or female (1); only one respondent noted something other than male or female and this response was excluded. Race was dummy coded as white (0) or non-white. Sexual orientation was dummy coded as straight (0) and not straight (1). Appointment type was dummy coded as full-time (0) and part-time (1). Where categories were collapsed, it was done because insufficient numbers of respondents were present to disaggregate the data. Additionally, although insufficient numbers were present to do statistical comparisons, during the qualitative strand attention was paid to the ways in which these self-identification patterns might impact faculty experiences.

Three variables had to be computed from more than one item. Dependence on non-tenure track income was combined as described in Table 2 from two items (Do you have primary employment other than your non-tenure track faculty position?; Do you consider yourself the head of household (primary breadwinner)?) and then dummy coded as dependent (if both answers are yes = 0) and not dependent (if either answer is no = 1). Possession of a terminal degree (yes =0, no=1) was computed from the responses provided to the item. Level of underemployment was computed by combining current position with desired position as described in Table 3; values ranged from zero to two.

### **Sample Descriptive Statistics**

Frequencies for categorical and ordinal variables can be found in Table 6, and descriptive statistics for the measurement variables can be found in Table 7. Respondents varied greatly on age and years in non-tenure track position. The sample was fairly evenly divided between full-time and part-time faculty members. More females than males participated, those teaching outside of STEM fields outnumbered those in STEM by two to one, and slightly fewer respondents possessed a terminal degree than those who did not. A majority of respondents (79%) are not dependent on NTTF income, and a majority (59%) were not underemployed at all; a small number (9.5%) consider themselves to be underemployed by two levels. Respondents were fairly evenly divided across the five levels of engagement with the faculty development center (FDC); slightly more reported low engagement than those who reported high engagement.

Table 6

*Response frequencies for appointment type, dependence, gender, race, sexual orientation, STEM, terminal degree, and level of underemployment (N=200)*

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>percentage</u>
Appointment Type			
	Full-time	102	51%
	Part-time	94	47%
	Missing	4	2%
Dependence on NTTF income			
	Dependent	40	20%
	Not dependent	158	79%
	Missing	2	1%
Gender			
	Male	72	36%
	Female	124	62%
	Missing (other)	3 (1)	4%
Race			
	White	180	90%
	Not white	18	9%
	Missing	2	1%
Sexual Orientation			
	Straight	177	88.5%
	Not straight	14	7%
	Missing	9	4.5%
STEM			
	STEM	52	26%
	Not STEM	146	73%
	Missing	2	1%
Terminal degree			
	Yes	75	37.5%
	No	113	56.5%
	Missing	12	6%
Level of underemployment			
	None	118	59%
	One level	60	30%
	Two levels	19	9.5%
	Missing	3	1.5%

Table 7

*Mean, standard deviation, skewness, minimum and maximum for age, AOC, engagement with FDC, OSOB, and years*

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Skewness</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Age	48.23	12.7	.366	22	78
AOC (DV) (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree)	4.85	1.275	-.049	2.90	6.64
Engagement with FDC (IV) (1=not engaged to 5=very engaged)	2.37	1.234	.527	1	5
OSOB (IV) (1=never true to 4= always true)	3.19	0.545	-.723	0.39	4.66
Years in NTT position	9.27	6.9	.950	0	30

### **Qualitative Strand**

Qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Straus (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). This method suggests that as researchers collect data they will begin to search for themes or categories. These initial categories (captured via initial coding and the focused coding that occurs concurrently) were compared back to the original data and to the next data collection, and further refined through that comparison. Emergent codes were assigned to each idea throughout the interview transcript. Initial codes were examined within each transcript for similarities and differences and categories will be identified. Transcript-specific categories were compared across transcripts to see if overall trends emerge as salient. Non-participant NTTF members were asked for input on the more developed analytical structure represented by the overarching themes shared across transcripts. Particular



attention was paid to how qualitative coding can be used to explain quantitative findings about the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

### **Participant Selection and Semi-structured Interview Protocol**

The results of the quantitative strand were used to select participants for the qualitative strand. Cases were selected based on the pattern of scores on AOC (DV) and OSOB (IV) with consideration for STEM. Selected participant scored more than one half a standard deviation away from the mean on both of the scales. Attention was paid to selecting a number of participants teaching in STEM disciplines and a number not teaching in STEM disciplines at both ends of the covariance (high and low).

Five cases were identified as exceptional, as the relationship between the IV and DV were reversed. These are interesting outliers that don't fit the consistent score pattern in that they are high on one of the scales and low on the other, but still have scores more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  a standard deviation from the mean on each scale. These cases don't fit the dominant pattern and are interesting to explore for this reason (Creswell, 2014).

This analysis resulted in 21 cases, with eight demonstrating high scores on both factors, eight demonstrating low scores on both factors, and 5 demonstrating a pattern contradictory to regression findings (i.e., high on one, low on the other). Of this pool, 9 participants were interviewed (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Interview Participants*

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>STEM</u>	<u>OSOB standardized score</u>	<u>AOC standardized score</u>	<u>Data</u>
Fern	STEM	-1.027	-0.879	Transcript
Omar	STEM	-1.115	-0.796	Notes
Rebecca	Not STEM	-1.073	-0.609	Notes
Charlotte	Not STEM	-1.195	0.658	Transcript
Annabelle	Not STEM	1.133	0.759	Transcript
Reg	Not STEM	0.815	0.841	Transcript
Kourtney	Not STEM	1.465	1.150	Transcript
Monique	Not STEM	0.654	1.373	Transcript
Krystal	STEM	1.190	1.575	Transcript

Initial coding was done on the data from each interview. Using the constant comparative method as described in chapter three, the emergent codes were examined to identify themes across the data. Codes and themes were also examined alongside the expectations created by the literature, as well as alongside the quantitative results. The semi-structured interview protocol focused on three questions, with a few follow up items that emerged throughout the process of conducting interviews and coding data. The questions represent the major threads of inquiry driven by the third research question that governs this study—How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?—and by the independent variables suggested by the literature:

1. Tell me how you came to be in a non-tenure track faculty appointment—what's your story?
2. The survey asked about organizational sense of belonging. Can you talk about how important it is to you to feel a sense of belonging at work? What increases your sense of belonging? What detracts from your sense of belonging?

3. The survey asked about affective organizational commitment, which just means your desire to work at your institution. How important is it to you that you want to work at this university? What contributes to your desire to work there? What detracts?

After the first interviews were conducted, a few emergent codes were identified across the transcripts. The constant comparative coding process identified these concepts in the early interviews, and they became follow up items in the succeeding interviews, complementing the three main questions in the protocol above. These themes were the role of promotion opportunities and a career pathway, differentiation and interaction between structural factors and interpersonal ones (e.g., committee service and leadership versus respect from colleagues), job security, and the university's faculty development center.

A total of nine interviews were conducted. Because of the global pandemic, face to face meetings could not be held so interviews were conducted and recorded utilizing the web-based video conferencing software Zoom. Two participants were not recorded; one declined, and one could not be recorded for technical reasons. The recorded interviews were transcribed by Azur, a transcription service that can be billed through the university's procurement process. Interviewees were identified in the transcripts only by number, and pseudonyms were assigned for the purposes of analysis. Any other individual names mentioned in the interviews were redacted by the transcription service in the final word documents. While disciplinary differences are clearly important, several interviewees expressed concern that they could be identified if their department or college was known. The names of academic units were redacted and replaced with a

similar phrase, e.g. “[this] Department” or [my] College,” and the name of the institution itself was replaced with the phrase “[this] University.” The final qualitative data includes seven transcripts and the researcher’s notes from two interviews. Coding was done using both pen and paper and Microsoft Word.

Two abbreviations that are used by the interviewees appear frequently in the transcripts. PAC stands for “Personnel Advisory Committee.” This is the name of the committee in each department that makes tenure and promotion decisions; actual details of the process and policies that govern a departmental PAC vary across academic units. Secondly, an RTA is a specific type of non-tenure track position at the institution where the study took place. It is a full-time position governed by a contract and stands for “Renewable-Term Appointment.”

### **Analyses and Integration**

The first two research questions were addressed in the quantitative strand of this research. To answer research question #1 (levels of affective organizational commitment among NTTF), I first examined the descriptive statistics from the quantitative strand. To answer Research #2, I conducted a regression analysis to identify statistically significant predictors. To answer question #3, I analyzed the qualitative interview data in light of the quantitative findings for question #1 and #2.

Integration of the two strands of research is critical to mixed methods research. This research design employs the measurement from the quantitative strand to inform the qualitative data collection and subsequent interpretation of the qualitative data. Although the qualitative data (transcripts and notes from interviews) was collected separately from the quantitative data (survey responses), there can be no qualitative findings separate

from the quantitative analysis. Consequently, the results and interpretation reported after the interviews is an integrated analysis based on both the quantitative analysis and the qualitative data. The integration of the two strands happens as the qualitative data is analyzed.

Because the two strands were conducted sequentially, the quantitative results are reported first in chapter 4. The results from the quantitative strand include both the descriptive statistics and the results of the regression analysis. The quantitative results were then used to select participants and to refine the semi-structured interview protocol. As the qualitative data was coded using the constant comparative method and themes were identified during the qualitative strand, the quantitative findings were used to inform the codes selected. For example, as each transcript was coded, the researcher referred back to the interviewee's responses to the survey instrument; the qualitative data of the transcript was interpreted in light of the levels of the AOC and the predictor variables that the interviewee exhibited. Chapter 4 concludes with the integrated results of both strands; the final analysis of the qualitative data is informed by and shaped by the quantitative results.

### **Limitations**

This section addresses limitations of this research. First, I note that this research was conducted in the midst of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the upheaval it created in both everyday life and across the higher education sector. Secondly, I discuss the limited generalizability of these results beyond this institution as well as to other institutional types. Lastly, I note that faculty are not randomly assigned to NTTF or TEF positions.

