

# A Descriptive Case Study Of The Organization-Based Self-Esteem, Institutional Belongingness, And Career Development Opportunities Of Adjunct Faculty At A Small Northeastern College

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## Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate and describe the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities of adjunct faculty members at a competitive liberal arts college in northeastern Massachusetts. Colleges and universities have assiduously used part-time faculty to deliver courses that require a specialized and intimate understanding of a certain topic or subject area. Often times these part-time faculty have held other full-time jobs and accepted the work for reasons other than financial remuneration (Leslie, 1998; Nelson, 1997). There are some differences between the duties and responsibilities of adjunct faculty members and full-time faculty members. Still, adjunct faculty members are treated differently than their full-time counterparts regardless of research that has shown no significant difference in the quality of teaching delivered to students by either adjunct faculty members or full-time faculty members (Carol, 2003; Elman, 2002; Klein, & Weisman, 1996; Van Arsdale, 1978).

Over the past 25 years, colleges and universities in the United States have engaged in the managerial practices of reengineering and downsizing in an effort to reduce costs (Champy, 1995). This was accomplished primarily by the substantial increase in the reliance on adjunct faculty members to teach those introductory courses that form the foundations of disparate subjects that full-time faculty do not want to teach (Sonner, 2000). This has also transpired in part due to adjunct faculty offering institutions “fine wine at discount prices. . . and our money goes farther than when we put it all in to full-time faculty. Furthermore, we can “pour it down the drain” if they have any flaws at all” (Gappa, 1993. p. 141).

Many adjunct faculty members are treated differently from full-time faculty members for a variety of reasons (Arden, 1989; Biles, & Tuckman, 1986; Dubson, 2001; Fulton, 2000). This differential treatment may lead to detrimental outcomes for those adjunct faculty members as indicated by the theoretical constructs of organization-based self-esteem, social learning, and social ecology. These three perspectives have indicated that the course of human development is a lifelong process that involves individual experiences, interactions, and interpretations as well as interaction with varying environmental conditions (Bandura, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Korman, 1976; Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989).

The significance of the workplace in providing opportunities for these types of interactions and interpretations is great. This is due to the central role work plays in a society's various cultures. Paid work, in particular, is pivotal to an individual's sense of self-worth and efficacy in that it "must be understood not merely as a vital economic organ, but also as a central social institution" (Jahoda, 1982, p. 61). Gill (1999), echoing Jahoda's position, writes that "the workplace is now the sole institution capable of satisfying the psychological needs that are deemed essential to individual well-being"(p. 727).

The workplace for many adjunct faculty members is structured in such a way that many individuals may be denied opportunities for establishing organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), institutional belongingness, and career development. Reasons for this include their being isolated, disconnected, and ostracized from each other, supervisors, and the institution writ large (Hallowell, 1999; Pierce et al., 1989; Vega, & Brennan, 2000).

### Background of the Problem

The medieval notion of a guild formation being embraced and strengthened by a sense of community and concern for its members well being and development no longer holds true in

most colleges and universities (Leslie, 1998; Nelson, 1997). Traditional institutions of higher learning no longer represent “a community of scholars dedicated to disinterested inquiry and intense intellectual dialogue” (Nelson, 1997, p. 188). Instead, these institutions represent what Aronowitz (Aronowitz, as quoted in Nelson, 1997) called “knowledge factories . . . that contribute significantly to the local economy, and perhaps most of all, aging vats for a considerable fraction of the labor force” (p. 188). A corporate model of profit motivated organizational growth, the necessity of operational efficiency via conservative fiduciary practices, and “ferocious, unrelenting competition for the customer’s approval” (Champy, 1995, p. 20) replaced much of the communal structure of academia’s past.

This shift in operational strategy has contributed to the increased utilization of adjunct faculty. Shumar (1997) wrote:

This fact was only beginning to be felt by the late sixties, because the powerful image of a “community of scholars” successfully concealed vast infrastructure changes that only came to light during the social and political ruptures of the 1960’s and 1970’s. . . .The managerial class of higher education experts became the majority voice in higher education. Of the two levels of corporate control in the university (the direct wielding power of the president and board of trustees is the primary one) the second, and more obvious, is in the dominant ubiquitous imagery of corporate structure. The corporate mentality frames all problems as instrumental issues, effectively silencing non-corporate voices and alienating faculty from the process of decision-making and problem solving. (p. 72)

The perspective offered by Shumar (1997) suggests that this “community of scholars” exists now as only a part of the nostalgic theme of college and university recruitment materials. At the same time much evidence suggests that little community exists within colleges and universities and the exploitation and social isolation of adjunct faculty members has increased (Gappa, 1993; Nelson, 1997; Robert, 1990; Rosenblum, & Rosenblum, 1990; Shumar, 1997; Van Arsdale, 1978).

These changes resulted, in part, from the adoption of the ideological model of the “large corporation operating in the name of rising costs compared to declining or stagnant revenues

while at the same time using budget cuts to effect a decisive power shift from faculty to administration” (Nelson, 1997, p. 198). The transformation from the community of scholars has been facilitated, quite clearly, by the cost-effective utilization of the growing pool of adjunct faculty members that were the “unrecognized, under-rewarded, and invisible part of the academic profession” (Gappa, 1993, p. 2).

