A Qualitative Exploration of the Relationships between Graduate Teaching Assistants and Contingent Faculty Members

Dissertation

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Abstract

Within the American system of higher education, declining levels of economic support from public funding sources and changing views on the purposes of colleges and universities have resulted in a prioritization of faculty research agendas, an increased need for contingent faculty members, and shifting roles for many graduate teaching assistants. As faculty reward structures increasingly incentivize research over both teaching and service, the traditional faculty role of teaching mentor for graduate teaching assistants may be ignored. In the absence of traditional teaching mentors and as increasing numbers of graduate teaching assistants are asked to instruct courses independently, universities should seek to develop appropriate support mechanisms for these instructors. The purpose of the research project was to explore the relationships between graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members in order to determine if these two constituents can serve as a support mechanism for one another.

Using a qualitative research design with a critical theory foundation, this case study focused on the relationships between graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members within a specific academic unit. Evidence gathered from researcher observations, document analysis, and interviews with ten instructors and two university administrators indicates that under certain conditions contingent faculty members and
graduate teaching assistants can develop peer mentoring relationships and teaching communities that serve as a support mechanism and help to enhance classroom performance. Data from this case study also demonstrate that by incorporating specific environmental conditions, university administrators can help foster inclusive departmental cultures and climates that promote developmental relationships between instructors and staff. Finally, evidence from this case study supports the argument that contingent faculty members should be viewed and treated as professionals who can contribute to the university community in multiple ways.
Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family who has always believed in me.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Graduate Program in Education and Human Ecology
# Table of Contents

Abstract ...................................................................................... ii
Dedication ................................................................................. iv
Acknowledgements ................................................................. v
Vita ............................................................................................... vi
Chapters:

1. Introduction ........................................................................... 1
   Statement of the Problem .................................................. 3
   Research Questions ............................................................ 5
   Qualitative Research Design ............................................ 6
   Case Studies and Theory Elaboration ............................... 8
   Research Context ................................................................. 9
   Conceptual Framework ...................................................... 10
   Limitations ........................................................................ 11
   Significance of Study ........................................................ 12
   Overview of Chapters ...................................................... 14

2. Literature Review .................................................................. 16
   Transformation of Higher Education ................................ 17
   Shifts in Accountability and Reporting ............................ 23
   Cost Effectiveness and Massification of Higher Education ... 26
   Redefined Faculty Priorities and Reward Structures ........ 28
   Faculty Entrepreneurialism and University-Corporate Partnerships ................................................. 29
   Commercialization of Research: Pros and Cons ............... 31
   Faculty Commitment in an Era of Commercialization ....... 32
   The Rise of a Contingent Faculty ....................................... 36
      Systematic motivation for a more contingent faculty ......... 37
      Contingent faculty by the numbers ............................... 40
      Contingent faculty by institutional type ......................... 41
      Degrees held by contingent faculty ............................... 42
      Hours worked and course load by institutional type ....... 43
      Number of years in current position and contract duration 44
      Gender, race, and age ranges of contingent faculty ........ 45
      Impact of a more contingent faculty on students .......... 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of contingent faculty members</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for accepting contingent appointments</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Contingent Faculty on Institutional Culture and Climate</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining organizational culture</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of organizational cultures</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining organizational climate</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to traditional faculty norms, values, and assumptions</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Contingent Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting Roles of Graduate Teaching Assistants in the Academy</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of GTA Development</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTA Development Models</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring and Socialization of GTA</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Individual Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery experiences: Developmental scaffolding and training</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious experiences: Role modeling and socialization</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social persuasion and physiological/emotional states</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Self-Efficacy and Academic Cultures</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Qualitative Research Design</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Research Questions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Approach</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology and Epistemology</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological/Theoretical Perspectives</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting and population</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling strategies</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research participants</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed consent</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection methods and confidentiality issues</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data collection</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews: Semi-structured and unstructured</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data verification</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing trustworthiness</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Concerns</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learning Center Case Report</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Terms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Teaching Associates’ Perspectives on Contingent Faculty</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFM as a support mechanism</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFM as peer mentors</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFM as quality instructors</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Faculty Members’ Perspectives on Graduate Teaching Associates</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFM as peers, mentees, and mentors</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of the Learning Center Teaching Community</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements that Contribute to the Learning Center Teaching Community</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms, expectations, and assumptions</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique language of the Learning Center</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTA and CFM redefining space</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcultural knowledge</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of instructor meetings</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created opportunities to develop relationships and community</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created opportunities to learn</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created opportunities to contribute</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsing instructor autonomy</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared spaces</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared office spaces</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden spaces</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTA interactions</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions on GTA/CFM status as instructors</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status within the Learning Center</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status outside of the Learning Center</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role confusion</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Case Study Findings</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding 1: Existence of CFM-GTA Peer Mentoring Relationships</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding 2: CFM as Socialization Agents</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding 3: Valuing GTA and CFM Knowledge</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding 4: CFM should be Considered Professionals</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding 5: Administrators as Supporters of Partnerships and Community</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared spaces</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent instructor meetings</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating GTA and CFM as equals</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching schedules</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator Impact on Culture, Climate, and Beliefs</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Lines of Research</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past decade the presence of contingent faculty members on college and university campuses has become more noticeable and now more than ever they are playing a large role in undergraduate education (Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Levin & Shaker, 2011; Wilson, 2010). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines contingent faculty members as both part and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure-track and the term also includes adjuncts who are generally compensated on a per-course or hourly basis (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). Growing numbers of contingent faculty members can be directly attributed to several internal and external trends impacting the U.S. system of higher education (Benjamin, 2003; Bradley, 2004; Ehrenberg, 2006; Schell & Stock, 2001). The internal and external trends that will be explored in this document include decreases in federal and state funding, increased accountability for quality post-secondary education, new corporate-university partnerships, shifts in faculty reward structures, and competing views of the mission of higher education.

In response to the growing number of contingent faculty members throughout the landscape of higher education, over the past decade there has been an increased number of studies (e.g., Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jaeger & Hinz, 2008; Landrom, 2009; Ronco & Cahill, 2004; Umbach, 2008) and publications (e.g., AAUP, 2003; Baldwin &
Chronister, 2002; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Benjamin, 2002, 2003; Herman & Schmid, 2003; Kezar & Sam 2011; Thedwall, 2008) exploring the role of these individuals and the positive and negative effects they have on undergraduate students. While studies on the impact of a more contingent faculty have increased, several contemporary observers (Kezar & Sam, 2011; Levin & Shaker, 2011; Tam & Jacoby, 2009) argue that there is limited meaningful information and research on this emerging population, especially as it relates to their impact on specific campus populations, including graduate students. Of particular interest to this researcher is the relationship between graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and contingent faculty members (CFM), a topic which has gone virtually unexplored.

Investigating the possible linkages between these two populations is important because as the numbers of both constituents continue to grow and their roles become more expansive, frequent contact between them may become more probable thus opening the door for new partnerships. Exploring innovative ways for GTA to develop as instructors should be of concern to university administrators because across the contemporary landscape of higher education GTA are becoming a vital component of the university system (Benjamin, 2003). Indeed, the majority of research focused universities now rely on GTA to teach a multitude of undergraduate courses and this trend does not appear to be disappearing as the number of GTA who now have sole responsibility for at least one course has steadily increased over the past decade (Flora, 2007).

The U.S. Department of Labor (2011) approximates that there are over 107,000 GTA working in U.S. colleges and universities and their development should be a topic of interest as researchers estimate that at some institutions they provide instruction for
approximately 40% of the undergraduate classes taught and they have responsibilities in roughly 60% of the introductory courses taken by first-and second-year students (Marincovich, Prostko, & Stout, 1998). In the year 2007, GTA made up 19% of instructors within all U.S. institutions, 25% at four-year institutions, and over 40% at public, doctoral granting universities (America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010). Given the number of both GTA and CFM teaching on university campuses nationwide, it is important to learn more about the relationships that either do exist or could be fostered as this information may help GTA and CFM construct collaborative and developmental teaching, learning, and mentoring communities. Possible beneficiaries of these developmental communities would be the GTA and CFM themselves along with the students with whom they interact.

The primary aim of this qualitative case study is to help fill a void in the current higher education literature by exploring the relationships that exist between these two constituencies as they may have important implications for GTA development and socialization, instructor self-efficacy, and the quality of undergraduate teaching. In addition, the literature review portion of this project will highlight several macrolevel trends within the system of higher education, the ways in which these trends manifest themselves at the institutional level, and how they may be impacting GTA, CFM, and undergraduate students at the microlevel.

**Statement of the Problem**

Economic insecurities along with increasing corporate-university partnerships have combined to cause a shift in faculty reward structures across the varying types of
U.S. colleges and universities (Fairweather, 1996, 2002, 2005; Powers, 2003). Current faculty reward structures are directly related to the amount of publishable research an individual produces, thereby incentivizing research over teaching and service (Engell & Dangerfield, 2005; Fairweather, 2005; Jaeger & Thornton, 2005; Lucas, 1998). As many faculty members concentrate more on research, their roles as teaching mentors for GTA is diminished, leaving graduate students to either develop on their own or seek guidance elsewhere (Boyle & Honnald, 2002). Commonly used GTA development models make the assumption that full-time, tenure-line faculty members have the time and incentive to devote to GTA mentoring as it relates to teaching (Nyquist & Wulff, 1996; Sprague & Nyquist, 1991). However, as faculty reward systems continually shift towards research focused incentives, the assumption that full-time, tenure-line faculty will be available to mentor GTA may be outdated and in need of revision.

In the report Socialization of Graduate and Professional Students in Higher Education: A Perilous Passage?, Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) highlight the growing concern over a lack of GTA mentoring when they assert “Even though teaching assistants should be involved in a true apprenticeship under continued guidance and support from a master teacher…faculty in research institutions may tend to slight teaching in favor of research, leaving them little time to serve as mentors to their graduate assistants in the area of teaching” (p. 78). In a system where teaching and the mentoring of GTA may not be formally rewarded, finding appropriate mentors for graduate students is an important topic as the lack of such a support system could have negative implications for undergraduate teaching, GTA development, and the future of the professoriate. Additionally, as GTA take on increased responsibilities in the classroom
and serve less as apprentices and more as independent instructors, securing teaching mentors becomes all the more vital as they will be working with students on their own. The aim of this project is to explore the relationship between GTA and CFM within a specific educational context as these relationships may be part of the solution to the problem of fading GTA mentorship practices.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide this project and serve as the foundation for the analysis of collected data:

- How do GTA view the CFM they work with?
- How do CFM view the GTA they work with?
- What types of relationships do GTA have with CFM within a specific context?
- What institutional or local trends may be impacting the GTA-CFM relationship?
- What macro-level trends in higher education may be impacting the GTA-CFM relationship?
- Do GTA and CFM develop unique teaching subcultures?
- What types of local knowledge do GTA and CFM develop?
- How do GTA and CFM distinguish themselves from one another?
- What aspects of the academic environment can help contribute to the development of community amongst instructors?
- What ideological beliefs impact the status of GTA and CFM within the university teaching hierarchy?
Qualitative Research Design

The proposed research project will draw from qualitative methodologies, utilize qualitative research methods, and be performed using a case study research design. Qualitative case studies like this one are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in realistic settings that are not controlled or manipulated by the investigators (Patton, 2002). Egon Guba (1978) suggested that naturalistic inquiry is a discovery-oriented approach to research that places no prior constraint on the outcomes of the project. For this case study, the researcher will be taking a discovery-oriented approach while using multiple methods of data collection. Methods of data collection include (a) observations from the field gathered via participant observation, (b) semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and (c) document analysis as it pertains to the institutional and departmental context. These methods of data collection will help yield detailed, thick descriptions of the context while also producing in-depth inquiries that capture direct quotations about individual experiences and perspectives (Patton, 2002).