## **Covid-19**

The novel coronavirus global pandemic upended both personal and civic life beginning in March 2020, and higher education was no exception. The institution where this study was conducted suspended face to face classes after spring break, transitioning all instruction to virtual modes of delivery. Such unprecedented upheaval across higher education (not to mention the rest of everyday life) likely had an impact on how faculty members experience sense of belonging and affective organizational commitment. While the long-term implications of this crisis for the sector are yet to be determined at the time of writing, a number of substantial impacts on faculty lives and livelihoods are occurring already. Hiring freezes (at both individual institutions and at the state level) have stopped faculty searches, non-tenure track and tenure-eligible faculty members are losing jobs, and adjuncts have even greater uncertainty about their course assignments for the coming semesters. Faculty members who are employed for Fall 2020 face pay cuts and increases in their teaching loads, as well as enormous uncertainty about mode of instruction for fall 2020. Even if students and faculty members are allowed to return to the classroom, faculty are being instructed to plan to provide content virtually when the instructor or students get sick. Classroom plans feature reduction to 50% capacity to facilitate social distancing, which means instructors will only see their students at most half of the usual face time for each class. Teachers and students will be wearing masks, which may hamper communication, and social distancing recommendations place students six feet apart in the classroom. Some faculty members are requesting permission to teach virtually, and colleges are altering schedules to accommodate extra cleaning and other

safety precautions. Faculty labs have been shuttered, and research agendas are on hold indefinitely. At some institutions, the tenure clock has been paused.

It is hard to adequately describe the degree of upheaval and uncertainty faculty members were experiencing at the time of data collection for this study. While individual NTTF members showed a generous willingness to spend their time completing the survey and participating in interviews, the results reported cannot be separated from the context of the global pandemic crisis and its impact on higher education. Data collection was done in the midst of the upheaval and uncertainty of spring and summer 2020, which makes the findings a unique snapshot of a novel moment in time. It's unlikely that higher education will ever be the same as it was before this crisis. While the findings may reflect the uncertainty of the time period in which the data was collected, they at least incorporate the effects of the upheaval.

### **Distinctions by Institutional Type**

The institution studied was a mid-level comprehensive institution with undergraduate teaching as its primary mission. Studying a single institution limits the generalizability of the findings. Further, in this case, type of institution and mission are particularly important to the topics of research. Only studying one institution and one type of institution limits the generalizability of the findings to other sizes and types of institutions, as well as to institutions with other primary missions. It is possible that NTTF members who serve at a university that is primarily a teaching institution like this one could exhibit a higher commitment to teaching and learning than those who are working at a research 1 or other type of institution. This may be reflected in the findings of the first theme, particularly; NTTF at a primarily teaching institution may be more

committed to teaching and learning than those who serve at institutions that focus less on teaching and more on research.

Additionally, levels of OSOB and AOC could vary at other types of institutions, and the relationship between these two variables might be different at another institutional type. Further, several interviewees noted that they know their experiences would be different if they were at a public research one institution. It is reasonable to assume that non-tenure track faculty experiences with sense of belonging might be different if they were working at another type of institution. Private institutions, institutions with a different focus, a smaller institution, or even one that was located in a major city might all be distinctions that would make a difference in the results.

### **Correlation, Not Causation**

Further, faculty are not randomly assigned to different types of non-tenure track faculty appointments, nor to their use of the faculty development center, so this research cannot establish causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Such random assignment is not possible, nor would it be ethical.

### **Conclusion**

This mixed methods research project uses a sequential explanatory design to explore the predictors of affective organizational commitment among non-tenure track faculty members. The quantitative strand was conducted first, and its results were used to inform participant selection for the qualitative strand, as well as integrated into the constant comparative coding used to analyze the qualitative data. Procedures for data collection and handling for both strands were reported in Chapter three. Limitations of the research were also discussed. Results of the two strands are reported in Chapter Four.



## **Chapter Four: Results**

Chapter Four presents the findings of the two strands of this research. The quantitative results, which address research questions #1 and #2, are presented first. This data was collected first. In addition to being used to conduct the quantitative analysis, the quantitative data and subsequent quantitative analysis was used to inform participant selection for the qualitative phase, qualitative data collection, and also the final, integrated analysis of the qualitative data. Although the qualitative data (transcripts and notes from interviews) was collected separately from the quantitative data (survey responses), there can be no qualitative findings separate from the quantitative analysis. Consequently, the results and interpretation reported after the interviews is an integrated analysis based on both the quantitative analysis and the qualitative data.

### **Quantitative Results**

The results of the quantitative strand are described below including the descriptive analysis and the regression. The quantitative strand addressed on the first two research questions.

Research question #1 was “what levels of organizational commitment do non-tenure track faculty members exhibit?” The quantitative strand of this study provides evidence that non-tenure track faculty members do exhibit organizational commitment (mean=4.85 standard deviation=1.27). The distribution of AOC scores (see Figure 2) approximates normality, which shows that there is variability in the scores. The scores are concentrated above the midpoint of the scale such that the distribution is negatively skewed (skewness= -0.049). In fact, 18.5% of respondents (n = 37) had scores greater than 1 standard deviation above the mean.

Both the shape and the spread of the distribution provide evidence of organizational commitment among non-tenure track faculty members; there are a greater percentage of respondents above the scale mean, an overall higher scale mean, and greater variability in AOC than we would expect if the claim that NTTF lack OC were true. Further, these descriptive statistics provide conceptual support for further investigation of the development of organizational commitment in NTTF members during the qualitative strand.

### **Regression Analysis**

Research question #2 was “What predicts the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members?” This question was addressed by conducting a regression analysis on the quantitative survey data. To begin, the data was examined to ensure that it meets the necessary assumptions to conduct a regression analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2016) state that “multivariate normality is the assumption that each variable and all linear combinations of the variables are normally distributed”(p. 78). The data appears to meet this assumption. The residuals were normally distributed, and scatterplots show linear relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. VIF values were within normal range with no values exceeding 1.65, showing that multicollinearity presented no difficulty.

The regression model had three blocks as shown in Table 9. The control variables were entered first, then three independent variables were entered in the second block, with the final independent variable entered into the third block.

Table 9

*Regression Model Summary*

<u>Model</u>	<u>Variables entered</u>	<u>R Square</u>	<u>F change</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Age Appointment Type Gender Race Sexual Orientation Terminal Degree Years in NTT position	.145	3.449	.001*
2	Dependent on NTTF income Level of underemployment Engagement with faculty development center	.177	2.106	.102
3	Organizational sense of belonging	.443	75.872	.000*

\*significant at  $p < .05$

Turning to parameter estimates found in Table 9, two predictors were significant. Both organizational sense of belonging and teaching in a STEM discipline reached statistical significance. Controlling for all other variables, for every increase of one standard deviation in organizational sense of belonging, affective organizational commitment increased by approximately one half of a standard deviation ( $b = 0.487$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Faculty members who do not teach in a STEM discipline (controlling for all other variables) scored approximately one third of a standard deviation lower on affective organizational commitment than their peers in the STEM disciplines ( $b = -0.347$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). None of the other control variables or independent variables reached significance as predictors of affective organizational commitment.

While the control variables did not reach parameter significance individually, as a block they showed model significance. This fits with the expectations created by the extant literature that demographic variables such as race and gender, as well

Table 10

*Regression Results*

		<u>Coefficients</u>	
	<u>Variable</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Model 1	age	.013	.006
	gender	.226	.126
	race	-.359	.226
	sexual orientation	-.093	.234
	terminal degree	.098	.129
	STEM	-.576*	.149
	years	-.017	.011
	appointment type	-.152	.134
Model 2	(Constant)	-.128	.330
	age	.009	.006
	gender	.131	.131
	race	-.323	.227
	sexual orientation	-.105	.232
	terminal degree	.074	.129
	STEM	-.511*	.155
	years	-.017	.011
	appointment types	-.016	.146
	underemployment level	-.179	.105
	dependence on NTTF income	.133	.167
	engagement with faculty development center	.105	.055
Model 3	(Constant)	.157	.274
	age	-.001	.005
	gender	.132	.108
	race	-.297	.187
	sexual orientation	-.079	.192
	terminal degree	.086	.106
	STEM	-.347*	.129
	years	.001	.009
	appointment types	.090	.121
	underemployment level	-.154	.087
	dependence on NTTF income	.069	.138
	engagement with faculty development center	.074	.045
	organizational sense of belonging	.487*	.056

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

as appointment type and dependence on NTT income, should account for a large amount of the variance in NTTF experiences. Further, these variables emerged in the qualitative interviews as influencing NTTF sense of belonging at various levels of the institution.

### **Qualitative Analysis Informed by Quantitative Results**

Research question #3 was primarily addressed during the qualitative strand of this study. The question was “How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?” The results from the qualitative strand informed by the quantitative findings are presented below. First, the two significant predictors that emerged in the quantitative strand are discussed in relation to the overall qualitative findings. Next, each of the main themes from the qualitative strand are presented. Six themes resulted. Table 11 illustrates how emergent codes were assigned to data from the interviews and then analyzed into themes.

#### **Two Significant Predictors**

The qualitative results supported the quantitative findings that organizational sense of belonging increased a faculty member’s affective organizational commitment. Interviewees said that when they felt “part of” their teaching group, department, college, or other social grouping on campus, they felt a greater desire to work at their institution. Interviewees identified multiple factors that influenced their organizational sense of belonging and their affective organizational commitment, and these are discussed in detail in the sections below on the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Regarding the STEM findings, interviewees often commented on departmental differentiation—“I know other departments don’t do it this way” (Rebecca)—but none reflected directly on the STEM/non-STEM distinction. Faculty members clearly identify

with their disciplines but may not identify strongly with STEM/non-STEM, which was a limitation on the ability to follow up on this finding during the qualitative interviews. Some NTTF in STEM fields mentioned that they were positioned to earn less than tenure-eligible peers or in their outside careers (e.g., as a pediatrician), but they specifically chose to pursue NTTF employment because they found it less demanding, less stressful, and/or more rewarding. Additionally, NTT positions in STEM fields may be compensated better than those outside STEM, which might make them more attractive than similar positions off the tenure track in liberal arts fields like English or History. Further research is needed to see why those in non-STEM disciplines might experience lower affective organizational commitment than their STEM peers.