Any organization operating in an economy rooted in capitalism requires the ability to shift with the inevitable expansion and contraction of its respective marketplace (Champy, 1995; Rosenblum & Rosenblum, 1990). Therefore, the increased use of adjunct faculty reflects the real and powerful influence of market forces on the management decisions made in many private colleges and universities. Analogous to corporate downsizing where “a set of activities are undertaken on the part of management and designed to improve organizational efficiency, productivity, and/or competitiveness” (Wagar, 2001, p. 852) the relatively low compensation of adjunct faculty members coupled with the absence of any benefits can make up to 75% of total salary expenditures available to be used elsewhere in the institution (Garcia, 1998).

The use of adjunct faculty became increasingly important to colleges and universities as “cost containment, competition for clients, demand and consumer satisfaction were no longer just concepts taught in business schools; the schools are now vigorously practicing them as well” (Louziotis, 2000, p. 49). Therefore, reasons for the increased use of the adjunct labor pool to accomplish academia’s manifest functions of education and transference of social norms may be necessarily couched in economics, demographics, technological developments, and delivering on the promises made in increasingly glossy recruitment catalogs.

From a macro-level market forces perspective in use at many institutions, the use of adjunct faculty is beneficial across many measures such as profit generation and the use of

available labor pools (Adelman, 1999; Church, 1999; Cline, 1993; Garcia, 1998; Weiger, 1999). From a micro-level perspective focusing on adjunct faculty, the conditions of their employment are thought to be exploitative, suppressive, and detrimental (Arden, 1989; Burgan, 1999; Di Giacomo, 1999; Fulton, 2000; Klein, & Weisman, 1996; Roueche, & Roueche, 1996). The literature suggests that outcomes of the utilization of adjunct faculty are beneficial to the institutions and harmful in various ways to adjunct faculty members as a group. This research begins, via a descriptive case study, to investigate the possible effects of this employment arrangement on the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities of adjunct faculty members in colleges and universities in the United States.

### Theoretical Background

There is much evidence that adjunct faculty members are treated differently than their full-time faculty counterparts (AAUP, 1992, 1997; Dubson, 2001; Fulton, 2000; Leslie, 1998; Nelson, 1997; Van Arsdale, 1978). Much of this differential treatment comes in the form of social ostracism via a lack of opportunities and resources that affects one's sense of belonging to a work community (Hui & Lee, 2000; McAllister & Bigley, 2002; Pierce et al., 1989). Dubson (2001) provided numerous examples of the level of institutional belongingness faced by adjunct faculty members, including one who indicated

I am invisible. My name and degrees do not appear in the school catalogue, no matter how many years I have worked there. My name does not appear in the course catalogue next to the classes I will be teaching. I have no phone number, no office number, no office. I am always treated as a temporary hire who can be cut loose at any moment, for any reason. (pp. 1-2)

A sense of institutional belongingness, or lack of it, in the workplace carries a double connotation. It can either renew an individual's attempt to increase his/her organization-based

self-esteem, via interaction with others, in order to achieve a valued social position in the organization or it can dishearten an individual via the increase of feelings of despair and helplessness (Gill, 1999; Hui & Lee, 2000; McAllister & Bigley, 2002; Pierce et al., 1989; Tang & Gilbert, 1994). This often occurs when the individual “perceives uncertainty (i.e., job insecurity) in one’s job and in the organization (i.e., anticipated organizational change)” (Hui & Lee, 2000, p. 217).

Hobbs and Armstrong (1998) wrote that individuals “should be in regular contact with others on a social level and not just through their working environment, if they are to stay mentally healthy and continue to perform their work duties efficiently” (p. 217). Hallowell (1999) supported the conclusion of Hobbs and Armstrong when he wrote that, “people need human contact in order to survive. They need it to maintain their mental acuity and their emotional well-being” (p. 60). Wiesenfeld (2001) added further credence to this position by concluding that individuals feel less relevant in “the absence of work-based social support and this leads to increased feelings of separation, autonomy and distance from the organization” (p. 217).

Coppersmith (1967) posited that the concept of “self” is dynamic, elaborate, and intricate. Individuals, therefore, possess a wide range of skills, abilities, and capacities. Many of these things are manifested in “external objects, such as the body, and others of which are internal, consisting of feelings and beliefs” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 635). These diverse attributes may be nurtured or hampered by varying organizational environments that frame the context within which organization-based self-esteem develops.

The construct of organization-based self-esteem encompasses the fundamental definition of self-esteem whereby individuals make and maintain an assessment with regard to themselves in relation to the environment(s) within which they exist (Coopersmith, 1967; Korman, 1976; Wells & Marwell, 1976). More specifically, organization-based self-esteem is the self-perceived value individuals have of themselves as members of organizations acting within the context of those organizations (McAllister, & Bigley, 2002; Tang & Gilbert, 1994). Also, organization-based self-esteem carries with it both determinants and consequences. The determinants of organization-based self-esteem include managerial respect, organizational structure, and job complexity. Some consequences influenced by organization-based self-esteem include job performance, intrinsic motivation, general satisfaction, citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, and satisfaction (Hui & Lee, 2000; McAllister & Bigley, 2002; Pierce et al., 1989).

Pierce et al (1989) argued:

Self-esteem expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval of self; it is a personal evaluation reflecting what people think of themselves as individuals; it indicates the extent to which individuals believe themselves to be capable, reflecting a personal judgment of worthiness. (p. 625)

Organization-based self-esteem, however, represents “self-esteem that is specific to organizational contexts and one’s perception of an organization and is constructed from past experiences such as task accomplishments and failures” (Hui & Lee, 2000, p. 217). The construct of organization-based self-esteem also considers the “degree to which organizational members believe that they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the context of an organization” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 625).