The qualitative methodological foundations of this project manifest themselves in three forms. First, this project will be developed and conducted within a constructivist paradigm. Glesne (2006) asserts, “This paradigm maintains that human beings construct their perceptions of the world, that no one perception is ‘right’ or more ‘real’ than another, and that these realities must be seen as wholes rather than divided into discrete variables that are analyzed separately” (p. 7). Constructivist theorists suggest that reality is assembled by each knower according to an individualized set of subjective principles that are developed through lived experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings (Sipe & Constable, 1996; Wadsworth, 2004). The purposes of constructivist research are to
contextualize, understand, and interpret experiences and perspectives through interactions and subjectivist explorations with participants (Vidich & Lyman, 2003). The constructivist paradigm was chosen as a foundation for this project because the relationships, experiences, and perspectives that will be explored are socially constructed by participants.

In accordance with constructivist beliefs and in order to help understand GTA and CFM as organizational subcultures, this research project is also founded in a symbolic interactionist perspective. Sweet (1999) suggests that “symbolic interactionists stress that selves are socially constructed and that people play an active role in shaping direction of their own and each others’ behaviors through the use of symbols” (p. 358). Utilizing a symbolic interactionist perspective is appropriate when researching marginalized or hidden subcultures like GTA and CFM as they are socially constructed groups of individuals who utilize the meanings of specific symbols, actions, and speech to give rise to a new self-conscious identity.

Finally, because one of the purposes of this project is to help individuals gain an increased understanding of the position of GTA and CFM within the university system, it is pertinent to suggest that the researcher will also be using a critical theory framework in conjunction with constructivism and symbolic interactionism. “The project of critical theory is to discover what is just and to take action; since knowledge is a form of power, it can be used to change the world into a more just and equitable place for all groups of people” (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 159). Critical theorists operate under the assumption that while there are multiple truths that exist in the world, the one truth that underscores all the rest is founded in political and economic power (Brookfield, 2005). Within any
organizational context there is often a multitude of hidden power dynamics and part of this research project is to explore and expose existing power dynamics in order to challenge some of the hegemonic ideologies that dominate the institution of American higher education.

**Cases Studies and Theory Elaboration**

Individual qualitative case studies like the one performed in this research project can be helpful for elaborating theories, models, and concepts focusing on large, complex systems (e.g., U.S. system of higher education) that can be difficult to study (Vaughan, 1992). Case studies can help link macrolevel factors with microlevel results and implications as they imply that the particular set of events selected for study are similar in relevant characteristics to other cases (Mitchell, 1983). For example, the macrolevel factor of shifting faculty reward structures within the U.S. system of higher education may have microlevel implications with regards to GTA mentoring and development at multiple institutions. In reference to the exploratory value of qualitative case studies Walton (1992) states, “At the bottom, logic of the case study is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces take shape and produce results in specific settings. That demonstration, in turn, is intended to provide at least one anchor that steadies the ship of generalization until more anchors can be fixed for eventual broadening” (p. 122). Through the use of a case study approach this research project attempts to connect macrolevel trends in higher education to a microlevel context in hopes that it will serve as a catalyst for additional inquiry on this topic.
Research Context

The context for the research project was an individual learning center embedded in a state-funded, Carnegie Foundation (2010) classified Research University with very high research activity (RU/VH). The university is located in the Midwestern portion of the United States. The Learning Center where this project unfolded is relatively small with a staff of 10-12 course instructors, four undergraduate learning specialists, and three staff members, including the founding director who also serves as a tenured faculty member. Course instructors in the Learning Center are divided into two categories: graduate teaching associates (GTA) and lecturers. GTA are full-time graduate students who teach part-time while pursuing advanced academic degrees. The lecturers in this context are part-time instructors hired on a quarterly basis and throughout this project they will be referred to as contingent faculty members (CFM). Within the Learning Center three courses are taught with the primary class being a 5-credit hour, undergraduate course on learning and motivation in the academic environment. Typically, Learning Center GTA and CFM teach 10-12 sections per academic quarter with a total enrollment of roughly 350 students.

In the past these courses were coordinated and supervised by an Associate Director who was also in charge of curriculum development, student disciplinary cases, and GTA/CFM development and support. Throughout the academic year, GTA and CFM would convene with the Associate Director for bi-weekly meetings which served as both professional development sessions and support groups as instructors were encouraged to share common concerns, successes, and possible curricular changes. In September 2010 the Associate Director accepted a position at another university and the vacancy was not
filled because of funding reductions. The removal of the Associate Director position within the Learning Center negatively impacted the amount of formal supervision and the number of professional development opportunities for the GTA and CFM. Studying the interactions, experiences, and relationships between GTA and CFM in a context with limited formal training, professional development opportunities, and ways to engage with the curriculum promises to bring forth practical information that will be useful for administrators who are faced with similar circumstances. Given the current and forecasted economic climate in higher education, similar scenarios are likely to unfold at colleges and universities nationwide.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that underscored the development of this project is resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2009). Resource dependence theory focuses on the relationships of organizations (e.g., institutions of higher education) with the external environment and the theory has been connected to policy development in multiple areas of study, including higher education (Davis & Cobb, 2009). Resource dependence theorists postulate that organizations which are deprived of resources will seek new sources of funding from external agencies that in turn will exert influence and control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, 2009; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Within these resource dependent organizations coalitions and stratified classes begin to form as they compete for scarce resources and power. The marginalization of those with fewer resources is often the result of this internal competition and faction development (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005).
In the case of higher education, as institutions become more dependent on external revenue sources, often tied to research, those within the organization who perform studies that have commercial value continually gain prestige and power while those who perform more traditional duties such as teaching and service may become increasingly marginalized. In part, this research project is attempting to demonstrate the value of those individuals (i.e., CFM and GTA) who are often marginalized because they are not directly linked to external sources of revenue. According to qualitative theorists Sutton and Staw (1995) “Strong theory…delves into underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for a particular occurrence or nonoccurrence” (p. 374). Utilizing resource dependence theory as a foundation, this research project will attempt to delve into some of the macrolevel issues facing higher education in order to better understand how these shifts are creating institutional changes that may impact individuals such as GTA and CFM at the microlevel.

Limitations

This study is limited to the experiences of twelve GTA, CFM and university staff members selected exclusively for this research project because they work in the aforementioned context. Therefore, one must not assume that all GTA, CFM and staff members have experiences, feelings, and perspectives that are comparable to those who participated in this study. Rather, this project seeks to explore the experiences and perspectives of these participants in an attempt to provide institutions of higher education with a greater understanding of the experiences faced by some GTA and CFM. Despite this restriction, because the research on the relationship between GTA and CFM is
limited, it is expected that this study can serve as an example for higher education administrators to note the issues that GTA and CFM face in a context hindered by economic restraints. Additionally, administrators who supervise GTA and CFM should be interested in the results of this case study because a component of this project is to explore the environmental conditions that either foster or hinder CFM and GTA growth and collaboration.

Simply put, the aims of this project are to examine how GTA, CFM, and staff members work together when obstacles to professional development and mentoring arise and what conditions can help promote collaborative partnerships and community amongst a group of university instructors and administrators. It is not the intention of the investigation to offer statistical data that can be generalized to an entire larger population. Additionally, inherent limitations exist when discussing work related themes in a context where individuals are currently employed. Being a former GTA and CFM myself, I am aware that the participant’s knowledge of my background could potentially lead them to not fully disclose information for fear of judgment. In addition, because I am a graduate student who experienced a similar situation when employed as a GTA, there is a potential for prejudiced findings and outcomes, as is possible in all qualitative research (Patton, 2002). In order to help contain biases, in Chapter 3 of this document I outline several measures that will be implemented.

**Significance of Study**

Dating back to the 1970s the topics of GTA development and CFM impact have been relevant subjects within the field of higher education (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Boyle & Honnold, 2002; Prieto, 2003) and it is believed that the proposed project will add to
this literature in several ways. First, for the most part, research on the impact of CFM has been overwhelmingly quantitative; focusing on dimensions such as student retention rates, amount of time spent on campus, student satisfaction, and academic achievement (Kezar & Sam, 2011; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). The qualitative study proposed here will not only be different in method, but will also offer a unique viewpoint of CFM and GTA within a specific context. Next, because the literature and research on the relationships between GTA and CFM is virtually nonexistent, this research project, while case specific, may be somewhat groundbreaking and help influence policy as it pertains to GTA and CFM professional development. Furthermore, this project may open the door for further research in this area as the rise of these two university contributors appears to be an ongoing trend in higher education.

In addition to the practical components of this case study there is also an advocacy element because despite the significant role that GTA and CFM play on college and university campuses, some research indicates that both constituencies often feel invisible and marginalized because of their perceived status (American Federation of Teachers, 2008; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Malveaux, 2004). Drawing on the methodological framework of critical theory, this project will seek to empower both CFM and GTA by exploring the possible ways that they work together and contribute to the university community. Finally, the investigator believes this research project will be beneficial for administrators and other campus constituents who are interested in improving the development of those who teach in college and university classrooms. The results of the project could include: (1) increased understanding of the relationships between GTA and CFM in an academic context that has been hindered by economic
pressures, (2) new methods or policy development surrounding the topic of GTA and CFM training and support, (3) increased self-efficacy for GTA and CFM, (4) enhanced understanding of the contributions of GTA and CFM to the university community, and (5) improved undergraduate teaching.

In an era of shrinking budgets, amplified accountability, and new competitors, making sure students receive a quality educational experience is imperative for all colleges and universities who hope to thrive in an increasingly aggressive higher education marketplace. Developing positive educational experiences for students begins in the classroom and if students attend universities with graduate schools they will most likely interact with GTA and CFM during the first two years of their collegiate coursework (America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010; Marincovich et al., 1998). By offering insight into the experiences, perspectives, and relationships of GTA and CFM, the proposed research project will produce data that may contribute to the development of positive educational experiences for both undergraduate students and the individuals who teach them.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 consists of an introduction of the major interests of the investigation, background data, the theoretical framework, statement of the problem being studied, purpose and importance of the investigation, primary research queries, and possible limitations.
Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the research and literature related to changing trends in higher education. Chapter 2 reviews the bodies of knowledge on (a) organizational culture, (b) shifts in faculty reward structures, (c) the rise of a contingent faculty, (d) graduate teaching assistant development and socialization, and (e) the shifting role of graduate teaching assistants in higher education.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed overview of the qualitative methodological lenses through which the study was conducted. This chapter outlines information on the selection of participants, methods of data collection and data analysis, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and enhancing trustworthiness of collected data.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection as I utilize narratives made available through the individual interview sessions to communicate the accounts of the participants. The chapter also illuminates the themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the individuals, as found throughout the evolution of the study.