### **Six Themes**

**Non-tenure track faculty are strongly committed to students' learning and development.** The first theme, and perhaps the most important finding that emerged from the qualitative strand overall, is that all interviewees, including those who scored on the low end for commitment in the qualitative survey, expressed significant investment in their teaching and their students. Interviewees identified their students, and students' learning and development, as significantly impacting their commitment to continuing faculty employment. Fern put it this way, "And then when I got to teach graduate students, it was phenomenal. ... And then I started teaching undergrads – loved it. I just love turning light bulbs on for people." Krystal points out that the focus on students increased her overall desire to work at the university-- "Teaching is on the forefront and putting out the best students that we can is on the forefront, what we call our "end product". What we have – our students and the availability to our students I think is one

of the biggest reasons that attracts me to [this] UNIVERSITY. ... So, here at [this] University ... they really strive to make the students successful and that's something that contributes to you wanting to work at an institution like that."

Even when faculty members identified factors that detracted from their sense of belonging or their organizational commitment, they did so in the context of also affirming their commitment to their students and students' learning. Charlotte made the following comment after pointing out that her salary was significantly lower off the tenure track than it would be as a tenure-eligible faculty member— "So, being an RTA at [this] University, you do it because you love it and because you love the students. It's not – we're not getting rich, that is for sure."

**Policies and procedures can make a significant difference in how NTTF experience sense of belonging, and these vary greatly across academic units.**

Examples include rules about who can serve on or lead committees, processes like the assignment of office space or selection of which courses each faculty member will teach, evaluation procedures, and promotion opportunities. These policies and procedures vary a great deal across different academic units (departments, colleges, and schools) throughout the institution. Interviewees noted the differences across academic units but pointed out both how positive policies and procedures could boost their sense of belonging as well as how bad ones could detract.

Interviewees described knowing that their academic units differed from others on important policies and procedures as well as interpersonal factors. In response to the question "does it matter what department and college you are in?" Kourtney said "It absolutely does. Absolutely does, and I'll toot the [my] School's horn. They are a really

super, innovative place to work.” Charlotte pointed out that her College is better than some on campus, a fact which definitely contributed to her overall desire to work at the University: “But I really like [this] University. I think it’s a good organization. Of course, not everyone’s going to say that and I think it really depends on your department. You could have an awful department, and I’m sure there are awful departments at [this] University.”

One important structural issue that varied across interviewees depending on academic unit was access to opportunities for promotion and advancement. One School allowed promotion independently of tenure track status. “[Our PAC] realized that there’s a gap in advancement and there needed to be a track for people just like me, terminal degrees who were not planning on going into a tenured position. And so, they redid it and they came up with a new – it’s very much the same, but now it’s got its own procedure and its own place in the handbook, and that was really helpful to clarify” (Kourtney)

Another was entertaining proposals to do this, though Annabelle noted that progress was painfully slow: “Here’s what I will tell you has been really frustrating, though, is that our PAC – they were actually advocating for the folks who were non-tenure line to be able to have the ability to be promoted without tenure. So, to be able to be promoted to assistant, associate, full – meet all those requirements, but to not get tenure if we had PhDs that were in a different field. That, as far as we know, is still sitting on the provost’s desk and has been there for at least two years. They have never gotten anything back. So, enormously frustrating...” Ultimately this lack of opportunity for advancement led Annabelle to secure a position at another university starting in fall 2020.



For NTTF members in other academic units on campus, the situation is far less promising. NTTF members described possessing the same credentials and experience as tenure-eligible peers, plus fulfilling the same responsibilities in their positions, yet they couldn't even look forward to the opportunity to get a raise, let alone a promotion. Omar pointed out that the different job titles for non-tenure track faculty weren't tied to any sort of logical scheme regarding responsibilities, compensation, or years of experience: "Even though I have the same job responsibilities as [name of a tenure-track Associate Professor], and I have a PhD in [this discipline], just the same, I have the same years of experience and so on, but we have different job titles, and he makes a lot more than me. We essentially do the same job."

This flat structure among non-tenure track positions is compounded by the sense of a dearth of tenure track opportunities. "Unfortunately, once you're in a non-tenure track level at [this] University, there is nowhere else you can go. You are there. You're not moving up. You're not getting pay raises to the amount of what you should be. We are underpaid in every single department across campus compared to our colleagues at [other state universities]" (Charlotte).

Other structural issues that impact NTTF members' sense of belonging are office space, the process of course selection, and participation in meetings and on committees. Charlotte noted that her office space is located in another building entirely from the one that houses her department: "I don't have an office in the College. I'm actually in [another building], so I'm not even with my department. And it's not just me; it's two other non-tenure track members and we were all grouped together and moved there simply because we teach [general education classes].... I couldn't tell you where half the

things are in the building because I'm hardly ever there. So, I'm literally physically removed from my department, so that definitely adds to a sense of not belonging.... I don't really see anybody from my department except for [name of a faculty member in the department]." While none of my interviewees reported having no office space at all, as has sometimes been described in the literature, Rebecca noted that she was assigned a desk in a shared space where other people moved in and out with no notice and no introduction, including other faculty members, but also students and staff doing project work.

Monique understands that tenure-eligible faculty get first choice of courses that they will teach each semester but says this way of assigning classes to faculty members detracts from her sense of belonging. Similarly, she feels excluded from departmental meetings because of her status as an adjunct, "We are invited to Department meetings, but every time it's like, "Well, you don't have to. *You're just an adjunct.*" We don't have to, but we're invited" [emphasis added].

In addition to departmental meetings, interviewees noted that rules around committee participation and leadership, particularly promotion and tenure committees (known at this institution as PAC) contributed significantly to their sense of belonging. Reg noted that being excluded from the tenure and promotion committee definitely decreased his sense of belonging: "The thing was, I was suddenly being treated like, "Oh, well, you're good enough to teach, but you're not good enough to be involved in the discussion about who we should keep in the club and who we shouldn't." PAC participation mattered a great deal to NTTF members' sense of inclusion. Krystal is in an

academic unit where promotion is available to NTTF, but issues still arise around NTTF service on PAC:

Where it becomes an issue – and this is something that we’re even looking at – is if I’m now on this RTA track, you know, instead of going by rank they go by tenured and non-tenured. It should really go by rank. So, if I’m an Assistant Professor, I should be evaluated by other associate professors who it doesn’t matter if you’re tenured or not. If you’re all in the same rank, you’re all at the same level. So, that’s the only place that I find that it shouldn’t be – because our promotion and tenure committee, what we call the PAC, which is who decides that – they always have to have like, three tenured people on it, and I just posed the question at the end of the semester, if PAC has non-tenured people but tenured people are allowed to decide the RTA people and they get promoted, why can’t RTA people talk about tenure? So, the equality is not there.

Policies and procedures have a significant impact on NTTF members experiences in their departments and colleges. Rules and procedures about promotion and about committee service and leadership joined procedures like course selection and the assignment of office space to either contribute to, or detract from, the sense of belonging held by non-tenure track faculty members.

**The interpersonal isn’t just interpersonal.** The third theme is that interpersonal factors interact with structural factors in complex ways to create the campus environment experienced by NTTF members. While interviewees did describe some specific instances where tenure-eligible colleagues just treated them poorly, personally, and some of the factors cited in theme two above are clearly primarily rule-driven, in most cases structural factors interact with interpersonal dynamics to impact sense of belonging.

How they are treated by tenure-eligible colleagues and leaders matters; interviewees reported feeling like “second class citizens.”

At [this] University RTAs – that’s a contract. So, we’re called “by contract”. We’re not even called lecturers. We don’t have a title. We’re just “contract”, that’s all. And some departments are really great at including the RTAs into discussions and some departments are awful, where *you’re a second-class citizen* and your opinion just doesn’t count” [emphasis added] (Charlotte).

Several pointed out that having even one supportive colleague mattered to their sense of inclusion into their academic units. Rebecca walked into the faculty lunch room to discover a large departmental gathering going on, only to discover it was a book group to which she had not been invited. “My chair, who I had a great relationship with, would never have let something like that happen, but she had just gone out on leave one month before.” Other interviewees noted that faculty peers who acted as mentors or collaborators improved their sense of belonging.

But while noting interpersonal interactions that affected them, interviewees often simultaneously pointed to underlying policies and procedures that created or contributed to this sense of a two-tier faculty that pervades the literature. One interview is worth quoting at length. Annabelle said when she started in her department, she definitely felt like non-tenure track faculty were outsiders:

Our department felt very hierarchical, very, in that there was a clear pecking order and people like me who were non-tenure line – we were without a doubt at the bottom of that pecking order. It showed up in the way that we were talked “at” in our faculty meetings. I had a vote just like everybody else, but my vote for some reason just didn’t seem to matter as much as the tenured folks. We also saw in terms of the belonging piece that there was a real sense of fear about our jobs, whether or not our jobs were ever really secure, and the folks who were tenured didn’t do anything to make us feel better about that. In fact, I think they were really kind of pushing the fear piece of it, that we were just never really safe. And that was a tough place to be in, to just not really feel like you’re really valued or wanted, and that came from the top down. So, that was both – our Department Chair had a very close relationship with one of the tenured faculty, and that tenured faculty was really ruthless. She – well, she had a strong influence on our department culture at the time, and that had a large spillover effect with everyone.

At one level the behavior that Annabelle describes is interpersonal, not rule-based. She does have a vote at the meeting; her sense of exclusion comes not from a policy that limits her participation, but from interpersonal interactions that suggest a lack of respect.

Yet when she talks about job security, she isn't just talking about how a tenure-eligible colleague makes her feel, she is describing a structural impact of that lack of respect. The feeling of disrespect was embedded in processes and policies that didn't just make her *feel* like a second-class citizen—they actually *made* her a second-class citizen. Annabelle goes on to explain how things changed when the senior faculty members moved on and were replaced by new leadership:

Our culture has changed overall where the people who felt scared are now the people who are in power, and instead of perpetuating that feeling of fear, I think they've done a really good job of being way more inclusive. One of the things we did that also created that sense of belonging, I think, was that when we did our most recent set of bylaws, one of the discussions was who should be Committee Chairs, and for a long time it was only tenured folks or people who were going – it could be Chairs of any committee, and we changed that rule to be that even if you were in a non-tenure line position, if you've been here for seven years that you could chair any committee in the department. And at one point, I mean, we had non-tenured folks chairing almost every committee in our department. That was kind of a big moment to look at that list and be like, "Wow. They're really giving us some opportunities." So, I think that really helped with the sense of belonging as well, feeling we had a real voice and a real sense we're shaping the department.