According to Pierce et al (1989), organization-based self-esteem becomes integral to an individual’s belief system. As such, once it is established “it is relatively stable, especially when

there are no major environmental changes that may give rise to new kinds of experiences” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 626). Organization-based self-esteem is therefore a representation of an individual’s perceived value as a member of the organization operating inside the context of the institution. This perceived value can reflect feelings of being “important, meaningful, effectual, and worthwhile within their employing organization” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 625). McAllister and Bigley (2002) reaffirmed this conclusion writing that

self-perceived competency and self-evaluation may be assumed to be a function of social learning experience and the value a person has come place on himself as a function of his interaction with others. Thus organizations and their environments, and their actors may be viewed in terms of the self-evaluations that such environments cultivate. (p. 894)

As a result, organization-based self-esteem is closely tied to an organization member’s belief in their self-efficacy or belief that they can implement the competencies necessary for completing their organizational tasks in an attempt to solidify institutional belongingness (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory postulated that much, if not all, of human development and resultant individual behavior is strongly stimulated by environmental factors and not solely reliant on cognitive processes. Bandura explained this interplay as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances rather than some totally cognitive process” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). This suggests that differential treatment of adjunct faculty members may be detrimental to their sense of institutional belongingness and consequently their contribution to institutional and organizational development.

The potential detriment resulting from differential treatment that impedes the construction of organization-based self-esteem amongst this group is also informed by social

learning theory's stress on the importance of being assiduous to and emulating the behaviors, attitudes, emotional, and impulsive reactions of others. For example, Bandura (1977) asserted that

most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. Because people can learn from example what to do, at least in approximate form, before performing any behavior, they are spared needless errors. (p. 22)

This theoretical perspective maintains the central premise that the workings of the surrounding environment play a critical role in the guiding of individual behavior toward the development of organization-based self-esteem and institutional belongingness.

Bandura (1977, 1986) described the centrality of "reciprocal determinism" as a process of continually adding and subtracting various components is an underlying construct of all observational learning. In Bandura's view, "contrary to any other assumption, the environment is only a potentiality, not a fixed property that inevitably impinges upon individuals and to which their behavior eventually adapts. Behavior partly creates the environment and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior" (Bandura, 1973, p. 43). People are continually developing because they are both the producers and products of their environment or "behavior, cognitive, and other personal factors, and environmental influences all operate interactively as determinants of each other" (Bandura, 1986, p. 23). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecology theory offers a broader context than Bandura's (1973, 1986) from which to examine the potential challenges faced by adjunct faculty in developing organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities.

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical position is founded on the notion that human development can only be described from a perspective that takes a systemic approach. Stokols (1996) argued that the result of this is an acknowledgement of "the importance of identifying various physical and social conditions within environments that can affect occupants physiologic, emotional, and/or social well-being" (p. 292). Social ecology theory recognizes the interrelated series of systems or structures that depend on one another implicitly for their continued development and existence.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that this interconnectedness continues in a cyclical manner and that

development as a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment . . . it requires looking beyond single settings to the relations between them . . . such interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting. (p. 3)

Any examination of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities amongst adjunct faculty from this perspective shifts the focus from the individual to the systemic relationship of both the structures in a society and the actors within those structures. Therefore, if adjunct faculty members believe they exist in a transient and disposable world of contingent employment, they reinforce that image by continuing to do so in larger numbers each year.

Hence, any development of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness and career development opportunities that happen within this system appear to be regulated by the cultural norms that pervade at any given time and as a result none can be said to dominate all others because of continual systemic shifts. The lack of domination occurs within cultural

systems as well as between them. There is, however, a necessary hierarchy in social ecology theory where “external influences of the macro-system effect the capacity of a micro system to foster the development of individuals” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723). Thus, continued development of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities amongst adjunct faculty may be a result of “the environment as it is perceived rather than as it may exist in objective reality” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4).

Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that the totality of the organizational context may affect the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities of marginalized members of the organization due to “highly controlled social systems that suggest to employees that they are not competent within the organizational context” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 628).

Adjunct faculty members are confronted with a different organizational context than full-time faculty members due to their status, rights, and privileges. The theoretical constructs of organization-based self-esteem, social learning theory, and social ecology theory all present perspectives that may be utilized in a synergistic manner to describe the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities within the organizational context encountered by adjunct faculty members.

### Methods

A mixed methods approach was used in here. This approach facilitated the compilation of enough disparate data sources needed to meet the conditions of triangulation required in a descriptive case study (Berg, 1998; Maxwell, 1996; Yin, 1994). This method consisted of a qualitative component that analyzed documents and archival records relevant to adjunct and full-

time faculty members such as employment contracts, faculty handbooks, and internal memos. This qualitative portion also included the completion and analysis of interviews with adjunct faculty members. The quantitative component consisted of a survey instrument that was crafted and used to reveal and parse the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities of those who are employed as adjunct faculty members within the case boundaries.

The setting for the study was a small liberal arts college in the northeastern United States. It was founded in the 1930's to educate women for greater independence and an enhanced position in the increasingly varied workplace that resulted in part from industrialization. The college is now a 4 year, coeducational institution that grants associate, bachelors and master's degrees. The college has a total of 152 faculty members, 78 who are categorized as adjunct faculty members. The undergraduate student population currently stands at roughly 1,300.