Chapter 5 includes the conclusions and implications of the investigation. Here, I encapsulate and confer the findings of the study, implications for institutions of higher education, project limitations, and suggestions for subsequent research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will outline the research pertinent to establishing the context for this case study by reviewing the literature about contingent faculty and graduate teaching assistants. In particular, with regards to contingent faculty, this chapter will illuminate specific characteristics of this population of instructors, reasons many teachers accept these types of positions, and research on the perceived positive and negative consequences of employing a primarily contingent labor force within the system of higher education. With regards to graduate teaching assistants, this chapter will present research related to their development as instructors, including commonly cited mentoring and socialization processes as they relate to graduate students. Additionally, research on the shifting roles and preparation of graduate teaching assistants will also be explored.

The following sections will also present information related to macro level trends appearing within the U.S. higher education system along with aspects of organizational culture and climate. Macrolevel trends are defined as the shifts in philosophy and practice that impact and ultimately alter an organism or entire system of operations (Giroux, 2010). For the U.S. system of higher education and the individual institutions that compose this structure, the past 30 years have brought about immense change based on the development of numerous macrolevel trends. The following sections will review the literature as it pertains to these macrolevel trends and how these developments have
impacted the labor force of higher education, the roles of graduate teaching assistants, and aspects of organizational cultures and climates.

**Transformation of Higher Education**

Over the past 30 years the U.S. higher education system has undergone dramatic organizational and philosophical shifts with one primary transformation occurring in the historically founded social role and functioning of the university system (Faulkner, 2005; Kezar, 2004). Those who look upon higher education as a social institution argue that public colleges and universities should be committed to an expansive range of social functions, including historically founded priorities such as the cultivation of citizenship, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the formation of individual values and ethics (Gumport, 2001). While some scholars argue that a movement away from the university as social institution towards a more corporatized organizational model is not a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997); recent literature suggests that this trend is on the rise as budget cuts and public calls for increased accountability have become more frequent and systematic (Hines, 2008; Hughey & Burke, 2010; Zemesky, 2005). If institutions of higher education continue to shift towards a corporate model of organization, some suggest student-consumerism and economic rationality will become the foundation for institutional decision making processes and the significance of the university as a contributor to societal good will be diminished (Giroux, 2010; Gumport, 2001; Suggs, 2009).

While the terms *corporate university* and *university as an industry* often evoke similar connotations and may be used interchangeably by some authors, it is important to note that in the current literature there are divergent definitions. First, some authors
suggest that the corporate university is a philosophically-based management model that uses increased numbers of administrators to oversee knowledge management and organizational learning processes in order to sustain a competitive advantage over other universities (Aronowitz, 2005; Washburn, 2005). In contrast, some argue that the university as an industry is an economically founded framework that focuses on product development, distribution, and the fiscal output of universities (Geiger, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Within the U.S. higher education system these two mindsets frequently coalesce to form the foundation for university ambitions along with systems of management.

In relation, reflecting on the contemporary landscape of higher education many argue that the idea of higher education as a social institution has been replaced with predominately economically focused, market driven goals that are spurred by a neoliberal philosophy (Bok, 2003; Kerr, 1994; Kezar, 2004). Neoliberal philosophic perspectives are founded in the belief that individual economic ambitions and benefits should supersede the historically founded social charter between higher education and society. From a neoliberal perspective, publically funded colleges and universities should be urged to privatize activities such as research and teaching in order to compete with for-profit organizations that have economic rather than social goals (Chambers, 2005; Olssen, 2004). A vast literature on the corporatizing of the academy confirms the primacy of a neoliberal agenda within higher education and the possible consequences of not adjusting to this trend (Carter, 2008; Donoghue, 2008; Hines, 2008; Lee & Rhoads, 2004; Mars, Slaughter, & Rhoades, 2008; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Neoliberal advocates argue that such consequences could include dwindling enrollment numbers, failure to
obtain external revenue streams, and a loss of institutional prestige (Anctil, 2008; Gumport, 2001).

While neoliberal views on higher education were established during the 1970s, several factors including economic declines beginning in the early 1990s have heightened the interest in using this philosophy as the foundation for post-secondary goals and initiatives (Markman, Gianiodis, & Phan, 2008; Potter, 2008). As neoliberal views of higher education continue to break down the social contract that exists between universities and the community, an organizational paradigm of the university as an industry has become pervasive in both the literature and in practice (Antcil, 2008; Hayes & Wynward, 2006; Kezar, 2004). Individuals who view higher education from an industrial standpoint see public colleges and universities as product-producing entities that should generate a wide range of marketable goods and services in order to remain salient within an increasingly competitive environment (Gumport, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Critics argue that industrializing the academy undermines academic standards, non-profit missions, and equal opportunity for access (Alexander, 2006; Zemesky, 2005) while others view this shift as a necessity for survival in today’s globalized economy and marketplace (Finkelstein & Schuester, 2001; Siegel, Wright, & Lockett, 2007).

Over the past thirty years the marketplace of higher education has changed dramatically and at the turn of the 21st century the rise of a globalized, technologically sophisticated, knowledge-based economy emerged, bringing with it new competitors in the realm of higher education (Anctil, 2008; Hayes & Wynward, 2006). The primary competition for traditional institutions of higher education arose in the late 1990s and
arrived in the form of a for-profit commercial education sector (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Burgeoning advances in online communication technologies and internet-based learning platforms allowed for-profit organizations like the University of Phoenix and DeVry University to compete against taxpayer-subsidized universities. In short, for-profit institutions could offer an educational experience that was cheaper, more flexible, and career specific (Carter, 2008). The emergence of for-profit institutions increased market pressures on traditional colleges and universities and forced them to respond or risk losing students and revenue (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

In order to survive in this competitive marketplace, traditional colleges and universities have been forced to adopt a more corporate attitude as they battle for resources and students (i.e. consumers) in order to generate revenue and increase their position within a capitalist structure (Giroux, 2010). One way that traditional universities have responded to increased competition is through amplified marketing and advertising of their products (Brewer, Gates, & Goldman, 2005; Kolter & Fox, 2002; Mark, Seamas, & Darryl, 2012). Indeed, institutional reputation and prestige are viewed as so important for revenue generation that the majority of colleges and universities in the United States employ entire departments to develop and market their trade name. In higher education, just as in other businesses, increased competition brings a greater awareness of the need to envision, construct, publicize, and maintain a distinctive image or what some have called a brand (Bok, 2003; Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005). The concept of institutional branding is one of the defining features of commercialization and in the battle for new revenue streams it often becomes a determining factor (Bok, 2003). Institutional branding has become an important component of the commercialization of higher education.
because while some institutional products (e.g., patents) expire after a set period of time, brand names have the potential to generate revenue for a much longer duration (Washburn, 2005). Specifically, institutions use the concepts of image management and product differentiation to market themselves to prospective students, parents, and private sponsors (Brewer et al., 2005; Mark et al., 2012; Mount & Belanger, 2004).

As a way to sustain an advantage over the competition, within the past 15 years the branding of higher education has become more evident (Anctil, 2008; Giberson & Giberson, 2009; Toma et al., 2005). For example, in order to attract new revenue streams and develop their unique brand many colleges and universities turn to collegiate athletics as one of their marketing tools. On college and university campuses nationwide the evidence of athletic commercialization is strikingly apparent as corporate advertising is displayed on sports venues, logo contracts with athletic apparel firms are developed, and universities sell exclusive rights to soft drink companies (Benford, 2007; Suggs, 2009). Research by Knapp, Rasmussen, and Barnhart (2001) reveals that in their survey of 1028 college students over 71% of the respondents indicated that athletic accomplishments increase the prestige of universities and that athletic image played a part in the decision to matriculate to their specific institution. These data demonstrate the power of marketing and commercialization to bolster university reputation; a trend that is happening on campuses nationwide (Splitt, 2007). In addition to collegiate athletics, many universities (e.g., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, California Institute of Technology) draw on their research prowess as a way to attract students, donors, researchers, and faculty members.
Within this competitive environment students have come to be viewed, and view themselves, as consumers (Mars et al., 2008). In part, the foundation for this student-as-consumer perspective can be traced back to 1972 when the U.S. Congress shifted the responsibility for funding higher education from the government and the institutions themselves to the students (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). One of the reasons for increased cost sharing between students, universities, and the U.S. government was the idea that obtaining a college degree was more of an individual benefit than a societal good (Hufner, 2003; Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008). From this perspective, the college degree is viewed as a career investment for the individual and therefore critics argue that students should shoulder the financial burden.

Current literature on the topic of individual versus social benefits of a post-secondary education indicates that two challenges are perpetuating the idea of higher education as an individual benefit (Diamond & Adam, 2004; Gumport, 2001). First, the general public’s limited understanding of the benefits of higher education beyond individual and economic gains, and second, higher education’s inability to articulate the social benefits to the public (Chambers, 2005; Easton 2009). In response to the growing rift between higher education and the general public, National Education Association-Democracy in Higher Education award winner Professor Woodruff Smith (2003) states “To gain public support, we must insist on the academy’s importance to a democratic society—rather than on the importance of the academy’s own values, values that are increasingly seen outside universities as having been constructed by and for the advantage of academics” (p. 62). Responding to a lack of clear communication on the part of the higher education community, many in the general public have developed a
mistrust of colleges and universities and in recent years calls for increased accountability have become more persistent (Alexander, 2006; Burke, 2005).

**Shifts in Accountability and Reporting**

Over the past decade, a shift in how accountability is defined and measured has contributed to the escalating tension between higher education and the general public (Burke, 2005; Ewell & Jones, 2006; Wellman, 2006). Historically, accountability in higher education focused on institutional efficiency and the primary goal of assessment was to make sure programs were not duplicated and that access for specific populations such as racial/ethnic minorities and veterans was a priority (Burke, 2005). In addition, from the 1960s to the late 1990s institutional accountability was largely a stand-alone activity that was not directly connected to state or federal policies with regards to finance and governance (Ewell & Jones, 2006). During this time period, fulfillment of certain aspects of institutional accountability were viewed as voluntary and they were dependent on internal agents (e.g., faculty members, academic affairs professionals) acting on professional ethics and in accordance with university mission statements (Burke, 2005).

Proponents of an internalized accountability system for higher education insist that in order to promote public good though societal critiques, universities must remain sufficiently safe from external pressures (Brand, 1999; Nir & Zilberstein-Levy, 2006; Tierney, 2004). Indeed, some argue that only internal university constituents have the expertise to judge their peers and that too much external accountability produces dependent institutions that are subservient to societal impulses (McGuinness, 2002). Supporters of an internalized accountability system also argue that external pressures threaten academic freedom. Academic freedom involves an individual’s right to conduct
research and the pursuit of knowledge independent of outside powers or pressures and many argue it is the bedrock of academic life and the American university (Brand, 1999; Tierney, 2004).