Actual structural changes were made to policies and procedures, such as changing the rule about who could chair committees, were made. These changes increased opportunities for participation in shared governance, and consequently, improved the strained interpersonal relationships that Annabelle described. While it is possible, as in the example Rebecca describes, for bad actors to treat individual NTTF members with a lack of respect and thus decrease their sense of belonging, in many cases more than just feelings and personal interactions create and maintain the two-tier faculty. In fact, their bad actions are structurally enabled by the policies and procedures that in effect keep NTTF from being full members of the collective faculty.

In particular, opportunity for promotion is one area that makes a difference in whether NTTF feel respected or not. While interviewees in some departments pointed to lack of opportunity for advancement as a detractor to their sense of belonging, two interviewees from the same academic unit noted that their School had established pathways for promotion for NTTF, and consequently how this made them feel like a full member of the community:

[This university] is like a family. ... I could talk about the [this] School itself as like a family. We are pretty much like a second family. Within the college, I'm on different interprofessional collaborations and never ever feel that – you know, you don't know who's tenured or not tenured. Nobody walks around with a badge that says you're tenured on it or anything, so I never once felt that I didn't belong because I was not on that level. (Krystal)

One interviewee who scored on the low end for both OSOB and AOC declined to be interviewed because of his experiences regarding promotion opportunities and second-class treatment in his college. “I’ve complained about it repeatedly so they would know who I am if you identify department. Even though I have a PhD I’m treated like I don’t matter—I have no rank and no possibility to move up” (Omar). Clearly promotion is an area that impacts both the structural positionality of those off the tenure track and their relationships with other faculty members.

**Sense of belonging was experienced differentially at different levels across the institution.** The fourth theme identified a range of levels—research group, “node” (group of instructors working on a common course or courses), program, department, college, and university as a whole –as being important places to experience a sense of belonging, and interviewees differentiated between them. For example, some felt strongly part of their small common teaching group but excluded from their department. Some felt strong identification with the university and its students at the broadest level, but experienced

being an outsider at the departmental level. Fern, who noted that she feels “ignored” in her home department, stated “Okay, so I feel pretty committed to [this] University, and I think it’s because – and when I say “[this] University” I mean the whole institution, rather than just the [department]. *But I really like the feeling that I get on campus. I like the students*” [emphasis added]. Alternately, others felt like the university as a whole was too big to experience much of a sense of belonging:

So, the desire I would say, in terms of [this] University, is probably lower than what the department commitment rating is, only because I feel like [this] University has gotten so big. *It’s hard to feel like I matter in a lot of situations, right?* ... And so, I think the department is kind of where I feel like I have a voice and I matter. In terms of the larger institution, I don’t feel like that’s as important to me just because we’re so big now. You just feel like kind of another cog in the machine most of the time” [emphasis added]. (Annabelle)

Krystal noted that distinctions are even made by program, “And you hear people talk that way. ... “Oh, I teach in a graduate program,” or “I teach in a Doctorate program,” or “I teach undergrad programs.” So, we have many different programs. That’s kind of how you identify yourself.”

Monique, and others, value feeling at home in their department: “Well, it is very important for me to feel like – I’ve been in workplaces where you almost feel like family, and I feel like I’ve found that, too, in the [Department].”

Non-tenure track faculty members may feel like they belong as part of one group, but experience isolation and exclusion at several other levels, or at any one other level. More research, with much more nuanced instruments, is needed to understand which level has the biggest impact on NTTF members, as well as how they develop a sense of belonging at the various levels.

Tenure isn't always perceived as creating job security, and it's not always desirable. The fifth theme is that NTTF who are not dependent on NTT income, those who have given up high stress careers in other fields, or those who opt not to get a terminal degree don't necessarily aspire to tenure-eligible positions. One interviewee with a terminal degree described having the option of moving into a tenure-eligible position and opting not to. Krystal argued that tenure doesn't necessarily provide job security: "I don't think that anybody who has tenure should think that they have this job security, which we all know is a false sense of security. So, we have to start thinking outside the box with higher education as we move forward that tenure is not the end-all, say-all."

Others argued that tenure wasn't that valuable to them for various reasons. Several noted that entering an academic career at a later date meant that tenure just wasn't as important to them; "But really, I mean, I'm not as invested in the whole career thing at 53 – but *I am invested in teaching*. That's what I care about" [emphasis added] (Fern). Others noted that a tenure-eligible position comes with responsibilities that they don't want. Monique opted not to pursue a terminal degree because she isn't really interested in doing research; "I just don't want to do research. I'm not interested in that." Fern pointed out that being in a NTTF position was much less stressful than her former career as a pediatrician—"I was an adjunct because I loved not being important anymore. I don't know if you've had that opportunity of being too important – so, when you're not the one on call, getting called in the middle of the night, it's a beautiful thing."

The idea that tenure-eligible positions are more stressful recurred throughout the interviews. "I have friends who are tenure track who are just grinding, trying to grind out



the problems so that they can move forward. Or I have people who are doing service because they have to, not because they want to. I can always say no, not that I would.” Kourtney felt that in her NTT role she had less stress and more options than she would have in a tenure-eligible position. Krystal similarly commented on the stress of the pursuit of tenure; “The tenure twitch comes out, where, you know, if you are close to the time that you are supposed to be promoted with tenure and don’t have your portfolio together and meet all of the criteria, you pretty much don’t have a job. So, it’s very stressful. To me, the benefits – it just didn’t make any sense.” While some interviewees did aspire to tenure-eligible positions, most also noted that pursuit of tenure brought stresses they avoided in their non-tenure track positions.

**Participation in programming offered by the university-level faculty development center boosts sense of belonging.** The final theme addresses engagement with the university’s faculty development center—a unit at the level of Academic Affairs that serves faculty across colleges and academic units. Center programming was identified as a powerful way to connect with other faculty members across campus. “Well, it’s a great thing, because it did give me that sense of belonging, what it is to be part of the faculty at [this] University and how the University treats everyone,” said Reg. Some noted that the center helped connect faculty across a very large campus with many decentralized units, creating a sense of belonging at the university level:

When we look at [this] University as a university, having the seven different colleges in it kind of siloes us out a little bit. But being that we’re pretty big, you know, you kind of have to do that if you are a big institution. ...I think [the FDC] is just a fabulous place, because I’ve met so many different people” (Krystal).

While use of the faculty development center only approached significance as a predictor of AOC in the quantitative phase, it emerged as a contributor to sense of belonging throughout the interviews.

### **Conclusion**

The quantitative analysis provides evidence that non-tenure track faculty exhibit affective organizational commitment, and it also identified two predictors that are statistically significant, organizational sense of belonging and teaching in a STEM discipline. These quantitative findings were used to select participants for the qualitative strand, as well as integrated into analysis of the qualitative data. Constant comparative coding of the qualitative data informed by the quantitative results resulted in the identification of six themes. First, NTTF are committed to their students. Next, policies and procedures vary greatly across academic units and make a difference in the development of sense of belonging. Third, interpersonal dynamics interact with material conditions to impact sense of belonging. Fourth, sense of belonging varies at different levels across the university. Fifth, some NTTF don't think the benefits of tenure outweigh the costs. Lastly, participation in programming offered by the university-level faculty development center boosts sense of belonging. Chapter 5 provides robust discussion of these findings and implications for practice.

Table 11

*Sample Quotes, Emergent Codes, and Resulting Themes*

<u>Sample Quotes</u>	<u>Emergent codes</u>	<u>Themes</u>
“The only promotion I want is the opportunity to influence more students. I want them to be able to learn this stuff the right way” -Rebecca	Commitment to students	1. NTTF are strongly committed to students’ learning and development.
“I just want to teach, really. .... I just like the relationship in the classroom...”-Monique	Commitment to teaching	
“RTAs – we’re RTAs. It’s kind of flat. There’s no distinction. We are what we are. I think technically there’s a difference between an instructor and a lecturer from the salary range in the University, but I don’t think the College has any “instructors”. I think that’s only adjunct. We have lecturers, so it’s flat.” -Reg	Lack of promotion opportunities as structural barrier	2. Policies and procedures can make a significant difference in how NTTF experience sense of belonging, and these vary greatly across academic units.
“ There’s some committees, like PAC – I was not able to be a full member. I served last year as an Alternative, and I could have been the Treasurer, but for the most part, that’s the only School one that I can’t do because I don’t have tenure.” -Kourtney	Limited committee participation as barrier	

<p>“And if I need help, I’m going to reach out to the other adjuncts before I’m going to talk to – I’m going to reach out to her because she teaches that. I feel like if you ask for help to like, the full-time professors, it kind of makes you look bad. Like, I can deal with that before I ask them.”</p> <p>Monique</p> <p>“I think also – another thing, too, in our department, my boss does this. She is aware and sensitive to the needs of the RTAs.” -Reg</p>	Two-tier faculty	3. The interpersonal isn’t just interpersonal.
<p>“I don’t see that there’s a tenure line; that you’re more accepted if you’re tenured or less accepted. I think that everybody is appreciated at their face value, what you bring to the table, and I really like that about [this] University. I know it’s not like that at big – I have friends who are working at Duke, and it’s not like that at Duke and it’s not like that at VCU. So, I’m in an environment where I’m allowed to flourish without that tenure position.” -Kourtney, who is in a department that offers promotion to NTTF</p>	Interpersonal relationships boost sense of belonging	
<p>“I guess just if I was working for a university or a company who had values that I really don’t like or don’t believe in, that would be hard for me to work for that company. I like the sense of family, community that is at [this] University. Coming from a different country, I like that the students are super proud of being at [this] University.” -Monique</p>	University-level sense of belonging	4. Sense of belonging was experienced differentially at different levels across the institution.
<p>“In terms of the larger institution, I don’t feel like that’s as important to me just because we’re so big now. You just feel like kind of another cog in the machine most of the time.” -Annabelle</p>	Departmental sense of belonging	