The survey and interview data collected for this study emerged from the total population of 78 (minus this researcher) adjunct faculty members (N=77) currently employed by the college who chose to participate in the completion of the anonymous survey and/or agreed to participate in the confidential interview portion. The solicitation of survey responses yielded 52 completed surveys.

Concurrent with the survey distribution and collection was the random selection of 5 interview participants from the total pool (N=77) of adjunct faculty members. In the event any of the 5 selected interview candidates declined to participate others were asked until the desired level of five participants was achieved. The 5 interview participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the commencement of the interview. Five interviews were chosen as the target number due primarily to time and budget constraints.

This type of methodology, while limited in its generalizability, can still be used to obtain meaningful information about the specific population under study (Berg, 1998). The assumption that many individual adjunct faculty members would complete the survey led to the conclusion that a representation of adjunct faculty members across all departments and schools could be obtained. This assumption was based on the assessment of the total distribution of adjunct faculty members across the various departments. This assessment showed that the adjunct faculty population is not evenly distributed across departments and therefore different response rates across departments, relative to their total size, could still provide meaningful representation of the adjunct population thus increasing the likelihood of reliable and valid findings.

The triangulation of data via survey, interview, documents, and archival records increased reliability of results by indicating that certain conditions contribute to the occurrence of other conditions. The use of multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources assists in the uncovering of convergent lines of inquiry and evidence. Information accuracy was further ensured by the use of complete documentation and analysis techniques so that the case study can be repeated with the same results.

#### *Document Review*

The review of existing documentation relative to both adjunct and full-time faculty members was focused, detailed and preceded the distribution of surveys and interviews in order to construct a framework for the relevant analysis of those two data sources. Mediated documents included employment contracts, mission statements, faculty handbooks, and memos from various levels within the institution. The analysis of these documents followed an inductive process gleaned from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposition that qualitative analysis begins with the initial data "from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be

arrived at by an inductive reasoning process” (p. 333). This inductive process proceeded in such a manner that various constructs of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities were able to emerge from the documents and thus be used as points of departure for bolstering data gleaned from other sources such as the survey and interviews.

#### *Interview Data*

The adjunct faculty’s statements were extracted from the overall interview data and offered to provide a richer description of the concepts of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities at the college under study. It was also understood at the outset that a future inclusion of short, focused interviews might be necessary to gather additional data to corroborate key observations.

This qualitative data analysis followed Straus and Corbin’s (1998) three tier coding scheme of “open coding, axial coding, and selective coding” (p. 102). Open coding facilitated the breaking apart of relevant data and allowed for the identification of categories, their properties, and their pertinent locations within the boundaries of the case. Axial coding was used to focus on the specification of a category in terms of the conditions that gave rise to it and the consequences of those strategies. These procedures allowed the data to be put back together in new ways after open coding.

#### *The Questionnaire*

The survey instrument utilized in data collection was informed by previous studies but generated by this researcher (Hui & Lee, 2000; McAllister & Bigley, 2002; Pierce et al., 1989).

The instrument consisted of 30 closed-ended questions with responses for 27 of the questions arrayed on a Likert scale. The scale make-up and means of the ratings follow. The survey item range included: 5= strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 2 = agree, 1 = strongly agree. The completed instruments were reverse coded prior to analysis to allow for the compilation of ascending scores from strong disagreement to strong agreement.

The survey instrument was used to glean data that assisted in the description of the organization-based self-esteem (Section 1), institutional belongingness (Section 2), and career development opportunities of adjunct faculty members (Section 3) within the bounded environment of the case being considered. It was developed to yield raw data that allowed for the assessment of the range of values, normality of responses, skewness, kurtosis, and a range of descriptive statistics relative to the concepts under study.

### *The Interview*

Interviews were utilized in this research to help meet the criteria for triangulation (Atkinson, 1998; Berg, 1998; Creswell, 2003). Atkinson wrote that the interview is the “most helpful research approach available” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 13) and was used in this study to have key respondents comment about certain events. This technique allowed for the provision of insight into events as well as the corroboration of evidence obtained from other sources. However, it is important to concede here that issues of bias due to potentially poorly constructed questions, respondent bias, and the possibility of leading questions being asked may have resulted in answers being given that reaffirm assumptions of the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). This researcher attempted to avoid these pitfalls as well as becoming dependent on a single informant by asking the same questions of four other interview participants to verify the genuineness of the claims.

This study also employed descriptive, nonparametric statistics to help in the presentation of data that was collected via the survey instrument. The data was reduced, simplified, and presented throughout the case study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analytic techniques utilized for this research included the use of arrays to display the resultant data from coded survey responses, tabulating the frequency of events, and ordering the information in a way that minimized the biasing of the results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher examined, organized, and reduced the raw data using many interpretations in order to find linkages between the research object and the outcomes with reference to the original research questions. SPSS 12.0 was used in the reduction and exhibition of the quantitative data.

## Results

Table 1 shows three demographic characteristics of the survey population. First, the sex of the survey respondents is indicated and shows that a majority of adjunct faculty members are females (61.5%) while a minority are men (38.5%). The second indicator is the length of employment for the survey respondents. The question was coded on a four point scale: 1 = 1-3 years of employment, 2 = 4-6 years of employment, 3 = 7-9 years of employment, 4 = more than 10 years of employment.