In contrast, critics of an internalized system of accountability insist that universities must publically demonstrate student learning outcomes and societal contributions beyond the walls of the academy if they are going to continue to receive public funding (e.g., Easton, 2009; Zemesky, 2005). Perceived failures of the voluntary assessment movement led to the concept of outward accountability which insists that publically funded universities should respond to external constituents such as parents, legislators, politicians, and to the public at large (Wellman, 2006). Over the past decade this has become a norm in the realm of publically funded higher education (Burke, 2005). Outward liability is one component of the new accountability movement in public higher education, a movement that calls for a refocusing of attention on outcomes of college and university activities, rather than the traditional focus of inputs alone (McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006). The new accountability movement focuses primarily on quantifiable measures of institutional performance in specified areas such as student retention, diversity of the student population, cost efficiency, and faculty productivity (Burke, 2005). While these measures may have already been used internally to determine budgets and fund distribution, the shift in using these criteria to determine external funding for public universities is a more contemporary phenomenon.

In order to determine institutional accountability and public resource allocation the new accountability movement has typically relied on three types of programs: (1) performance funding, (2) performance budgeting, and (3) performance reporting
(McLendon et al., 2006). It is important to note that performance funding and performance budgeting relate only to public funding thus private universities would not necessarily be subjected to the same accountability measures. Performance funding is an approach that connects public subsidies to the performance of public universities on individual indicators (Burke, Minassians, & Rockefeller Institute of Government, 2003). Under this form of assessment, universities are judged on predetermined notions of success in certain areas of campus productivity and the amount of funding received is directly linked to these measures. In contrast, performance budgeting allows external constituents such as legislators and governors to consider university achievement on predetermined performance indicators as one of many factors when it comes to resource allocation (Burke et al., 2003). In short, within the performance budgeting system the prospect of financial reward based on institutional performance is discretionary and determined by individuals outside the academy. From the late 1990s to around 2003 the two abovementioned accountability programs dominated the public higher education community, but recently another accountability program known as performance reporting has become more popular (Burke et al., 2003; Burke, 2005).

Performance reporting relies on publicity to motivate universities to pursue state and federal priorities and improve institutional performance (Burke, 2005; McLendon et al., 2006). Federal performance reporting through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is mandatory, standardized, and includes all institutions receiving Title IV funds. State performance reporting varies in scope and depth but all states do require the reporting of some data from publicly funded colleges and universities (Brown, 2008). Information gathered from state and federal performance reports is often used in
commercialized college and university ranking systems such as *U.S. News & World Report College Rankings*. The influence of these ranking systems on institutional prestige and revenue generation may serve as an impetus for colleges and universities, including private schools, to report institutional data thus increasing transparency and accountability. In contrast to performance funding and budgeting approaches that provoked hostility from some college and university leaders, performance reporting is viewed as less controversial and costly making it a popular choice. Prompted by increased pressure for fiscal responsibility and the publication of *Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*, the majority of states have adopted performance reporting as their primary approach to exploring institutional accountability and allocating public funding (Burke, 2005).

**Cost Effectiveness and Massification of Higher Education**

Despite increased assessment of university inputs and outcomes, many critics are still not satisfied. Indeed, most critics argue that public support will continue to shrink until higher education can clearly, intentionally, and publically place societal benefits over institutional and individual prosperity (Wellman, 2006). Paradoxically, as Alexander (2006) suggests, “Cutbacks and minimal increases in state appropriations to public universities has led to a draconian cycle whereby institutions have increasingly raised their tuitions to make up for lost revenues, which, in turn, has spurred state governments to further reduce their commitment and support” (p. 16). Higher tuition rates, combined with other factors such as a federal funding shift from grants to individual loans, have helped solidify a student-as-consumer mentality within higher education and institutions have been forced to respond through massification of educational goods (Bok, 2003;
Massification of higher education refers to the commodification of knowledge, learning, and degree attainment and it has led to a shift away from a traditional liberal arts curriculum towards a more vocationally-focused academic agenda (Arnowitz, 2005). Today, many students seek a college diploma not for the sake of a well-rounded educational experience, but simply as a necessary credential for entering the work force (Martin & Samels, 1997; Mohrman et al., 2008; Neely 1999). From a neoliberal perspective, college and university students are seen as human capital who must acquire the skills necessary to compete in the job market (Gumport, 2001). In this type of hyper-capitalistic environment student-consumers demand competitive pricing, flexibility in coursework, and more campus services and facilities. In response to these demands, traditional universities have increased expenditures for student services such as academic advisors, career counseling, and psychologists (Hemsley-Brown, 2011; Katz, 2010; Reisman, 1998). Additionally, in order to remain competitive with for-profit, online institutions like University of Phoenix, mass production and delivery of courses has become standard at many colleges and universities (Bradley, 2004).

The mass production of courses, while necessary to keep tuition costs low, has come under scrutiny from internal and external university constituents as they argue it indicates a fundamental shift away from quality undergraduate teaching (Mount & Belanger, 2004). Despite criticisms of this shift, and in order to generate revenue in an increasingly competitive post-secondary marketplace, public institutions, especially high research intensive universities, have been forced to (1) create new partnerships while also redefining faculty priorities and reward structures, (2) employ more contingent faculty
members, and (3) shift the role of many graduate teaching assistants. Within the remainder of this literature review each of these topics will be addressed.

**Redefined Faculty Priorities and Reward Structures**

The metamorphosis of higher education as an institution focused on societal good towards a more corporatized model has resulted in a restructuring of faculty reward systems (Light, Caulkins, & Cox, 2009). Within the changing academic environment, faculty research agendas have become an important source of external funding and thus frequently dominate faculty reward structures, especially at high research intensive universities (Fairweather, 1996, 2002, 2005; Powers, 2003). Some scholars argue that research has become nothing more than a commodity for faculty members to sell to the highest bidder and that universities are supporting this behavior because it allows them to increase cost effectiveness (Kleinman & Vallas, 2001; Light et al., 2009; Musselin, 2007). Other authors suggest that within this type of reward system faculty members may begin to develop an aversion to teaching and service as they are transformed into entrepreneurs who focus on research and publication that can lead to individual profit and prestige (Engell & Dangerfield, 2005; Fairweather, 2005; Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). In recent years, the concept of *faculty entrepreneurialism* has become pervasive in the literature on higher education, and as state and federal funding continue to decline, it is likely that research in this area will increase (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Lee & Rhoads, 2004; Markman et al., 2008; Powers, 2003; Siegel et al., 2007).
Faculty Entrepreneurialism and University-Corporate Partnerships

Faculty entrepreneurialism has been identified as the effort of faculty members to generate revenue for either themselves or their institution and scholars such as Lee and Rhoads (2004) argue that this trend has become an essential component of most research universities in the United States. In part, the roots of faculty and university entrepreneurialism date back to Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 which created a standard patent policy for federal agencies and allowed universities to retain title to inventions made through federally funded research and development programs (Antcil, 2008). Additionally, advances in biomedical science and technology also served as an impetus for patenting and licensing by colleges and universities during the late 1970s and by the time the Bayh-Dole Act was passed several patent lawsuits involving universities (e.g., *Diamond vs. Chakrabarty*, 447 U.S. 303, 1980) were already underway (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008; Mowery, Nelson, Sampat, & Ziedonis, 2001). Evidence gathered by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (2008) aptly demonstrates the impact of the Bayh-Dole Act and other licensing initiatives on the patenting activity of U.S. colleges and universities as their patent numbers have increased substantially from 188 in 1969 to 2891 in 2008.

The Bayh-Dole Act and other patent initiatives were a result of declining levels of federal academic research and development funding which had fallen from around 75% in the mid-1960s to approximately 66% by 1980 and less than 59% from 1997 onward (Renault, 2006). In recent years, continued decreases in government funding for research and development have contributed to the commercialization and privatization of higher education as lost revenue is frequently replenished through financial support from
commercial entities (Tierney, 2006). The growing need for external sources of funding has led to a proliferation of corporate-university partnerships along with the development of spin-off companies and marketable products (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Washburn, 2005). Some argue that these emergent relationships between private industry and universities symbolize a neoliberal agenda as scholars at research institutions are often expected to produce knowledge that is valuable in a global marketplace (Mohrman et al., 2008; Siegel et al., 2007).

Throughout the current literature there are arguments both for and against corporate-university partnerships. Proponents of these relationships suggest that entrepreneurial activities can produce benefits for universities including subsidization of institutional operating costs and salaries, the development of new laboratories and research centers, increased internship and employment opportunities for students, and enhanced individual and institutional prestige (Hines, 2008; Lee & Rhoads, 2004; Markman et al., 2008). In contrast, critics argue that these relationships are at odds with the traditional university culture of openness and sharing and they present serious ethical questions surrounding issues such as conflict of interest with regards to research and university mission shift (Lowe & Gonzalez-Brambila, 2007; Washburn, 2005). Common concerns with regards to conflict of interest include compromised objectivity of research practices, marginalization of research that cannot be sold, misuse of university resources for individual gain, and increased skepticism between researchers and university administrators (Bok, 2005; Geiger, 2004; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Renault, 2006). Additionally, in their longitudinal study of 4,227 university scientists over a 30-year period, Ding, Murray, and Stuart (2006) found that corporate-university partnerships
perpetuate gender bias within faculty cultures as women were 40% less likely to engage in the forms of commercial science that are rewarded with grant money or prized in promotion and tenure decisions.

**Commercialization of Research: Pros and Cons**

As the commercialization of research and the rise of faculty entrepreneurialism have become more prevalent, within the literature several concerns have been propagated (Bessen & Meurer, 2008; Mars, 2007; Thursby & Thursby, 2003). Within the higher education literature, several debates related to faculty entrepreneurialism and the commercialization of research have been put forth and these discussions include topics such as: (a) intellectual property rights (Sun & Baez, 2009), (b) equitable revenue sharing (Markman et al, 2008; Slaughter, Feldman, & Thomas, 2009), (c) beliefs about the traditional role of the university system and research for societal good (i.e., the Mertonian ideal) (Goldstein, 2010; Merton, 1973; Renault, 2006; Stein, 2004), (d) data withholding and the negative impact on student-faculty relationships (Bagley, 2008; Hall, Link, & Scott, 2003; Vogeli et al., 2003), and (e) the protection of individual commercial self-interests (e.g., Blumenthal, Campbell, Causino, & Louis, 1996; Campbel & Blumenthal, 2000; Thursby & Thursby, 2002). Despite the concerns highlighted above, and although some argue for a return to Mertonian ideals (e.g., Renault, 2006), given the decreasing amount of public support for higher education it’s likely that commercialization of research will continue to be an integral component of most research-based colleges and universities within the U.S. (Williams-Jones, 2005).
Faculty Commitment in an Era of Commercialization

While the aforementioned concerns are pervasive throughout the higher education literature, some researchers (e.g., Fairweather, 2002; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) suggest that the conflict of interest which has received the most attention is the concern of whether or not faculty can maintain a commitment to teaching and student contact while engaging in entrepreneurial ventures. Particularly, public scrutiny comes from legislators, parents, and other external constituents who expect teaching to be paramount among faculty priorities and university missions; however, within the prevailing academic culture at many universities it does not find strong support (Lucas, 1998). The historically founded, stereotypical image of a university professor is an individual who has the unique ability to balance a full teaching load, maintain consistent student contact, conduct and publish meaningful research, and perform service within a discipline, department, university, and the outside community (Benjamin, 2003; Leslie, 2002). This stereotype, fair or not, perpetuates the notion that faculty members who are not industrious in all three arenas shouldn’t be promoted or that they are not productive members of the university community. In contrast to the aforementioned stereotype, there are contemporary authors arguing for a reconceptualization of faculty roles and they insist that institutions of higher education will continue to deal with increased public scrutiny until outdated notions of expected faculty productivity are debunked (Finkelstein & Schuster, 2001; Gappa et al., 2007; Gappa & Austin, 2010; Sorcinelli, 2002).