<p>“What are the benefits to me now at 58 of getting tenure? ... Is it worth it, and is it going to reset my advancement clock? ... And I decided that I just didn’t want to put the work into it, and I talked with a lot of friends and I did some literature research, and tenure did not seem to be – especially in our department – that important. ... The only huge difference is they would give me a small work release for research. And I was thinking, “I’m already in a research group,” and I didn’t see how a three-credit release was going to be that big a deal in my life.” -Kourtney</p>	<p>Tenure as not that valuable</p>	<p>5. Tenure isn’t always perceived as creating job security, and it’s not always desirable.</p>
<p>“Quite frankly, tenure – what does it get you? Not much, really, and quite frankly, if they want to get rid of you, even though you’re tenured, they can. So, you know, they would have to give me as an RTA – I would have to have so many bad evaluations, and then they would have to give me a year’s notice.” -Krystal</p>	<p>Tenure as no guarantee of job security</p>	
<p>“So, I had to make a decision of how I was going to go from Point A to Point B, and the PhD path was about five or six years of schooling, where I really couldn’t run a business full-time. I had to go and teach and do nothing but school full-time. Have the money up front to do that, and have to get a personal loan in order to be able to do that. Then after six years, only then would I start really teaching. By that time I’d be 59 years old. ... The other routine was to do an MS routine, which is two years. I could do it full-time and work full-time. -Reg.</p>	<p>Decided not to pursue a terminal degree; chose a NTTF position over a TEF position</p>	
<p>“the New Faculty Academy, I think that’s what it’s called. My experience with that is fabulous. [The] Faculty Development Center does such a good job with it in terms of connecting people and motivating people, and I mean, they really, really bring the [this] University spirit to that New Faculty Academy. So, being part of that just kind of – you start drinking the purple Kool-Aid, as I like to say. It’s like, “Oh! I love [this] University. This is awesome.”” (Charlotte)</p>	<p>Faculty development center boosts sense of belonging</p>	<p>6. Participation in programming offered by the university-level faculty development center boosts sense of belonging.</p>

## **Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications**

Across the higher education sector, faculty in non-tenure track positions outnumber those in tenure-eligible positions two to one. Concern about the organizational commitment of this segment of the faculty pervades discussions about the future of higher education. At the same time, little is known about NTTF experiences. This mixed methods study investigated what contributes to and what detracts from affective organizational commitment in faculty members serving off the tenure track. Three research questions were posed:

1. What levels of organizational commitment do contingent faculty members exhibit?
2. What predicts the organizational commitment of contingent faculty members?
3. How do contingent faculty members understand and explain the development of their current level of organizational commitment?

The first two were addressed in the quantitative strand and the third was addressed in the qualitative strand. The integrated findings from the two strands of the study provide evidence that non-tenure track faculty members exhibit a range of desire to work for their institutions (AOC), and that both sense of belonging and teaching in a STEM discipline are positively associated with that desire. Further, six themes emerged from the integrated analysis of the qualitative data which further explain the quantitative findings and can be used to guide practice in higher education.

The results of the quantitative strand show that NTTF members exhibit varying levels of affective organizational commitment. Two predictors were significant; organizational sense of belonging and teaching in a STEM discipline are both positively correlated with

affective organizational commitment. None of the other variables reached significance in the regression analysis.

Interviewees were selected based on exhibiting the patterns identified during the quantitative analysis. Both those with a low affective organizational commitment and those with a high affective organizational commitment were included in the interview phase. Six themes resulted from the integrated analysis of the qualitative results informed by the quantitative findings. First, the integrated results provide evidence that non-tenure track faculty members are committed to students' learning and development. Next, policies and procedures that make a difference in NTTF sense of belonging vary greatly across academic units. Third, NTTF experiences suggest that interpersonal dynamics are both caused by and can result in structural inequities. Fourth, NTTF experienced a sense of belonging differently at multiple levels of the institution, ranging from small working group through academic unit to the broader university level. Fifth, tenure isn't always perceived as job security, and it's not always desirable. Lastly, engagement with a university-level faculty development center can boost sense of belonging at the university level in non-tenure track faculty members.

The following chapter discusses the implications of the findings for practice, offers recommendations based on the study results, and notes directions for future research. To begin, I address the danger of further exploitation of non-tenure track faculty members and I make the case for change based on three values—justice, sustainability, and excellence. I then discuss the implications of these research findings and make recommendations for practice. The final section includes directions for future research based on these findings.

### **The Case for Change: Justice, Sustainability, and Excellence**

The findings of this study show that NTTF members are committed to their students and those students' learning and development, and this study identifies factors that contribute to increasing that commitment. Before I offer recommendations to leverage these findings, I want to acknowledge the considerable evidence that faculty members who labor off the tenure track are vulnerable to exploitation (Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019; Shulman, 2019). The results of this study should not be used to justify further marginalization of already vulnerable NTTF members. Powerful institutions could exploit the predictors identified in this study to boost affective organizational commitment among these vulnerable workers without addressing the systemic issues that faculty members who labor off the tenure track face. To prevent this, any change to what constitutes 'faculty' in higher education needs to start from the understanding that NTTF members frequently do not get equitable treatment.

Beyond the argument for fairness, colleges and universities need to recognize that the faculty model that keeps NTTF members as second class citizens isn't sustainable. Even if the faculty members who fill the non-tenure track positions are willing to keep serving under these conditions, marginalizing 70% of the faculty workforce means that the remaining 30% have an even deeper pile of shared governance tasks. Given that non-tenure track faculty members already do much of the work of teaching that constitutes the core mission of higher education, higher education institutions benefit when this portion of the workforce is stable and sustainable. This happens when all faculty are fully integrated into the collegium, and when the faculty (collective) fulfills its key role in shared governance.



It is clear that the increasing use of non-tenure track faculty can't be said to present an existential threat to higher education; as noted in Chapter Two the trend of increased hiring off the tenure track has been remarked upon for nearly 35 years (Gappa, 1984; Gappa, 2000). The sky isn't falling, and some university presidents and board members might argue that hiring faculty off the tenure track saves money for institutions and provides maximum workforce flexibility. Additionally, do the conditions under which these faculty members labor really matter? If what this study found is true, that is, if non-tenure track faculty invest in their students' learning and development regardless of their commitment to their institution, why make any changes? Is the value of fairness more important than the benefits that universities and colleges get from the contingent labor of non-tenure track faculty under the current system? Further, isn't there an endless pipeline of qualified PhD's to replace NTTF members who get disillusioned and move on? To this point, my findings suggest that many non-tenure track faculty members actually possess a fairly high desire to work at their university or college; they don't fit the stereotype of the burned out adjunct. All of this suggests that despite some NTTF feeling like second class citizens, they can and do perform the work of teaching regardless of this marginalization.

Beyond the compelling justifications that justice and sustainability provide for addressing the labor conditions of non-tenure track faculty members, there is a case to be made for excellence. The valuable expertise of this substantial majority of the workforce is being underutilized when conditions threaten to make them feel like second-class citizens. Healthy organizations leverage the totality of their human capital, but the two-tier faculty structure effectively ignores significant human capital in the form of NTTF

expertise and abilities. Birnbaum (2004) notes that increasing the role of faculty in shared governance increases social capital. This is important because social capital increases trust and cooperation, and also because this improves the “effective influence” of an institution’s leaders (p. 14). Ultimately integrating the collegium both allows individual faculty members to perform better, but it also makes both those individuals and the institution as a whole easier to lead.

I would argue that all change should not be driven by crisis management. Good leadership looks past crisis to invest in continued improvement. This kind of change in a higher education context is what Buller calls interactive change. Buller argues that internal pressures can create circumstances that warrant action, even if a clear and present danger has not presented itself. Leading interactive change is about creating the best, most creative, and most effective institutions possible to serve stakeholders. Improving the integration and function of the collegium may not be essential for survival, but it can make the difference between a good university and a truly great one. It can also provide a competitive advantage to universities that make the effort. Better integrating NTTF into the collegium has the potential substantially improve the campus workplace. Instead of struggling to fill positions in key areas, universities and colleges that engage in this work may find they have created a campus culture that brings faculty applicants flocking to their institutions.

My findings bolster the literature’s evidence that a substantial majority of higher education’s key workers are at risk of feeling like second class citizens. Further, these employees have pointed to key ways that they are excluded from full participation in, and hence, excluded from full contribution to their institutions. Faculty members, and the

faculty (as a collective) are a vital part of a vibrant learning community on campus. The professional authority of faculty (individual and collective) complements the administrative authority vested in the institutional hierarchy (i.e., the president, provost, and board members). Higher education is unique as an organizational type because of the interaction of these dual sources of authority. Hence full faculty participation in shared governance via that professional expertise is key to effective colleges and universities. Leaders who understand that will grasp that improving the collegium through better integrating non-tenure track faculty members has the potential to make all faculty, both non-tenure track and those who are tenure-eligible, easier to lead. It also frees up these key employees to contribute to the institution in their best, most passionate, and most creative ways. Challenging the two-tier faculty system isn't about survival; it's about excellence.

Harris (2012) argues that high performance leaders create the best working conditions for their employees, and fully utilize those employees' talents and skills. "The high performance organization emphasizes... workers as assets to be fully used and developed ... [and] avoids...underutilizing, manipulating, and exploiting employees." (Harris, 2012, p 53). Like Buller, Harris argues that good leadership is about creating excitement, allowing creativity to flow, and leveraging workers' passion to improve the organization. "Leaders in high performance management create a corporate culture that excites people and makes work both joyful and productive" (p 53). While faculty may resist being referred to as 'employees' because of fears that 'corporate culture' might erode the unique values of the collegium, treating NTTF as second class citizens does precisely that which they fear. Harris's model of high performance leadership makes the

opposite case—that all employees need to be empowered to contribute creatively and effectively, to their full abilities. This case for improving the conditions under which NTTF labor is the case for creating an improved workplace and allowing workers to excel. "By bringing these faculty members into the academic governance and culture of the institution, they will become active contributing members instead of being kept on the sidelines as second-class citizens" (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013, p. 326).