### *Research Question 1*

The first research question in this descriptive case study was, “What difficulties, if any, do current adjunct faculty at the college under study experience developing and maintaining organization-based self-esteem?” Pierce et al. (1989) identified an individual’s interpretation of

their being valuable, trusted, effective, and supported members of an institution as important indicators of organization-based self-esteem.

Table 1

Demographics of Adjunct Faculty Survey Respondents

Sex:	Female	Male	Total
	32 (61.5%)	20 (38.5%)	52 (100%)
Years of Employment:	1-3	4-6	7-9
	23 (44.2%)	27 (51.9%)	2 (3.8%)

Department of Employment:

	Frequency	Percent
Art	1	1.9
Art/Design	5	9.6
Arts/Sciences	19	36.5
Business	9	17.3
CompScience	1	1.9
Computers/IT	1	1.9
Interior Design	1	1.9
Liberal Studies	8	15.4
Nursing	5	9.6
Psychology	1	1.9
Sports Science	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

However, the nature of the adjunct faculty members expendable organizational role is clearly stated at the outset of the employment contract. It states both the commencement and termination date of the adjunct faculty member's official membership in the organization. This appointment/termination dichotomy at the outset might indicate that an adjunct is not seen as a valuable element and thus hamper the development of organization-based self-esteem. One adjunct echoed this potentiality in stating

The contract is pretty standard and spells out what it is you have been hired for, at what rate of pay, and for how long. This third part always reminds me of a conversation I had with my brother when I started teaching here. He looked at the contract and said to me, “Well, at least you know when you are going to be fired.” That really opened my eyes to what I was getting into here, and to be fair it isn’t just here. What other job in this type of environment gives you your appointment and termination letter at the same time and in the same sentence? (Anonymous, personal communication, April 22, 2004)

The results presented in Figure 1 represent the adjunct faculty members overall interpretation of the difficulty, or lack thereof, in developing and maintaining elements of organization-based self-esteem. Table 2 parses out the data for those survey responses. These data demarcate that adjunct faculty at the college under study interpret their organization-based self-esteem in a slightly positive ( $M = 27.6$ ) manner regardless of their temporary status.

The data describe the Organization-based self-esteem of these adjunct faculty members as individuals they have minimal difficulty developing the “self-esteem that is specific to organizational contexts and one’s perception of an organization and is constructed from past experiences such as task accomplishments and failures” (Hui & Lee, 2000, p. 217). However, maintaining that organization-based self-esteem, as members of the college community, is more difficult.

The data suggest that adjunct faculty may experience a minimal “degree to which organizational members believe that they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the context of an organization” (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 625). Thus sustaining the “self-esteem that is specific to organizational contexts and one’s perception of an organization” (Hui & Lee, 2000, p. 217) is made difficult by the employing organization. This is due partially to the inability, due to certain college policies, of adjunct faculty members to construct either a positive or negative

organization-based self-esteem from past task accomplishments and failures due in part to their tenuous and isolated involvement with the organization.



*Figure 1.* Histogram of the organization-based self-esteem scores.

Data presented here on the organization-based self-esteem of the adjunct faculty members indicate that they often do not have the opportunity to have either personal success recognized or to learn from their failure due to their institutionally defined role as expendable contract employees.

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Table 2

Extent of Organization-based Self-Esteem Amongst Adjunct Faculty

Variables	N%	% Positive response	% Neg. response	% Neutral
SQ4: Asset to Institution	52	63.5	5	26.9
SQ5: Taken seriously at institution	52	63.5	23.1	13.5
SQ6: Trusted at institution	52	61.6	3.8	34.6
SQ7: Make a difference at this institution	52	63.5	15.4	21.2
SQ8: Cooperative at institution	52	76.9	23.1	0
SQ9: Supportive work environment at institution	52	36.6	40.4	23.1
SQ10: Faith in me at this Institution	52	44.3	34.6	21.2
SQ11: Given performance evaluations at institution	52	11.6	69.2	19.2
SQ12: Adjunct faculty morale at institution is high	52	9.6	61.6	28.8

*Research Question 2*

The second research question asked, “What, if any, institutional belongingness do current adjunct faculty at the college under study experience?” Figure 2 delineates the overall institutional belongingness score for the second section of the survey instrument. Table 3 parses out the data for the survey responses. Data show signs that overall, the adjunct faculty experiences a modicum of negative institutional belongingness ( $M = 23.2$ ). The results describe the institutional belongingness experienced by adjunct faculty at this institution.