In relation, there are those who suggest that within the contemporary landscape of higher education the idea of the complete faculty member is somewhat antiquated and that in order to cope with changing environmental conditions colleges and universities
must constantly redirect faculty priorities (Finkelstein & Schuster, 2001; Mason, Goulden, & Frasch, 2009). Using data gathered from over 25,000 faculty members via the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Fairweather (2002) found that “simultaneously achieving high levels of productivity in teaching and research-the complete faculty member- is relatively rare” and for “most faculty members, generating high levels of student contact hours diminishes publication rates, and vice versa” (p. 44). Consequently, for the majority of faculty members across institutional types, enhanced pressure to develop lucrative research agendas and increase publications translates to less time in the classroom and reduced contact with students and peers (Fairweather, 2002; Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). In turn, this lack of student contact is often viewed by various internal and external constituents as a lack of productivity and a movement away from a frequently espoused commitment to quality undergraduate education (Zemesky, 2005).

The development of faculty entrepreneurs is also in part related to what some have labeled a shift in commitment as faculty members may feel more closely aligned with their discipline than their institution (Leslie 2002; Mars, 2007). In fact, some authors indicate that university promotion and reward systems that encourage the development of for-profit research agendas may contribute to a lack of institutional commitment as faculty members are released from teaching or service duties and permitted to spend extended periods of time away from the university community (Lee & Rhoads, 2004). Authors such as Campbell and Slaughter (1999) warn that these types of reward systems contribute to university stratification as entrepreneurial faculty members increase status, prestige, and individual economic gain, non-entrepreneurial professors fulfill the more
traditional, presumably less prestigious academic duties such as teaching and advising.

It is important to note that research indicates this type of reward system is not sought after by most college and university professors (Leslie, 2002). In fact, scholars in this area suggest that many faculty members experience commitment conflict as they are torn between increasing pressures to perform research and their desire to provide students with a quality educational experience (Fairweather, 2002; Gappa et al., 2007). Analyzing the responses of 25,700 faculty members from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty, Leslie (2002) found that on average, faculty members do value teaching and gain satisfaction from it but that at many institutions it is not the centerpiece of promotion and tenure decisions. Leslie (2002) asserts “The results present a paradox. On one hand, it is fair to conclude that faculty, regardless of the type of institution in which they are employed, do support teaching effectiveness as the primary criterion for promotion- and that they typically disagree that research and publication should be the primary criterion for promotion” (p. 63). In relation, many authors argue that quality teaching and student development are the centerpiece of most college and university mission statements and to deviate from these ambitions goes against the historically founded purposes of higher education (Boyer, 2009; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; O’Meara & Rice, 2005).

Despite assurances from university leaders that teaching remains the focus of research intensive universities, there is evidence to suggest otherwise (Leslie, 2002). For example, data from the NCES- National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) indicates that faculty members in some disciplines (e.g., natural sciences, engineering) at 4-year public research universities spend less than 55% of their time committed to teaching. In relation, using the responses of over 17,000 full-time, tenure-line faculty
members from two *National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty* databases (1993 & 1999), Fairweather (2005) found that across all institutional types teaching was a negative factor in faculty pay. The same research project also found that teaching undergraduate students was a negative factor in faculty salaries and that this trend appears to be getting stronger as research and publications continue to be positive factors in faculty reward structures. Speaking on the primacy of research and publication in faculty reward structures, Lucas (1998) states “more than a few analysts have concluded, American academe may be moving toward a single faculty reward structure, a system designed to maximize published scholarship and to minimize the time and effort faculty spend on instruction” (p. 192). In an environment with a reward structure that is dominated by research and publication, the traditional roles of teaching, advising, and mentoring are often outsourced to other university constituents such as graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members.

Within the current higher education literature there is research related to the movement away from teaching as a priority for tenure-line faculty but discussions on the impact that this shift may have on graduate teaching assistant mentoring are limited. The partial literature that exists on this topic does not fully examine two important questions. First, in the absence of tenure-line teaching mentors, who will graduate teaching assistants rely on for advice and guidance with regards to instruction and classroom management? Second, can other university constituents who are performing teaching duties be called upon to help fill the mentoring void left by shifts in faculty reward structures and faculty priorities?
The Rise of a Contingent Faculty

The changing university system highlighted in the previous sections has combined with pressure for lower tuition rates and a demand for curricular flexibility to create an increased need for contingent faculty employment (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Gappa, 2008; Herman & Schmid, 2003; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010). For some time, observers of higher education have noted the changing demographics of university faculty within the United States. Where formerly most university faculty members held full-time appointments that provided the economic security of tenure or would lead to consideration of that status, in recent years rapid growth has been in contingent appointments (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Schell & Stock, 2001). Schuster, Finkelstein, Galaz, and Liu (2008) claim “Writ large, academic staffing is moving, seemingly inexorably, toward becoming a contingent workforce. A majority contingent workforce, no less” (p. 323). Despite the influx of contingent appointments across the landscape of higher education, questions still abound as to how contingent positions came to be so prominent and who is fulfilling these positions (Bataille & Brown, 2006). In the following sections, explanations for the rise of a more contingent academic labor force will be offered, along with demographic information about the makeup of this population of instructors.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines contingent faculty members as both part and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track, and the term also includes adjuncts who are generally compensated on a per-course or hourly basis (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). Despite this overarching definition, within the literature and on many college and university campuses contingent faculty members are also listed as course instructors, lecturers, visiting professors, or clinical faculty, just to
name a few (Gappa, 2008; Monks, 2009). Kezar and Sam (2011) indicate that at some institutions there are up to 50 different names for individuals in contingent appointments and that the lack of a common title creates confusion among both internal and external constituents as to the status of many university instructors. Some authors (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Schell & Stock, 2001) suggest that the utilization of a range of diverse names for contingent faculty members may actually be a way to hide these individuals within a complex organizational system. The primary reason for hiding contingent faculty members is to avoid public criticism for the employment of a large number of part-time or adjunct professors as these titles often evoke connotations of poor instructional quality and lack of qualifications (Kazar & Sam, 2011). Gappa (2008) asserts that common descriptors of contingent faculty members (e.g., non-tenure eligible, off tenure-track) are negative and focus on what these individuals are not, rather than on the positive contributions they make to university communities.

**Systemic motivation for a more contingent faculty.**

No matter what they are called, for several reasons over the past three decades the use of contingent faculty members has become commonplace at a majority of public institutions and the trend appears to be continuing (Bradley, 2004; Hanley, 2004; Levine, 1997; Rhoades, 2008). The first reason for the rise of a more contingent faculty is cost-effectiveness. In the past decade public colleges and universities have experienced significant uncertainty in state and federal funding thus they have turned to contingent faculty members as part of the solution to this problem (Ehrenberg, 2006; Schell & Stock, 2001). The use of contingent faculty members offers increased flexibility in budgeting
while also presenting an alternative to tenure track positions. Furthermore, the elimination of mandatory retirement in 1994 has increased the cost of tenure and made the use of contingent faculty an even more attractive option for reducing labor costs (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zang, 2005).

A second motive contributing to the rise of a more contingent faculty is the desire to expand course offerings to fit fluctuating enrollment numbers and career interests (Baron-Nixon, 2007). Enrollment numbers in core and remedial courses are often inconsistent throughout the academic year and contingent faculty members are hired on short notice to teach unplanned sections. The availability of contingent faculty members makes it easy for universities to accommodate shifting enrollment trends with virtually no institutional risk. In addition, frequent changes in the national economy bring with them modifications in the desired skill sets that students should possess upon graduation from a college or university (Baron-Nixon, 2007). Historically, transformations in desired student skill sets occurred over long periods of time allowing faculty members and universities to ease into the shift. However, within today’s rapidly changing, technologically advanced, and internationally expanding market, enormous pressure is placed on universities to react swiftly to changing employer demands (Benjamin, 2003; Bradley, 2004). Seemingly, hiring contingent faculty members is a win-win situation for universities because it allows them to weave specialists in and out of the system in order to meet employer needs while also maintaining an effective cost structure.

The third factor contributing to the rise of a more contingent faculty manifests itself in the form of changing student demographics and incoming student needs (Baron-Nixon, 2007). Increased enrollments have combined with the ideology that a college
degree is necessary for a successful career to create an influx of students who may require basic or remedial coursework that was not addressed in high school. Included in this influx are non-traditional students (e.g., adult learners) who may be entering with years of work experience, but who still require remedial coursework, often related to technology and computer skills. At many institutions the number of remedial courses required to meet incoming student need has swelled to the point that full-time, tenure-line faculty members cannot cover them. Enter contingent faculty members who are qualified to teach these courses and offer a low-cost solution to a growing trend (Baron-Nixon, 2007). In some cases, hiring contingent faculty members to teach undergraduate and graduate courses also helps relieve tenure-line faculty from their teaching duties so that research agendas can be pursued.

Finally, some institutions hire contingent faculty members because they view them as viable candidates for full-time positions when they become available. Once they are in the system, contingent faculty members who perform well and develop relationships with others inside and outside of their department may have an edge when applying for full-time positions (Baron-Nixon, 2007). Additionally, some university administrators such as student and academic affairs professionals may use contingent positions as a springboard to a full-time teaching appointment later in their career.

Despite a recent increase, the use of contingent faculty members is not a contemporary phenomenon (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Benjamin, 2003; Nelson, 1997). Historically, colleges and universities began to hire contingent faculty members during the early 1970s as student enrollments increased. Shortly after, demographers predicted a decline in student enrollments over the following decade but that decrease
never materialized (Schell & Stock, 2001). Originally, contingent faculty members were thought to be a temporary solution to rising numbers of students. However, as college and university enrollments continued to increase and public funding began to decrease, contingent faculty members became a permanent fixture in higher education.