Discussing the conditions under which NTTF labor sometimes seems to plunge us into a minutiae of bureaucratic details that seem far removed from the concerns of the vast majority of university stakeholders. Why should students and their parents care who gets invited to the faculty book club? How is creating transparency in how the titles “lecturer” and “instructor” get assigned going to change the life of a college freshman? But the lives and livelihoods of NTTF have a direct impact on how good institutions of higher education are at fulfilling their core missions of teaching and learning. Policymakers and leaders in higher education need to understand the key role that NTTF play in meeting their institutional mission. Further, these leaders should leverage the mission, vision, and values of the university to create the momentum needed to affect the policy changes that will impact the opportunities that NTTF have to fully contribute.

In conclusion, there is a case to be made for further integrating NTTF members into the collegium from the perspective of justice and sustainability, but the case for excellence is even more compelling. The discussion below is offered with these considerations in mind.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

This section addresses the implications of these findings and makes recommendations for practice. First, I discuss the underlying causes of the persistent sense of a two-tier faculty, as well as the potential consequences of this splintered collegium for the project of higher education broadly. Leaders in higher education must draw on models of “the faculty” that more accurately represent the experiences of faculty members both on and off the tenure track as they strategize for the future of higher education. Next, this study’s findings regarding non-tenure track faculty members’ commitment to student learning and development is considered. What are the implications of the fact that non-tenure track faculty members prioritize student learning? While NTTF are not poor teachers because they serve off the tenure track, they may face additional barriers to faculty development because of their position type. What’s more, engagement with a university-wide faculty development center was described by interviewees as promoting their sense of belonging. Strategies for increasing and enhancing NTTF engagement with FDCs are discussed. Third, recommendations for creating and maintaining a fully functional collegium are discussed, including addressing policies and procedures that create and maintain the two-tier faculty. Pursuit of equity and transparency in the assignment of job responsibilities, titles, and compensation, along with the issues of performance evaluation and job security are discussed. Recommendations for creating and implementing career pathways for faculty off the tenure track are reviewed. Lastly, policies that can encourage participation in shared governance by NTTF members are considered.

### **Rejecting Deficit Narratives: Building a Fully Integrated Collegium**

Discussions about faculty working off the tenure track tend to emphasize particular narratives—the story of the underpaid adjunct teaching at multiple campuses all the while lacking job security, advancement opportunities, sufficient compensation, and maybe even material resources like a desk or computer crops up next to the tale of how faculty members without tenure cannot be trusted to have the best interests of their students or college at heart (Charfauros & Tierney, 1999; Kezar & Sam, 2010). These narratives reflect a deficit approach to understanding faculty who serve off the tenure track (Kezar & Sam, 2011), and they depend on models of both individual faculty members and the faculty collective that don't correspond to the reality my subjects described.

The findings of this study suggest that non-tenure track faculty have experiences that are far more wide-ranging and complex than the exploited adjunct tale or the dispirited, mediocre lecturer. While there is evidence that NTTF face disparities in areas like compensation and promotion, the findings of this study suggest that other factors also significantly impact the experiences of non-tenure track faculty. Most importantly, this study provides evidence that regardless of their commitment to their department or their institution, NTTF members are deeply committed to their students and their teaching, a reality that is missing in these dominant narratives.

My findings support the idea that the number of narratives needed to capture the experiences of non-tenure track faculty members is vast. There are the many part-time faculty who prefer to only teach a class or two because they currently have other employment, have/had a primary career/identification outside higher education, or have

chosen not to get a terminal degree; there are the huge number of full-time non-tenure track faculty members with stable long-term positions focused on teaching who do not aspire to enter the tenure rat race; there are aspiring academics who labor to make themselves indispensable to their departments; and there are endless combinations of these narratives. These stories matter because our mental model of what constitutes a ‘faculty member’ impacts how we think higher education works, how we think it should work, and what changes we recommend. Working from the assumption that NTTF are a homogenous group makes it easier for leaders in higher education to dismiss both the needs of this substantial majority of the faculty workforce, but also the potential contributions that these professionals could be making. More research needs to be done to understand which mental models are being drawn on as leaders in higher education make policy, and how those models compare to the realities on the ground at our institutions.

My study also found that interpersonal dynamics of social relationships aren’t just interpersonal. My interviewees said that they *feel* like second-class citizens, but they also went on to point out how various policies and procedures *position* them as second-class citizens. This insight points to an underlying truth about the way the academy works. Preserving the tenure-eligible faculty model at universities and colleges is a deliberate strategy embedded in the very nature of higher education; that is to say that non-tenure track faculty members are *intentionally* excluded from the collegium by the very nature of higher education itself. As a type of organization, postsecondary institutions are distinct from other types of endeavors; one of those distinctions comes from the centrality of the collegium. The faculty, as a collective noun, is a unique institution. The authority derived from faculty expertise complements administrative authority to create a specific

model of shared governance unique to higher education (Birnbaum & Edelson, 1989).

Due to the power of faculty expertise and the authority it confers, access to that authority is jealously guarded by the structure of higher education. In other words, it's hard to get into the collegium by design—gatekeeping is part of the structure.

The two-tier faculty structure described by my interviewees is not a side effect of this gatekeeping; it's the point. The collegium is deliberately designed to be hard to get into. However, it could be argued that the creation of a permanent underclass that outnumbers tenure-eligible faculty two to one (across the sector as a whole) undermines, rather than serves, the broader missions of the academy. While the gatekeeping itself may be intended, having 70% of faculty serving in long-term positions where they may come to feel like second-class citizens could actually undermine the very faculty authority that the gatekeeping is designed to protect.

The core of our model of “the faculty” (collective), or the collegium, is constituted by the group of tenure-eligible faculty members in Humboldtian positions focused on research, teaching, and service (usually in this order of importance). Yet this expectation doesn't capture the reality that this core group is shrinking and today 70% of faculty members don't occupy these types of positions. When our working model of what constitutes ‘faculty’ doesn't include those faculty members who serve in non-tenure track positions, when in fact this group constitutes the majority of all faculty, higher education leaders and public stakeholders risk building strategic decisions on the wrong foundation. The increasing proportion of non-tenure track positions is not new; it's been written about for more than thirty years. Yet despite this important change in the makeup of the collegium, we continue to plan using mental models that don't accurately reflect this



trend. It is vital that higher education establish a new way of talking about, and thinking about, individual faculty members and the collective faculty in a way that reflects the on the ground conditions experienced by non-tenure track faculty members and their tenure-eligible peers.

Leaders in higher education need to radically rethink how to preserve the authority of faculty expertise and its role in shared governance while simultaneously meeting the fiscal and flexibility needs of their institutions that are served by the increase in faculty hiring off the tenure track. Some of the ways to better integrate non-tenure track faculty members into the collegium were suggested by my interviewees and are discussed at length below, but these specifics do not add up to the monumental shift in vision required by this challenge. Before I present specific recommendations that may be adopted by institutions, I discuss the broader implications of these trends to the project of higher education writ large.

### **Challenging the Role of the Academy: Academic Freedom, Knowledge Creation, and Service**

I acknowledge that the incremental changes recommended in the following sections, while important, do not address the broader challenges that the NTTF hiring trend presents to the project of higher education. Dismantling tenure is not a change that should be made lightly. While the evidence presented by the NTTF hiring trend suggests that massive changes to implementation of the tenure system are already underway, these ongoing changes make it even more imperative that leaders re-envision tenure with careful consideration of the purpose of the academy (Frye, 2017; Kezar, 2012). Tenure addresses broader issues that are important to society, such as academic freedom and the

role of the academy in knowledge creation and service. These issues were not addressed by the individual faculty members that I interviewed. This may be because they weren't experienced by these particular individuals, but may also be due to the fact that they are issues of concern for the collective faculty. However, consideration of these concerns is vital when developing a new strategic approach to this challenge.

The academic freedom bolstered by the tenure system is designed to cushion individual faculty members, and the faculty as a collective, from the whims of political or popular opinion, ensuring research and teaching around difficult or controversial topics can continue at the highest level. Even if we could instantly solve all of the other difficulties facing faculty members off the tenure track (for example, provide equitable compensation, improve job security, create pathways for promotion, boost opportunities for participation in shared governance, etc.), NTTF will continue to be vulnerable to violations of academic freedom. This is a key concern for leaders as they plan for the future of the academy in an age of increasing non-tenure track appointments.

The other important societal consideration is the role of the academy in knowledge creation and in service to the community. Since NTTF positions largely concentrate on teaching, what effect will the trend away from tenure-eligible positions have on research and service in higher education? This study found that some NTTF already conduct research. Further, the faculty members I interviewed work at an institution that is teaching-focused; most of them were happy to prioritize teaching over research. But regardless of how happy individual NTTF members are with their job responsibilities, the question remains— if most faculty members work off the tenure track, will this diminish the role of higher education in research and knowledge creation?

Does the academy need to reconsider how to incentivize, and compensate, the vital work of knowledge creation and community service? These are questions that, though decidedly beyond the scope of my study, bear consideration when calling for a radical re-envisioning of the way tenure and the collegium function. This research did not address the question of how to replace the tenure system, but its findings must be considered in light of these big picture questions facing the academy.

### **The Most Important Commitment**

One of the first steps in building new models of individual and collective faculty is to reject the deficit approach to understanding those who serve off the tenure track. If the primary responsibilities of non-tenure track faculty members are teaching, then the commitment of those faculty members to their students is arguably the most valuable organizational commitment they could hold. My findings provide evidence that non-tenure track faculty members have this commitment. As an adjunct faculty member myself and someone who has worked in higher education for most of my career, this finding is not a surprise to me. Each of the faculty members that I talked to for this study described helping students grow and learn as the most important part of their jobs. When I asked Rebecca (who actually scored below average on affective organizational commitment) about whether she valued opportunities to be promoted and had those opportunities, she answered: “The opportunity to develop the intro course—the chance to teach even more students this vital material—that’s the only promotion that matters to me!” As the evidence in this study presents suggests, instead of lacking in commitment NTTF exhibit extraordinary investment in their teaching, their students, and their institutions.