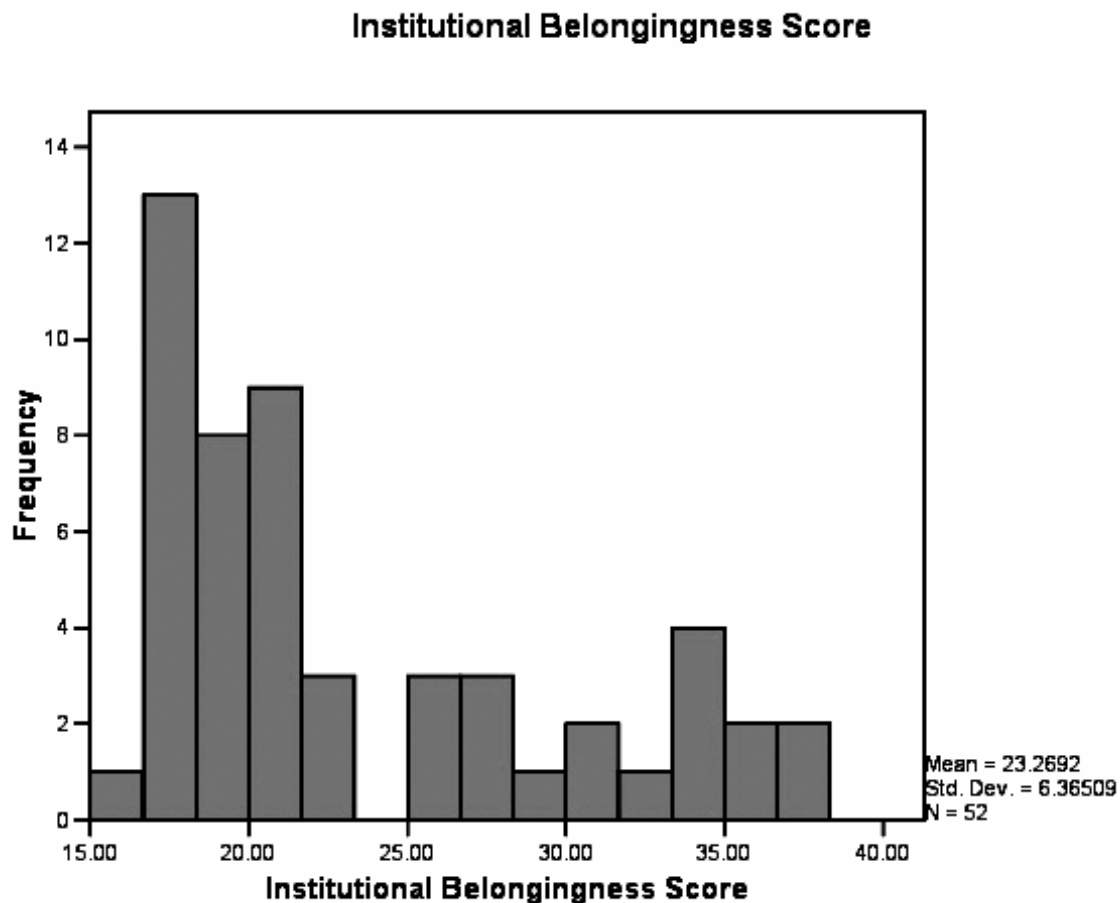


Figure 2. Histogram of institutional belongingness scores.

Drucker (2002) attempted to dissuade organizations from taking the broad risk of treating individuals solely as employees without considering their need to feel a sense of belongingness to the institution within which they work. He wrote that “a growing number of businesses have outsourced employee relations; they no longer manage major aspects of their relationships with the people who *are* their formal employees” (p. 70). Drucker (2002) went on to state,

The attenuation of the relationship between people and the organization they work for represents a grave danger to business. It’s one thing for a company to take advantage of long-term freelance talent or to out-source the more tedious aspects of its human resources management. It’s quite another to forget, in the process, that developing talent is business’s most important task . . . by offloading employee relations, organizations also

lose their capacity to develop people, they will have made a devil's bargain indeed. (p. 71)

As encounters with peers, superiors, and subordinates become more infrequent and increasingly random due to isolating environments and decreased institutional belongingness so to do opportunities for meaningful interaction and developmental opportunities for individuals involved with the organization that helps define them.

Table 3

Extent of Institutional Belongingness Amongst Adjunct Faculty

Variables	N%	% Positive response	% Neg. response	% Neutral
SQ13: Opportunities for social interaction with other adjunct faculty	52	32.7	38.5	28.8
SQ14: Opportunities for social interaction with full-time faculty	52	25	65.4	9.6
SQ15: Opportunities for social interaction with administrators	52	9.6	71.2	19.2
SQ16: Satisfied with working conditions	52	25	40.3	34.6
SQ17: Flexibility in performing job duties	52	59.7	28.8	11.5
SQ18: Given enough feedback on their work	52	15.3	71.2	13.5
SQ19: Closely supervised at this institution	52	11.5	76.9	11.5
SQ20: Satisfied with their supervision	52	11.6	34.6	53.8
SQ21: Opportunities to respond to evaluations	52	15.4	69.2	15.4

### Research Question 3

The third research question asked, “What, if any, career development opportunities do current adjunct faculty at the college under study have access to within his/her institution?”

Figure 3 shows the overall career development opportunity score for the third section of the survey instrument while table 4 parses out the data for the survey responses. Data show signs that, overall, the adjunct faculty experience very little career development opportunities ( $M = 25.1$ ). The results help to describe the career development opportunities experienced by adjunct faculty at this institution.