**Contingent faculty by the numbers.**

Over the last 30 years the percentage of college and university teaching done by contingent faculty members has risen substantially (AAUP, 2003; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006; Gappa, 2008). In 1975, 58% of all faculty members were in tenure-line positions but by the year 2000 only 27% of all new faculty members were on a tenure-line (Gravois, 2006). The academic labor shift is aptly demonstrated by recent data from the NCES\(^1\)-*Digest of Educational Statistics* that reveals of the over one million faculty members nationwide, roughly 49% are part-time and 66% of all faculty are neither tenured or on a tenure-line (NCES, 2010). At four-year, public institutions the proportion of part-time, contingent instructors was 41% in the year 2007 (NCES, 2008).

When graduate students are included in the contingent statistics the numbers rise substantially. In the year 2007, graduate teaching assistants (GTA) made up 19% of instructors within all U.S. institutions, 25% at four-year institutions, and over 40% at public, doctoral granting universities (America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010). Research suggests that GTA provide instruction for approximately 40% of the undergraduate classes taught at research universities and they have responsibilities in roughly 60% of the introductory courses taken by first-and

\(^1\)NCES data on contingent faculty positions may only include those who teach part-time.
second-year students (Marincovich et al., 1998). Taken together, contingent faculty members and graduate student instructors compose close to 70% of the teaching workforce in higher education (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010). When compared with the historical trends of faculty hiring, these data indicate a shift away from a more traditional, full-time, tenured professoriate towards a more part-time, contingent labor force. (Nelson, 1997; Musselin, 2007). It is important to note that a good deal of the statistical data on contingent faculty members is older, and thus the trustworthiness could be viewed as a concern.

**Contingent faculty by institutional type.**

Historically, community colleges have employed the largest number of contingent faculty members and in 2007 around 82% of those who taught at these institutions were hired as contingent workers, 69% part-time (NCES, 2008). Excluding community colleges, in 2007 public research/doctoral granting universities had the largest proportion of contingent faculty members at around 71% which was up 5% from 1997 (NCES, 1997, 2008). In the same timeframe, the number of graduate student instructors at these universities increased by 4%. While these increases may not seem substantial at the offset, they become more glaring when one considers that instructional staffs at public research/doctoral granting universities grew by 34% between 1997-2007; the most by 10% over other types of public institutions (American Federation of Teachers, 2008). At public research/doctoral granting institutions the three areas of study that house the largest percentage of classes taught by contingent faculty members are Health Science (56.10%), Human Services (54%) and Education (48.90%), with several other areas over
40% (American Federation of Teachers, 2008; NCES, 2003). It is important to note that within several academic fields contingent faculty members are labeled as clinical or professional faculty. For example, in the health sciences field many of the contingent instructors are physicians or other hospital clinical staff and they may be labeled clinical faculty. Examples of professional faculty include practicing or retired superintendents and principles acting as contingent faculty in the field of education or experienced businessmen/women teaching on short term contracts in business schools.

Public comprehensive universities have also experienced academic labor shifts as the percentage of full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty decreased from 52% in 1997 to 39% in 2007 (NCES, 1997, 2008). During this same time period, the number of part-time contingent workers on these campuses grew significantly from 34% to 44% while the number of graduate student instructors remained steady at around 6%. At public comprehensive universities the academic disciplines that house the highest percentage of courses taught by contingent faculty include Fine Arts (48%), Human Services (46%), and Education (42%) (NCES, 2003).

 Degrees held by contingent faculty.

According to the NCES- National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (2004), contingent faculty members at public research institutions hold the following degrees: 10% have Bachelor’s, 36 % Master’s, 17% professional, and 36% Doctoral. At public doctoral granting institutions contingent faculty members hold the following degrees: 14% Bachelor’s, 54% Master’s, 7% professional, and 24% Doctoral. Contingent faculty members at public comprehensive universities hold similar percentages of degrees as those at public doctoral institutions, the exception being a slight increase in the number of
professional degrees. Contrary to popular belief, when combined, almost 30% of contingent faculty members from the nation’s largest research, doctoral granting, and comprehensive universities hold Doctorates and as contingent positions and PhD programs continue to grow, so will the percentage of PhD toting contingent faculty members (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). Finally, at public two-year institutions, contingent faculty members hold the following degrees: 14% have no Bachelor’s, 21% hold Bachelor’s, 52% Master’s, 3% professional, and 9% Doctoral.

**Hours worked and course load by institutional type.**

The NCES- *National Study of Postsecondary Faculty* (2004) reports that contingent faculty members at public doctoral granting universities average around 18.7 hours per week with 85% of that time spent on teaching, 7% on research/scholarship, and 7% on other related activities (e.g., office hours, grading). At these same institutions, of the contingent faculty who teach undergraduates only, 59% teach one course, 27% teach two courses, and 14% teach three or more courses. For those who teach graduate students only, 81% teach one class, 11% two courses, 7.5% teach three or more. Public research universities have slightly higher workloads for contingent faculty members as the average hours per week is 21 with 74% of the time going towards teaching, and 13% each to research/scholarship and other academic activities. Of the contingent faculty who teach undergraduates only, 53% teach one course, 31% two courses, and 17% three or more. For those who teach graduate students only, 72% have one course, 20% two courses, and 8% three or more.
Contingent faculty members who teach at comprehensive universities work around 18.2 hours a week with 91% of that time going towards teaching, 6% towards research/scholarship, and 3% to other academic tasks. Of the contingent faculty who teach undergraduates only, 49% have one course, 33% two courses, and 18% three or more. For those who teach graduate students only, 75% teach one class, 13% two sections, and 12% three or more. Finally, at public two-year institutions, many of which are community colleges, contingent faculty teach undergraduates only and work an average of 14.6 hours a week with 91% of the time going towards teaching, 2% towards research/scholarship, and 7% to other academic tasks.

*Number of years in current position and contract duration.*

Despite the stereotype that contingent faculty members are “gypsy academics” who travel from institution to institution seeking employment, there is evidence to suggest otherwise (Gappa, 2008; Schuster et al., 2008). Data gathered from the NCES-National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) indicates that at 4-year and 2-year public institutions contingent faculty members have taught for an average of 7.1 years and they average 1.3 jobs\(^2\) per semester. In comparison, full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty at 4-year institutions have held their current positions for an average of 11.9 years and at 2-year institutions the number increases to 12.3 years. Across institutional types, full-time faculty average 1.2 jobs per semester, a number that is similar to their contingent counterparts.

\(^2\) The NCES derived variable for number of jobs identifies whether the respondent had any other employment besides the job held at the institution sampled during the Fall 2003 term. Respondents are given a score of 1 if they hold a single position, full or part time, at their current institution. This variable also identifies whether the other job included instruction at another postsecondary education institution or not and also includes consulting.
While many contingent faculty members teach at only one university, that does not guarantee job security. Data gathered from the NCES-National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) shows that at public 4-year institutions 52.4% of contingent faculty respondents have one term contracts, 24.8% one year, 2.9% two years or more, and 12.1% have unspecified appointments. At 2-year public institutions, 68.2% of contingent faculty respondents have one term contracts, 7.5% one year, 0.9% two years or more, and 16.3% have unspecified contract durations.

**Gender, race, and age ranges of contingent faculty.**

Compared to full-time, tenured and tenure-track populations, within the contingent labor force of higher education there is greater diversity with regards to gender and race (Shell & Stock, 2001). Historically, men have represented the majority of the workforce in higher education. However, between the years 1997-2007 the number of women in the higher education workforce grew 48% from 492,000 to 729,000 compared to only 21% for men (American Federation of Teachers, 2007). Females now comprise over 46% (729,000) of the total number of instructors in higher education with 36% of that total in contingent positions (NCES, 2008).

While the percentage of women in the instructional workforce of higher education has increased substantially as the number of contingent positions has grown, the same cannot necessarily be said for racial/ethnic minorities, although there have been some advances (American Federation of Teachers, 2008; Schuster et al., 2008). Since 1997, the percentage of white, non-Hispanic faculty members has dropped by 7% with the majority of this decrease occurring in the full-time, tenure and tenure-line positions (NCES, 1997,
(American Federation of Teachers, 2007). Finally, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics saw small increases of just over 1% with the majority of these individuals working in contingent positions (NCES, 1997, 2008). In 2003, across institutional types, the race/ethnicity of contingent faculty members was distributed in the following percentages: White, non-Hispanic (85.3%), Black/African-American (5.9%), Hispanic (3.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.0%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (1.6%) (NCES, 2004).

Data from the NCES-Digest of Education Statistics (2003) indicates that across institutional types contingent faculty members vary in age. For example, at public research institutions 5.6% of contingent faculty members are under the age of 30, 18.5% are between 30-39 years of age, 26% are between the ages of 40-49, and 51.3% are above 50. At public doctoral institutions contingent faculty have the following range of ages: 8.9% are under the age of 30, 18.2% are between the ages of 30-39, 27.4% are 40-49 years of age, and 52.3% are over 50. Public comprehensive universities host contingent faculty in the following age ranges: 5.7% under 30 years of age, 19% each in the 30-39 and 40-49 age range, and 57% over 50 years of age. Finally, at public 2-year institutions contingent faculty under the age of 30 represent 4.4% of the population, 18.6% are between 30-39, 26.1% between 40-49, and 51% are 50 years or older. Interestingly, across institutional types the majority of contingent faculty members are over the age of 50, indicating the existence of an experienced group of instructors, many who may be post-retirement rehires. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by these statistics, across the
landscape of the U.S. higher education system contingent faculty members represent a range of ages and career stages which makes it difficult to determine the needs of this population of instructors.

**Impact of a more contingent faculty on students.**

While contingent faculty members may be an economically sound solution to lowering instructional costs and increasing institutional flexibility, throughout the literature there are also concerns surrounding the use of a growing contingent labor force. First, some scholars (Benjamin, 2002, 2003; Eagan & Jaegaer, 2009; Jaeger, 2008; Umbach, 2008) suggest that overutilization can have negative consequences for undergraduate students; however, research in this area presents conflicting evidence. For example, in a study of 30,000 student transcripts from 4-year institutions, Jaeger and Hinz (2008) found that students who were primarily taught by part-time, contingent faculty members were less likely to return the for their sophomore year. Another study performed by Ehrenberg and Zhang (2004) found that graduation rates decreased when students were taught by both full and part-time contingent faculty members. Harrington and Schibik (2001) also found that between 1997-2001 students entering in the fall semester were less likely to return for the spring semester if they had more than half of their courses taught by contingent faculty members.

In contrast, in their study of 3,700 first year students from multiple disciplines at a 4-year, public research intensive university, Ronco and Cahill (2004) found little evidence that retention rates were linked to instructor type; rather, that student retention and achievement were tied to educational background and experience. Kehberg and
Turpin (2002) studied the effect of exposure to contingent faculty on GPA and retention and found that the negative relationships that existed disappeared when academic preparation was taken into account. In relation, several studies (Maynard, 2000; Maynard & Joseph, 2008; Outcalt, 2003) have demonstrated that contingent faculty members at both 2-year and 4-year institutions are equally or more committed than their tenure-line colleagues. Finally, Landrum (2009) explored instructional differences between full-time and part-time faculty within eight academic units at a 4-year institution and found no significant differences in instructional capacity or student satisfaction.