**Access to Faculty Development for NTTF Members.** Are there bad teachers among those faculty who work off the tenure track? Surely, just as there are among tenure-eligible faculty. And NTTF members may face barriers to improving their teaching abilities that their TEF peers do not. Even when NTTF are not underemployed, the structure of their positions may make professional development, whether for teaching improvement or for disciplinary development or for both, inaccessible. A practicing medical doctor who teaches one course a year may lack the time to attend faculty development workshops on high impact practices. A full-time NTTF member with a one-year contract may use all of his extra time trying to secure a position for the following year, giving him little time to pursue the latest developments in his discipline. An adjunct dependent on her NTT income may not be able to spend her free time attending uncompensated faculty development programming. These structural barriers do matter, but my findings suggest that NTTF aren't bad teachers just because they are working off the tenure track; NTTF members care about their students' learning and development.

Access to faculty development center programming is one way to facilitate improvement in teaching, and my study suggests that it may offer other advantages. Although engagement with the university-wide faculty development did not achieve statistical significance on its own in the regression analysis, interviewees noted the university's center for faculty development as a force to boost their sense of belonging at the university level. In particular faculty members mentioned that programs serving new faculty (e.g., the fall orientation, a year-long mentoring program for new faculty) boosted their feelings of integration into the collegium and the institution as a whole.

First, faculty development programming should be made available to NTTF faculty (as it should be available for their tenure-eligible peers). This should include both teaching improvement programming and discipline development opportunities, because both impact student learning and development.

Once the programming is available, ways to make it accessible to NTTF need to be explored. Universities, and academic units, should consider ways to compensate NTTF who participate in faculty development center programming. A small hourly stipend could enable part-time faculty to participate. A fund, administered at the university level by the FDC or at the level of the College or Department, could be accessible by application. Funds could be awarded by criteria that target NTTF most in need of teaching improvement, perhaps by asking applying faculty to include evidence from their end of term student evaluations.

Other ways to incentivize participation in faculty development center programming should be considered. A pool of guest lecturers could be established for particular courses to enable faculty members to take time away from their scheduled teaching to attend a faculty development workshop on topics particularly relevant to their discipline; e.g. a workshop on using team-based learning in the general education classroom. NTTF members could receive credit in their annual evaluations for participation in activities to improve their teaching.

It is notable that this study found that NTTF members named the FDC as a place where they made connections across campus and developed working relationships with other faculty members. Universities should not underestimate the power of FDCs as a university-level initiative that can build the integrated collegium. Given the

decentralization that is a factor in any intervention in higher education, university-level FDCs offer a powerful institution-level lever to facilitate change.

### **Creating a Fully Integrated Collegium**

The idea of a fully functional ‘faculty’ is at the core of the mission of the higher education endeavor. If we continue to allow the collegium to splinter the way it has with the creation of the new faculty majority, we endanger the core nature of higher education. While we cannot convert every non-tenure track position to a tenure-eligible position (nor would those serving off the tenure track want us to), my findings suggest that there are strategies that can reduce the experience of non-tenure track faculty members as “second class citizens.” Interviewees experienced a range of conditions that they described as contributing to or detracting from their sense of belonging. These experiences can inform strategies to improve the integration of non-tenure track faculty into their departments, as well as into their universities more broadly.

**Addressing Conditions that Marginalize NTTF.** Interviewees enumerated policies and procedures that contributed to their sense of a two-tier faculty. Recommendations that arise from their experiences are discussed below in the context of the extant literature, including ensuring access to material resources, assigning job responsibilities, titles, and compensation in equitable and transparent ways, developing career and promotion pathways, and enabling participation in shared governance. It is important to note that the decentralized nature of higher education means that many of the key conditions that impact NTTF experiences cannot be easily remedied by a central authority. While presidents and boards do wield positional authority in shaping policy at the university level, many of the policies and procedures that most profoundly affect the

lives and livelihoods of faculty members are determined by, and implemented within, smaller academic units (e.g., departments, schools, and colleges). Attention must be paid to the policy context at both the institutional level and at the various levels of academic governance. To make any recommendations at all requires a degree of generalization, and implementation will require consideration of the specific institutional context where the change is taking place. The way these recommendations can be implemented at a particular university will vary based on the specifics of that context. In addition, a high degree of coordination between the various levels at the institution will be required in order to effectively implement change within the decentralized systems that characterize institutions of higher education.

While discussions of leadership often focus on what executive leaders can do, a core feature of shared governance is that individual faculty members can and do exert leadership influence. Among faculty members, department chairs can substantively influence the experiences of NTTF, both in terms of their influence on policies and procedures and for their impact on the interpersonal interactions that take place in their academic unit. These key faculty leaders can personally email part-time faculty to request input when the general education courses that they teach are going to be redesigned. They can schedule departmental committee meetings when NTTF can easily attend, or they can shift these meetings to videoconferences to encourage broader participation. They can mentor NTTF members throughout their careers, and they can initiate proposals to create promotion pathways. Given the dual authority and loose coupling which characterize higher education, my findings should be leveraged by both executive leadership and departmental faculty leaders to create change.

***Conduct a Self-study Across the Institution and Incentivize Change.*** To that end, my first recommendation is that institutions undertake self-study to understand what policies and procedures are currently in place at the department level. For each of the areas addressed below, do you know what is happening in each department across your institution? Given the range of conditions described by my interviewees at just one institution, it's important to understand the specific context for each academic unit across the whole of the institution. A survey conducted at the level of the individual academic unit allows identification of specific departments where issues may exist. Knowing what conditions NTTF members currently experience is a prerequisite to creating change.

University-level leaders (president and board) cannot mandate change within academic units, but they can take actions which incentivize it. Departments that evidence effective policies can be highlighted in communication with academic unit heads and other faculty leaders (e.g., faculty senate). Unit-level funding can be tied to progress on key policies and procedures. Key issues impacting NTTF members can be integrated into the mission and vision promoted by the institutional president, and into key initiatives. Academic unit heads (e.g., deans and department chairs) can be encouraged to introduce initiatives that improve conditions for NTTF in their areas and rewarded/recognized for doing so.

***Access to Material Resources.*** Only a few interviewees noted issues with material resources such as office space or access to equipment. This did not emerge as a major theme for this study, perhaps because these material resources are in good supply at this institution. Nonetheless, it's reasonable that lack of access to material resources would impact NTTF experiences, and the literature suggests that this is a problem at some



institutions. Having a suitable office, the necessary computer and lab equipment, and access to email and other software have an effect on the campus climate experienced by NTTF members. Like the policies that govern promotion opportunities, poor access to material resources can make NTTF *feel* like second-class citizens, while at the same time *making* them second-class citizens. Understanding if there are any issues with access to material resources is one important area for the proposed self study.

***Assignment of Job Responsibilities, Titles, and Compensation.*** Job titles and responsibilities, along with accompanying compensation, need to be designed in an equitable fashion and implemented transparently. The most damaging condition noted by interviewees was the haphazard assignment of titles, responsibilities, and accompanying compensation. Several NTTF members noted that a range of job titles were used for individuals who performed essentially the same exact duties, with no logic behind their assignment. Not only the lack of a career pathway (addressed in the next section) but also the lack of transparency in this implementation bothered my interviewees. Did people get the better title and compensation because they were well connected? Or was it merely random?

These unit-level conditions are impacted by unit-level policy and also by the institutional policy context, but they may also be limited by regulations set on a much larger stage. In the case of the public university studied here, state level regulations governed the assignment of titles and potential compensation. Just how much each of these policy contexts impacts the outcome will differ for each institution. Understanding the conditions faced at the unit-level across the institution is an important part of the self-

study, but this understanding will require an analysis of the policy context at various levels.

***Development of Career and Promotion Pathways.*** Pathways for promotion and advancement are important to non-tenure track faculty members. This is an area noted by all interviewees, and the range of conditions they experienced was wide. In some academic units, NTTF members described having the opportunity to convert their position to a tenure-eligible position when they earned a terminal degree. For interviewees in other units, no possibility of a tenure-eligible position existed regardless of their commitment or efforts. A similarly wide range of policies existed on promotion pathways. Some described a flat hierarchy with no options for advancement. Others noted regular opportunities for promotion that mirrored tenure-eligible opportunities, a system which allowed rank to function independently of the tenure process. Without exception, my interviewees described opportunities for regular promotion as a factor that boosted their sense of belonging. Faculty members are professionals the success of whose efforts depend, in part, on recognition of their expertise and the authority it generates. Promotion pathways are an important way to incentivize excellent performance, but they also *constitute* that performance.

An integral part of these pathways is the evaluation process. Interviewees described a range of experiences, from a clear and transparent evaluation process tied to their promotion opportunities to no evaluation at all to being informed of the annual evaluation process in the middle of the spring semester, only months before the required materials were due. Establishing an evaluation process that empowers improvement requires that faculty members are well-informed about the process, and that the process

itself is clearly tied to both their job responsibilities and their opportunities for advancement.

It is important to recognize that the markers for advancement may be different for NTTF members than they are for tenure-eligible positions. If NTT positions don't compensate research activities, valid pathways for promotion cannot require evidence of research activities. Exactly what the promotion pathways will look like for NTT positions will vary based on discipline, position description, and institution. Research exists on developing faculty reward models that can support strong teaching. One example is Diamond's 1993 survey of 47 campuses that found that stakeholders at all levels (faculty, chairs, deans, and central administrators) supported implementing these kinds of efforts. The findings of my study, conducted at just one institution, suggest that viable models are already being utilized within some units. More research on these options is needed for institutions (and their individual academic departments) to draw on to inform the development of effective policies and procedures. This is yet another area where the institution-wide self-study can provide valuable guidance.

***Shared Governance: Committee Service, Departmental Meetings, Etc.*** In addition to their experiences as individual employees, non-tenure track faculty members described how their opportunities to contribute to the growth and development of their programs and departments, as well as the university as a whole, contributed to and detracted from their sense of belonging. Department level committee service was noted as important for many of my interviewees, and limitations on their participation decreased sense of belonging. In particular, opportunities to serve on and/or lead

promotion and tenure committees (known as PAC at this institution) were identified as key to full integration into the collegium.