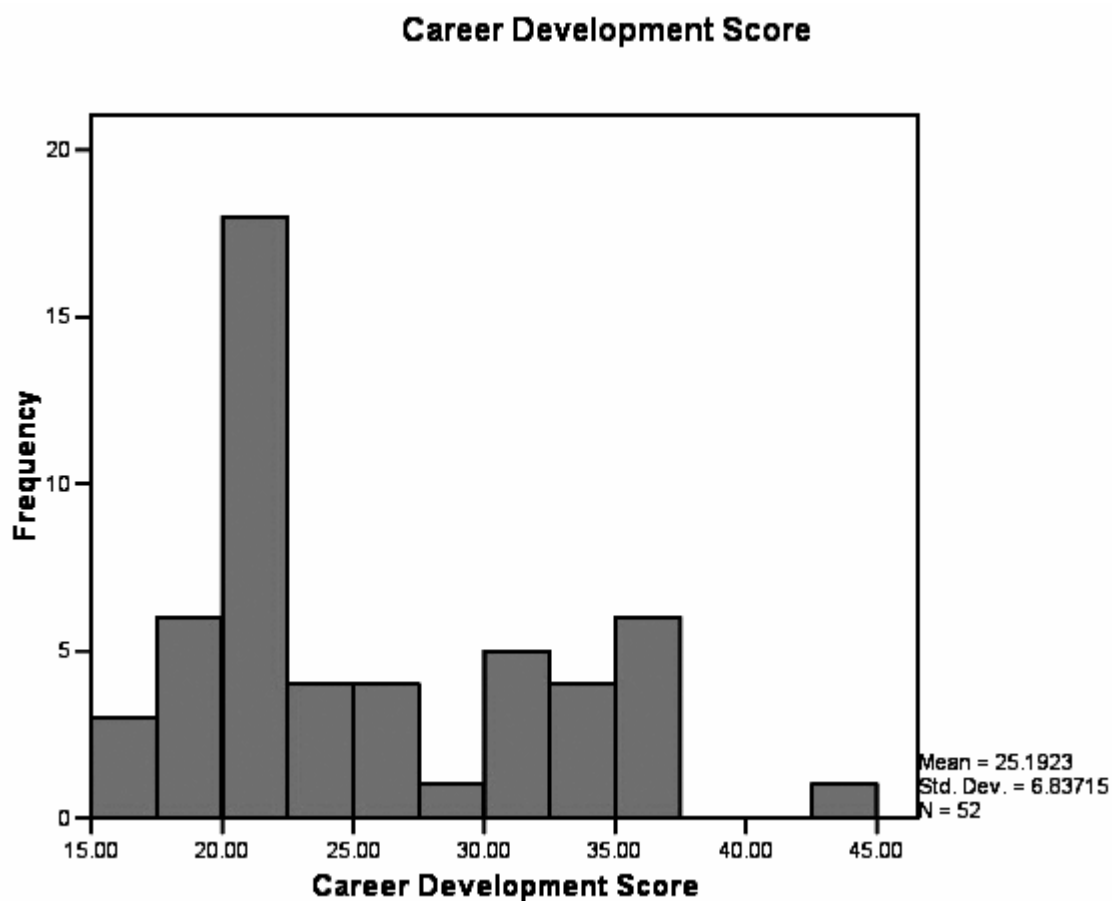


Figure 3. Histogram of career development scores.

Table 3

Extent of Career Development Opportunities Amongst Adjunct Faculty

Variables	N%	% Positive response	% Neg. response	% Neutral
SQ22: Access to off-site career development opportunities	52	3.8	73	23.1
SQ23: Access to on-site career development opportunities	52	11.5	71.2	17.3
SQ24: Given enough job performance guidance	52	26.9	53.8	19.2
SQ25: Supervisors are aware of adjunct faculty career development concerns	52	11.5	53.8	34.6
SQ26: Administrators address the concerns of adjunct faculty	52	5.7	59.6	34.6
SQ27: Institutional support for adjunct faculty developing new programs	52	32.7	13.5	53.8
SQ28: Expectation for adjunct faculty being expert in their field	52	34.7	42.3	23.1
SQ29: Institution recognizes adjunct faculty who excel	52	13.5	69.2	17.3
SQ30: Institution expects adjunct faculty to be active members in college community	52	5.8	77	17.3

### Summary

Data collected and presented here were interpreted in a manner that would not overstep the boundaries of reliability and validity present in all case studies (Maxwell, 1996; Yin, 1994). The collected data and subsequent analysis do provide for a sound and detailed description of the challenges faced by adjunct faculty at the institution under study. Those challenges emerged in the development and maintenance of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities.

The descriptive highlights of the data included the ensuing elements:

1. Adjunct faculty members do not appear to have difficulty developing organization-based self-esteem in terms of the individual elements that comprise that concept. However, on the measures and indicants of organization-based self-esteem that require the institution to play an integral role, both the development and maintenance of such esteem is challenged and perhaps impeded.
2. Adjunct faculty members have difficulty in establishing and maintaining a sense of institutional belongingness. This difficulty appears to be a result of the policies and procedures under which adjunct faculty are held accountable at the college.
3. Adjunct faculty members do not have opportunities for career development and thus cannot engage in such practices.

The results culled from the data can be used to present a sound description of what the adjunct faculty members at this college experience in terms of organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities. The emergent data from the survey instrument, interviews, and archival documents also presents a rich opportunity for recommendations to be made for the improvement of the adjunct experience at this college. Finally, the results of the descriptive case study highlight the limitations of the study and thus point out possible directions for future research.

### Implications

The implications for positive social change indicated by this research rest in the identification of situations and organizational policies and procedures that, if ameliorated, may

lead to increased organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities amongst adjunct faculty members at the college under study. However, it is not only the adjunct faculty who might benefit from any resulting positive social change at this particular college. It is quite possible that the entire institution would benefit from an increase in the three aforementioned areas of focus in this research.