Landrum (2009) and others (e.g., Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gappa et al., 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2011) have indicated that significant differences exist in the support mechanisms provided to contingent faculty members versus full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty members. Lack of institutional support for contingent faculty members is a well-documented phenomenon in higher education (e.g., Bradley, 2004; Louis, 2009; Smallwood, 2004; Townsend, 2003) and it is most prominent in three areas: classroom, professional, and personal support. Classroom support refers to the materials (e.g., text books), technologies (e.g., an institutional email address, computer software), and space (e.g., office) it takes for contingent faculty members to be successful in today’s modern classrooms. Professional support refers to specialized development opportunities, invitations to departmental meetings, recognition of their contributions to undergraduate and graduate education, and access to research projects and funding. Finally, personal support manifests itself in the forms of health benefits, retirement plans and competitive salaries. Within the literature, there are a host of scholars who have documented institutional deficiencies in all three areas of support while also postulating
the consequences of ignoring this trend.

The first consequence of a lack of institutional support is that it often leaves contingent faculty members feeling isolated from peers and marginalized by the system (American Federation of Teachers, 2008; Smallwood, 2004; Townsend, 2003). Feelings of isolation can lead to additional consequences as contingent faculty members may withdraw from the campus community, spend less time on their course plans and grading, and engage with their students on an inconsistent basis (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Bradley, 2004). A lack of office space and virtually no monetary incentives are just two of the reasons contingent faculty members may be less connected to campus culture and have fewer interactions with students.

An extensive body of research exists on the positive outcomes related to student-faculty relationships (e.g., Astin, 1993; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) and it stands to reason that a lack of interactions between contingent faculty members and students could be potentially problematic. Jaeger (2008) states, “The criticisms of increased employment of contingent faculty are based on research that supports the idea that faculty-student interaction leads to positive outcomes, including increased cognitive and affective development, improved academic performance,… and increased overall satisfaction with the college experience” (p. 42). Lack of connections with students, peers, and the general campus culture helps perpetuate the stereotype that contingent faculty are not valid members of the university community and should not be treated as such (Baron-Nixon, 2007).
Satisfaction of contingent faculty members.

Despite the aforementioned conditions, the majority of contingent faculty members are not unsatisfied with their appointment (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Conley & Leslie, 2002). In fact, data from the NCES-National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) demonstrates otherwise as 90.5% of contingent faculty at 4-year institutions and 92.5% at 2-year institutions reported overall satisfaction with their position. In addition, 88.1% of contingent faculty at 4-year schools and 88.7% at 2-year institutions reported satisfaction with their workload. In comparison, full-time faculty reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their workload, 73.2% at 4-year schools and 76.9% at 2 year institutions.

While contingent faculty satisfaction with overall position and workload may be positive, the statistics tell a different story when it comes to satisfaction with benefits and salary. Contingent faculty at 2 and 4-year institutions reported an average of 65% satisfaction rate with regards to salary and 51.5% satisfaction rate with regards to benefits. Lower-levels of satisfaction may stem from the fact that on average contingent faculty members earn almost half the amount per course than their tenured or tenure-line counterparts and they also have little to no job security. NCES-National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) numbers indicates that on average, at public comprehensive universities, contingent faculty members earn $4,972 per course while tenured/tenure-line faculty members earn $10,731 per class. The variation between the groups is even larger at public research institutions where contingent faculty members average $7,010 per course and tenure/tenure-line faculty members average $20,252. In part, the variation in salary is due to the research and service requirements that come with
tenure line positions but that does not mean that inequalities are nonexistent.

Despite the low satisfaction rates with regards to salary and benefits, 90% of contingent faculty surveyed for the NCES- *National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty* (2004) reported that they would choose an academic career again. In part, many contingent faculty members are content in their positions because they are not seeking full-time tenure-line appointments. Data from the NCES- *National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty* (2004) helps demonstrate this point as 69% of part-time contingent faulty respondents from 4-year institutions indicated that they were not seeking full-time teaching appointments. In relation, 58.4% of part-time contingent faculty respondents from 2-year institutions reported the same ambitions. These data partially dispel a commonly held belief that contingent faculty members only teach part-time or are on short-term contracts because they cannot find or are not qualified for tenure-line positions. While there are still a percentage of tenure-line seekers among contingent faculty members, there are also a host of other reasons why these individuals accept part-time or short-term employment. The following section will review some of these motivations.

**Motivation for accepting contingent appointments.**

As indicated above, about a third of all contingent faculty members accept their position with the hope of it leading to a tenure-track appointment. Baldwin and Chronister (2002) have termed these individuals *tenure-track hopefuls* and they assert that individuals in this cohort are dedicated to pursuing an academic career by whatever means necessary. Despite their enthusiasm for teaching, many tenure-track hopefuls
become frustrated by the following: (1) the lack of respect they are shown by their peers, (2) an institutional lack of support for research and professional development, and (3) their own perceptions about becoming less marketable the longer they stay in these types of positions (Shell & Stock, 2001). While a desire for the seemingly elusive tenure-track appointment may remain a motivating factor for individuals in this cohort, many become comfortable with their contingent position and work hard to develop into quality instructors who make a difference in the lives of students (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002).

In contrast to the tenure-track hopefuls, a certain percentage of contingent faculty members choose a contingent career path because they have become disenchanted with the tenure-track. One reason for this disenchantment is the observation of the lifestyle and pressures of those on the tenure-track during graduate school (Mason et al., 2009). A second reason is the development of a personal interest and passion for teaching and not necessarily for research. Finally, there is a set of contingent faculty members who were once in tenure-track positions but chose to leave because of interdepartmental politics and vague tenure requirements. Despite frequently being labeled second-class academics, research by Baldwin and Chronister (2002) suggests that many tenure rejecters view their role as contingent faculty to be positive, personally rewarding, and important to the university system. The same authors state, “Interestingly, many of them continue some scholarship in addition to their teaching but do not see it as the raison d’être of their career” (p. 139). Indeed, data from the NCES-National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (2004) indicates that nearly 40% of all contingent faculty respondents from 4-year institutions perform research or write for professional journals.
Among contingent faculty across the U.S. there are a host of instructors who choose these types of positions because they do not have a terminal degree in their discipline but they still want to teach at the university level (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002). Many of these contingent faculty members are active professionals who teach in addition to their full-time professional position. With reference to this type of contingent faculty member Baron-Nixon (2007) asserts “Their motivations may include interest in keeping up with the academic side, altruism-helping to prepare the next generation of professionals, or recruitment by schools that want to provide their students early exposure to practitioners in the disciplines” (p. 7). For these individuals, the flexibility of contingent appointments is appealing because it allows them to fulfill their professional obligations while still maintaining a relationship with the academy. Research by Maynard and Joseph (2008) indicates working professionals who teach voluntarily can be classified as both highly motivated and satisfied when compared to groups such as the previously mentioned tenure-track hopefuls.

In addition to the aforementioned contingent faculty motivations, many individuals who choose contingent positions do so as part of a two-career job search. Research by Baldwin and Chronister (2002) found “The career paths of a significant number of the…non-tenure-track faculty we met have been shaped by their roles in two-career couples or families. In most but not all cases, the ‘trailing’ or ‘accompanying’ partner was female” (p. 140). The same research project found that the majority of accompanying partners were happy with their continent arrangements either because they were not seeking tenured appointments or because they felt it was a way to earn a future tenure-track position. In addition, some accompanying partners were not previously
employed in academia and thus their new contingent teaching positions led to the beginning of a second-career (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Maynard & Joseph, 2008).

The data and opinions offered in the previous sections indicate that as a whole, contingent faculty members are a diverse group of individuals from a range of academic backgrounds who teach for a myriad of reasons. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of contingent faculty members choose these types of positions, they are not traveling from institution to institution as freeway scholars, and they are satisfied with their teaching experiences (NCES, 2004). While their differences may be part of the strength of contingent faculties, a lack of typicality also makes it difficult to ascertain their needs and experiences in order to increase institutional support (Monks, 2009). Indeed, the previous sections indicate that there is not a typical type of contingent faculty member although a majority of them do share similar experiences such as a lack of institutional support, limited benefits and pay, virtually no job security, and feelings of marginalization.

The data presented in the previous sections offers primarily statistical information on contingent faculty members. While this data is informative, some authors (e.g., Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Levin & Shaker, 2011) suggest that because contingent faculty members teach in a range of departments and for many reasons more in-depth, qualitative studies about their teaching methods, motives for teaching, and relationships with other university constituents must be performed. These same authors also argue that preconceived negative notions about non-tenure track instructors have created a gap in the literature on contingent faculty and that critical research related to the positive contributions these individuals make to the university
community should be performed. Based on the current gaps in the literature, two key questions that need exploration are as follows. First, besides teaching, what other contributions do or can contingent faculty members make to the university community? Second, are there commonly held beliefs or ideologies that prevent contingent faculty members from being viewed and accepted as valued members of the university community?

**Impact of Contingent Faculty on Institutional Culture and Climate**

While many are quick to blame contingent faculty members for a lack of commitment to students and the academic community, Baldwin and Chronister (2002) indicate that the problem may be systematic as a *marginalized model* of faculty employment is common among some institutions of higher education. Under this model, institutional intent is to utilize contingent faculty members as a cost-saving resource, as well as to maintain flexibility with regards to staffing. For contingent faculty members, marginalized models of employment create limited status and respect within the institution, lack of voice in academic governance, virtually no access to professional development resources, and limited opportunities for advancement (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002). In addition, utilization of a marginalized model of faculty employment may also impact institutional culture and climate as traditional norms, values, and assumptions are challenged by new organizational practices.

As was noted earlier, institutions of higher education are certainly influenced by powerful external factors such as demographics, economic conditions, and political agendas. However, these institutions are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from
within (Schein, 2010). Internal dynamics have roots in the history of the organization and derive their power from the values, beliefs, processes, and goals of those most intimately involved in the institution’s workings (Tierney, 1988). These internal dynamics form the foundation of organizational cultures and climates which in turn have an impact on the performance of individuals and institutions as a whole. Tierney (1988) asserts “As decision making contexts grow more obscure, costs increase, and resources become more difficult to allocate, leaders in higher education can benefit from understanding their institutions as cultural entities” (p. 5). In the following sections, organizational theories related to culture and climate will be explored. These theoretical frameworks will be used to illuminate specific trends related to the increase of contingent faculty and the impact it can have on institutional culture and climate.

**Defining organizational culture.**

Culture is an abstraction, but the forces that are generated in social and organizational situations deriving from culture are real and powerful. Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel” (p. 18). Organizational culture is at the core of institutional uniqueness with no two institutional cultures ever being exactly the same. Hoy and Miskel (2008) state that “organizational culture is a system of shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinctive identity” (p. 177). These cultures are composed of several elements such as norms, values, and tacit assumptions that individuals within the organization recognize and abide by (Schein, 2010). The
following sections will offer an overview of these theoretical cultural elements and explore their impact on institutional cultures within research universities.