Two other specific shared governance practices were identified during my study. Participation in departmental meetings was uneven across units, and NTTF members who were excluded from full participation found this detracted from their sense of belonging. An adjunct interviewee noted that the process of selecting courses to be taught each semester prioritized tenure-eligible faculty members over part-timers, regardless of length of service or rank. Like committee service, departmental meetings are part of the shared governance role that the collegium performs. NTTF positions are often less costly for the institution because they do not include these service responsibilities. Yet this comes at a cost both for the collegium as well as for individual faculty members—as the number of tenure-eligible faculty members performing these duties decreases, the service load on each of the TEF members individually increases. The long-term implications of this practice on the institution’s mission, as well as on the collegium, needs to be carefully considered.

Part-time faculty hired on a semester by semester basis present a particular challenge. Generally paid by the course, their duties frequently include none of the shared governance responsibilities. Arguing that they are cheaper to employ requires the false economy of obscuring this shift in workload to full-time members of the collegium. The solution isn’t as simple as requiring part-time instructors to attend the weekly departmental meeting; adding unfunded mandates isn’t going to improve the integration of part-time faculty. Simply saying, as Monique pointed out, “You’re just an adjunct,” does not address the issues that this exclusion presents to the collective faculty, nor does

it get the work of shared governance accomplished. Creative ways to compensate and incentivize their participation should be considered. If a rotating adjunct representative is compensated to represent the part-time faculty at departmental meetings throughout the academic year, it could close the communication gap, move the needle on fully utilizing the talents and expertise of part-time faculty members, and boost NTTF members sense of belonging.

During the self-study, institutions should identify academic units that enact policies that integrate NTTF into unit-level committee service, as well as those who exclude NTTF members. Units with effective policies should be leveraged as examples for those where progress needs to be made. Models that work need to be identified, cultivated, and disseminated widely both within and across institutions. A recognition that shared governance work is just that—necessary labor that needs to be assigned fairly in order to be achieved—is vital to making progress in this area of NTTF integration into the collegium as a whole.

### **Directions for Future Research**

These findings suggest areas where additional research is needed. Discussed below are four directions for future research indicated these results.

The empirical research on organizational commitment in faculty is limited. My findings suggest that the most important types of organizational commitment in faculty members may not be adequately captured by the existing concepts and instruments. The faculty members studied here each identified an investment in their students and those students' learning. This occurred regardless of how much of a desire they had to work for their institution—this finding persisted across faculty with organizational commitment

scores at all levels. This suggests that the concept of affective organizational commitment, and the instruments available to measure it, may not capture the most important commitment that non-tenure track faculty make – the one to their students. Additional refinement of the concepts associated with organizational commitment, and the instruments used to measure these commitments, are needed to understand the NTTF experience.

Developing instruments to measure the level of that commitment, and consequently the factors that contribute to and detract from that commitment, is a key area for future research. Measuring the concept we could call “teaching commitment” or “student commitment” requires survey items that ask about faculty desire to work with students, about the time faculty invest in various student-focused activities, and about the factors which detract from engaging with student learning and growth. Further investigation is needed to develop accurate models of the types of commitment that matter for these vital higher education employees.

More research needs to be done to investigate NTTF experiences across different types of institutions, of different sizes, and with different missions. While this study focused on a teaching intensive public university, follow up at research institutions and other types of institutions is needed. The range of NTTF experiences at just this one institution suggests that even more variety is likely across institutional types. To understand how NTTF experience campus life and commit to their students and institutions, investigation across different size institutions with different missions is required.

What we know about where and when the various policies and procedures that shape non-tenure track faculty appointments are currently being used is minimal. These findings suggest that even at the same institution, a great deal of variation can be seen in how issues like the assignment of job titles and responsibilities, processes for performance evaluation, opportunities for promotion, and opportunities for shared governance are handled. More empirical research is needed to even understand the range of what is currently being implemented, not to mention the way that implementation impacts the experiences of non-tenure track faculty members. Further, the impacts of these practices on the division of labor within the collegium needs to be better understood in order to inform strategic decision-making by university and faculty leaders.

Sense of belonging can be experienced at different levels of campus. Which is the most important level for faculty off the tenure track to feel a sense of belonging? More research is needed to understand how these different levels of sense of belonging impact faculty commitment, as well as what factors influence sense of belonging at multiple levels. The differentiation between sense of belonging at different levels and within different groups across the institution that emerged during the qualitative strand is notable. Interviewees noted nuances that were not captured by the instrument used to measure these concepts. For example, some pointed out that they felt part of their small teaching group but felt excluded from their academic unit, a distinction that is absent in the concept of organizational sense of belonging that was employed in this study. The concept itself, and the scale used to measure it, was not designed specifically for a higher education context. The final integrated results of the study indicate that the concept of organizational sense of belonging needs to be further refined to investigate how non-

tenure track faculty experience campus climate. Development is needed to understand on what level/s faculty members feel that they belong, as well as what level is most important for them to belong in order to experience organizational commitment. Decentralization is a characteristic of higher education (Birnbaum & Edelson, 1989; Campbell & O'Meara, 2014). Understanding at what level (or levels) we can most effectively impact faculty sense of belonging is a crucial piece of the puzzle for putting these findings into practice.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study risk being utilized to further exploit faculty who face structural, material, and social barriers to equity within their profession. With that in mind, what are the takeaways from this study?

Postsecondary scholars, leaders, and stakeholders need to stop assuming that non-tenure track faculty are less committed to teaching and learning than their tenure eligible peers. The evidence in this study suggests that, regardless of race, gender, age, duration of appointment, possession of a terminal degree, dependence on non-tenure track income, and/or level of underemployment, non-tenure track faculty members who feel like they belong are strongly committed to working for their institution. Further, even those who feel like outsiders (either at the departmental level or at the institutional level) still commit to their students' learning and development. Instead of approaching non-tenure track appointments with an assumption that those appointments and the faculty who fill them are inferior, institutions of higher learning need to start appreciating what they contribute to the university's core mission.



Next, higher education leaders need to understand that when the collegium is broken (that is, when structural factors or interpersonal relationships serve as barriers to full participation by non-tenure track faculty members), it takes a toll on those individual faculty members and on the ‘faculty’ as a whole. If colleges and universities are going to rely on NTTF members to do a large portion of the university’s core mission of teaching and learning, higher education leaders have to make sure those members feel fully a part of their institutions across multiple levels—working group, department, college, and university-wide. This is going to require attention to material conditions such as equipment, office space, and compensation when these things are inequitable. But even when these material inequalities don’t persist (or can’t easily be remedied), the faculty members in this study have identified a range of other factors that can increase their sense of belonging. When all faculty are invited to social and enrichment activities (like a faculty book club), it boosts sense of belonging. When committee membership is assigned in a transparent and fair fashion, it boosts sense of belonging. When leadership opportunities are accessible to NTTF members, it boosts sense of belonging. More importantly than the impact on how these individual faculty members *feel* is the fact that such changes can empower the faculty as a collective to do its best work. Creating the conditions that foster an integrated and fully function collegium is critical to a sustainable future for higher education, but it’s also key to creating the best possible colleges and universities we can. Integration of non-tenure track faculty members into the collegium allows both campus administrators and faculty leaders to more fully leverage the value of this vital faculty workforce.

## Appendix A

### Survey Items

Please indicate your appointment type:

- ☐ Full-time non-tenure track faculty member
- ☐ Part-time non-tenure track faculty member

Drag the slider to indicate how many years you have been in any type of non-tenure track faculty position.

0      5      10      15      20      25      30

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years



Which choice below best fits your desired type of appointment?

- ☐ I would prefer not to be working as a faculty member at all.
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time non-tenure track
- ☐ Full-time tenure eligible

Do you have primary employment other than your non-tenure track faculty position?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Do you consider yourself the head of household (primary breadwinner)?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Please indicate which best represents your perspective for each of the 8 items below.

	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career at this college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy discussing my college with people outside of it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really feel as if this college's problems are my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think I could easily become as attached to another college as I am to this one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel "a member of the family" at this college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This college has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not have a strong sense of belonging to this college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How engaged are you with the university's center for faculty development?

	Not at all engaged	Slightly engaged	Somewhat engaged	Moderately engaged	Very engaged
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate which best represents your perspective for each of the fifteen items below.

	Never true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Always true
I feel like I fit in with other faculty in my department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty I work with in my department see me as a competent person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others in my department offer to help me when they sense I need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I receive sufficient feedback about my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I receive support from other faculty in my department when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the faculty I work with in my department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel discriminated against in my department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a faculty member in my department, I feel like an outsider.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others in my department ask for my ideas or opinions about different matters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel understood by others in my department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable contacting my department chair if I have the need to do so.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty I work with in my department accept me when I am just being myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I approach a group of faculty coworkers, I feel welcomed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the level of supervision I receive as a faculty member.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I view my department as a place to experience a sense of belonging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you teach in a STEM discipline?

☐ yes

☐ no

Please indicate how you identify:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you identify:

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ White

☐ African American or Black

☐ Native American

☐ Latinx

Please indicate how you identify:

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Heterosexual

☐ Gay

☐ Lesbian

☐ Bisexual

Drag the slider to indicate your age.

	20	30	40	50	60	70	80
Age							

Please indicate your highest degree earned.

- ☐ Undergraduate degree
- ☐ Terminal Master's degree (MFA, MLS)
- ☐ Other Master's degree
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

As noted above, I will be conducting ~30 minute interviews in the next phase of this research. If you are willing to be contacted for a follow up interview in the next phase of research, please enter your email.

- ☐ Email \_\_\_\_\_

All participants who complete the survey may enter the drawing for a VISA gift card: two \$50 gift cards and four \$25 gift cards will be sent via campus mail to 6 respondents drawn at random. To keep the raffle separate from any identifying information, please click on this link to enter your name and MSC.

Thank you so much for your participation! Your effort is valued by me, and hopefully this research will lead to findings that can be used to improve conditions for non-tenure track faculty at our institution.

Best,

Melissa Altman

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