First, it is clear from the previous presentation of data that stark divisions exist between the full-time employees, full-time faculty and administrators in particular, of this college and adjunct faculty. Divisions do play an important role in organizations and are essential to a degree (Jaffee, 2001). However, the chasm that exists within the boundaries of this case appears to be harmful to many who make up the institution's ranks. In order to minimize this chasm some fundamental shifts can be made so that a concept of one faculty may emerge, take shape, and play an active role in changing and strengthening the organizational system of the college. This concept of one faculty would have at its core two ideas.

The first concept is that the adjunct faculty will receive decent, consistent, and more equitable treatment aimed at minimizing exploitation while still acknowledging important designations of seniority, merit, and service to the community. A shift in the treatment of adjunct faculty members to a more equitable model would take into account an individual's contributions to the organization across several measures that would be tied to some system of financial award and formal recognition instead of each individual being bound to their place in the organization's flow chart. This is not meant to suggest that there is no place for formal designations of ranks and positions in the organization's hierarchy. There may be opportunities to provide individuals within all ranks the opportunities to enhance their standing in the community through

demonstrable means. Therefore, an adjunct that performs well across the organization's measures would have the opportunity to improve their standing in the institution's community.

The second core concept would accept that the faculty consists of a variety of people all engaged in accomplishing the interrelated goals of teaching, research, and service. These three elements, central to any viable academic institution, can contribute to the entire college's organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities. The accomplishment of any change in this area is tied to the first concept. It is possible that an increase in the financial and social well-being of adjunct faculty members who perform well would result in their being able to engage in teaching, research, and service as a result of becoming less nomadic in their development of a career.

At the same time this type of shift may allow for the realization of positive and functional outcomes based on the interrelation of the college's parts. But, as White (1995) suggested, the difficulty with implementing a change of this magnitude cannot be minimized because any attempt at organizational change must take into account that failures very seldom have a single cause and often chains of events combine to produce the current problematic situation and simply adds to the organization's labyrinth like structure without addressing the underlying causes of a problem.

The promise for positive social change as a result of this research lies in changing the organizational structure within which adjunct faculty members exist so that it is virtually indistinguishable from the one that envelops the full-time faculty. First, the college should establish and form a faculty governance body that is comprised of all categorizations of faculty

within the college. This body of representatives would provide a standing forum on existing issues.

Because all organizations are dynamic this body would also be in place to identify, define, and address any emerging issues pertinent to the faculty successfully fulfilling their roles in the realization of the manifest function of the college. An emerging issue may involve an instance of a full-time faculty position opening up and the formalization of a process where by adjunct faculty are given consideration for that position. Another emerging issue may be the formalization of a ceiling on how long an adjunct can serve before they must be considered for a full-time position. This may take the form of a sort of conversion adjunct tenure track with the end goal being full-time employment in a tenure track position.

Second, employee handbooks should be critically evaluated and re-written in order to correctly reflect the current faculty demographics and the dynamic nature of the organization and those who make it up. Upon completion of the assessment and re-writing the new faculty handbook would be distributed to every faculty member, regardless of designation, in order to facilitate a standard of communication and to minimize the transference of policies and procedures via word of mouth. The availability of this handbook would also be extended to managers and administrators so that lines of communication can be formally established and looked to for guidance in the redressing of grievances and the rewarding of merit and acknowledgement.

Third, because it is unrealistic to expect any organization to totally eradicate inequity and exploitation (Jaffee, 2001) there should be different faculty designations based on seniority, merit, and qualifications. Every faculty member should be both expected and encouraged to

become a full participant in the community of the college. This can be accomplished by allowing all faculty to participate actively in meetings at all levels where traditionally only full-time faculty were included. Also, faculty should be allowed to advise students in some capacity in order to increase their sense of institutional belongingness. Finally, all members of the faculty should be given early notification of their contractual status so they can prepare for the role associated with that contractual status whether it is preparing for a course they are teaching or securing employment outside of the institution.

It is clear that this college has an opportunity to change the organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities of its adjunct faculty in a number of ways. In fact, many of the recommended changes are indicated in the adjunct faculty responses to the survey and interview instruments. The possibilities for making those changes are great but first the college, as a formal organization, has to understand that the adjunct faculty, while making economic sense in the short-term, is a valuable asset to the long-term survival of the organization. They are also increasingly relied upon to carry out the mission of the college in an increasingly difficult set of circumstances caused by their exploitation. Thus, if the college takes bold steps to move in the opposite direction of academia in general they could alter both the perception of adjunct faculty members as an unworthy and exploited underclass while improving the overall performance and standing of the college within the ranks of academia.

Adjunct faculty will continue to provide many of the educational services of colleges and universities at a relatively low cost to an expanding population of students. This economically viable solution is not without its costs. Many adjunct faculty members suffer the effects of this

tenuous employment situation. This research has described these conditions and has highlighted the costs of being a part of this expendable and transient labor force.

Those costs include adjunct faculty members being isolated, ostracized, and left alone to stay current in their fields of expertise all while weakening their sense of community and connection to the institution. Hiring an adjunct faculty member makes economic sense for the short-term health of a college or university but over the long term it could lead to a disconnected, ambivalent, and ineffective pool of employees being relied upon to assure the continued success of the institution. That success is less likely to happen with adjunct faculty members that have low organization-based self-esteem, institutional belongingness, and career development opportunities. Change is needed.

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