These particular theoretical components will be highlighted because they form the foundation of organizational cultures which in turn influence individual and institutional goals and performance. In their work *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy* Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) contend that academic “culture provides a container. It establishes roles, rules, attitudes, behaviors, and practices. It describes a way for people to be safe. Culture provides predictability and ascribes importance to one’s actions and one’s presence in the world” (p. 12). Exploring the concepts of institutional culture is important because as Schein (2010) argues, “The bottom line for leaders is that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead” (p. 22).

**Elements of organizational cultures.**

The first component of organizational culture, the one that several authors (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 1988) suggest defines a major slice of identity, is institutional *norms*. Norms often develop at two levels, *formal and informal*. Formal norms are set forth by the organization and are often monitored by supervisors; they are the official expectations that guide behavior (Schein, 2010). Formalized organizational norms represent what the institution stands for and they are often manifested in stories, myths, and ceremonies (Tierney, 1988).
In contrast, informal norms are those developed by participants within an organization and they are often enforced by social pressures. Informal norms are usually unwritten expectations that impact behavior and occur just below the surface of observable experience (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In both varieties, norms are an influential component of organizational culture as they inform institutional mission along with individual goals and behaviors (Argyris, 1964). When compared to other components of institutional culture (e.g. values), norms are much more visible and they provide a clear means for individuals to increase understanding of the culture of a particular organization. “Norms determine the way people dress and talk; the way participants respond to authority, conflict, and pressure; and the way people balance self-interests with organizational interests” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 179). Institutional norms are often maintained through sanctions and rewards as individuals are compensated and encouraged when they conform and ostracized and punished when they deviate (Schein, 2010).

The second component of organizational culture manifests itself in the form of values; shared beliefs about what is desirable. Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest that values are reflections of the underlying assumptions of an organizational culture and they help define what members should do if they hope to be successful within a particular context. Shared values influence individual and collective behaviors and help define the individual identity of an organization; common examples include trust, cooperation, teamwork, and egalitarianism (Argyris, 1964). As values become more ingrained within organizational units they become what Hoy and Miskel (2008) term core values, “the dominant values that most of the organizational members accept and share; they
influence virtually every aspect of organizational life” (p. 180). While having strong organizational values can be a positive characteristic, it is important to note that when beliefs and values are held too tightly the consequences can include a lack of flexibility, an inability to adapt when change is needed, and the marginalization of certain individuals or groups.

The third component of organizational culture comes in the form of *tacit assumptions*. “Tacit assumptions are abstract premises about the nature of human relationships, human nature, reality, and the environment” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008 p. 181). Within organizations, patterns of assumptions are invented, discovered, or developed as institutions learn to deal with internal and external adaptation and change (Schein, 2010). As these assumptions prove trustworthy and reliable they become further embedded in the fabric of the organization making them more difficult to change. “At its deepest level, culture is the collective manifestation of tacit assumptions. When organizations develop consistent and articulate patterns of basic assumptions they have strong cultures” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 181). The fusing of these three cultural components can be a powerful combination that results in cohesiveness, effectiveness, and a positive organizational framework on which to build (Schein, 2010). It is also important to remember that because strong cultures serve to guide and shape the attitudes and behaviors of those within an organization, they can also promote dysfunctional actions that impede rather than empower (Argyris, 1964).
Defining organizational climate.

Along with institutional cultures, organizational climates help define and separate organizations from one another. Broadly speaking, institutional climate refers to individuals’ perceptions of the work environment and it is influenced by formal and informal organizational norms, individual personalities, and institutional leadership. “Put simply, the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence behavior of each school’s members is the organizational climate” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 198). Climate can also be defined as people’s perceptions of how they are treated in a specific environment; the key difference between culture and climate rests with perception. Hoy and Miskel suggest three lenses through which institutional climate can be assessed: (1) openness, (2) health, and (3) citizenship.

The first type of organizational climate is characterized by openness. Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest that open climate is marked by cooperation and respect within the faculty and between the faculty and administrators. Within open climates, supervisors are key players as they listen and are open to suggestions, provide feedback and praise to instructors, and support the faculty by respecting their professional competencies. In these environments, supervisors also allow faculty to perform duties without close scrutiny (low-directiveness) and they try to avoid bureaucratic trivia whenever possible (low-restrictiveness). Consequently, faculty members also serve as a support network (high-collegial relations) as they know each other well (high-intimacy) and are committed to shared goals (low-disengagement) (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Behavior demonstrated within an open climate is genuinely positive and authentic. Some authors (e.g., Brown, 2000; Thomas, 2009; Tierney, 1990) suggest that institutions with open
climates are positively related to faculty participation in decision making and high levels of effectiveness. In addition, open climates foster a sense of trust which has been shown to be positively correlated with high levels of student achievement, collective efficacy, and academic optimism (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Consequently, high levels of openness within an organization positively correlate with institutional flexibility and the ability to change (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In contrast, the closed climate is characterized by the following: (1) strict adherence to routine tasks (high-restrictiveness), (2) low-levels of faculty commitment (high-disengagement), (3) controlling, rigid, and unresponsive leadership (high-directiveness and low-supportiveness), and (4) lack of professional respect and friendship among the faculty (low-intimacy). Hoy and Miskel (2008) state, closed climates have leaders who “are nonsupportive, inflexible, hindering, and controlling and a faculty that is divided, intolerant, apathetic, and uncommitted” (p. 201). Closed environments foster a sense of distrust which can lead to lower-levels of both student achievement and collective self-efficacy.

The second framework for thinking about institutional climate is organizational health. Organizational health is directly related to conditions that either facilitate growth and development (i.e., healthy) or hinder healthy organizational dynamics (i.e., unhealthy). Hoy and Miskel (2008) assert, “A school with a healthy organizational climate is one that copes successfully with its environment as it mobilizes its resources and efforts to achieve its goals” (p. 202). Within schools, organizational health is defined by a myriad of critical components that help meet the needs of the internalized social system along with three levels of control or responsibility. The first level of control,
**institutional**, refers to the connection between the organization and its environment. When organizations do not experience undue pressure and interference from external environmental influences, it can be assumed that they have a high degree of **institutional integrity**. Hoy and Miskel state, “institutional integrity is the school’s ability to adapt to its environment and cope in ways that maintain soundness of its educational programs” (p. 203). Institutional integrity protects the organization from narrow, vested interests of the community and allows for flexibility and change to occur when necessary.

The next level of control or responsibility, **managerial**, helps control the internal efforts of the organization and usually encompasses a range of responsibilities that vary greatly from those of faculty; administrators control the managerial function. Supervisors such as provosts, academic deans, department chairs, or unit directors serve as the primary administrative officers within colleges and universities and as leaders they must find ways to develop loyalty among the faculty, motivate instructors, and coordinate efforts across institutional boundaries. Within the managerial level of control, four key aspects must be analyzed if organizational health is to be determined, they include: (1) *supervisor influence*-the ability to influence the decisions of superiors, (2) *consideration*-supervisor behavior that is open and supportive, (3) *initiating structure*-supervisor defines work expectations, performance standards, and procedures, and (4) *resource support*-extent to which supervisor provides faculty members with the appropriate resources (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Finally, the third level of responsibility, the **technical function**, refers to the teaching-learning process, of which faculty members should be directly responsible. Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest, “Educated students are the product of schools, and the entire
technical subsystem revolves around the problems associated with effective learning and teaching” (p. 203). Two key elements, morale and academic emphasis, serve as the core of the technical level of responsibility. In essence, morale refers to the enthusiasm, confidence, and perceived accomplishments of the faculty and academic emphasis is the institutions push for student achievement. In sum, Hoy and Miskel claim “a healthy organization is one in which the technical, managerial, and institutional levels are in harmony. The organization is both meeting its needs and successfully coping with disruptive outside forces as it directs its energies toward its mission” (p. 203). Research on school climate suggests that the health of an institution is directly correlated with student achievement, faculty engagement levels, and instructor efficacy; the higher the health index, the more successful the university.

The third framework for analyzing institutional climates manifests itself in the form of organizational citizenship. According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), “Organizational citizenship is behavior that goes beyond the formal responsibilities of the role by actions that occur freely to help others achieve the task at hand” (p. 207). When individuals within an organization (e.g., faculty members) are willing to exert extra effort the overall performance of the institution improves. Organizational citizenship has five aspects: (1) altruism-giving time and assistance freely, (2) conscientiousness, working efficiently and going beyond expectations, (3) sportsmanship-being constructive and not complaining, (4) courtesy-providing advance notices and reminders, (5) civic virtue-volunteering within organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The combination of these aspects results in an overall climate of citizenship, which can be a powerful tool for increasing institutional effectiveness and student achievement.
Challenges to traditional faculty norms, values, and assumptions.

In their book, *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy*, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) assert that traditional faculty norms and values such as academic freedom, tenure, autonomy, and participation in academic governance are part of what they term the *Collegial Culture*. These same authors argue “In most academic institutions, although its strength is diminishing, the collegial culture is still very powerful and has a strong influence on the ways in which faculty members interact, as well as what they value and reward” (p. 27). Within the context of contemporary research universities, three primary faculty cultural norms and values that have been impacted by the use of a more contingent faculty are academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

Academic freedom involves an individual’s right to teach or conduct research and the pursuit of knowledge independent of outside powers or pressures and is considered by many to be the foundation of academic life and the academy as a whole (AAUP, 2006; Tierney, 1998). In relation, the existence of tenure helps protect academic freedom and some scholars argue that academic freedom and tenure represent a reciprocal relationship where each element is dependent on the other for survival (AAUP, 2006). Academic tenure and freedom guarantee that faculty will have the autonomy to explore topics in their specific area of concentration without repercussions for breaking with tradition, trying new methods, or discovering unpopular results (Chait, 2002; DeGeorge, 1997). Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) assert “The value of autonomy is particularly manifest in and reinforced by the doctrine of academic freedom. This is one of the dominant norms of the collegial culture” (p. 31).
Unfortunately, the tenuous positions most contingent faculty members find themselves in creates a justifiable fear about challenging the status quo because in the majority of cases they are not explicitly protected by university policies with regards to academic freedom (Schneirov, 2003). While tenured positions may not be available for all higher education instructors, several authors (e.g., Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Baron-Nixon, 2007; Benjamin, 2003; Schell & Stock, 2001) do argue that academic freedom is an essential component of faculty culture that should be guaranteed to all those who teach at the university level. These same authors argue that to forgo this protection would not only indicate an unhealthy organizational climate due to lack of technical functionality on the part of the faculty, but it also would be problematic to the long-term performance of research universities for several reasons.

First, pedagogically, academic freedom can lead to high levels of quality teaching as faculty have the autonomy to experiment with diverse approaches to student learning, challenge students by advancing assorted perspectives, and support students through one-on-one interactions and advising sessions (Chemerinsky, 1998; DeGeorge, 1997). The notion of challenge and support is at the foundation of holistic student development and it demonstrates a commitment to quality teaching which is imperative as public scrutiny of undergraduate education continues to mount (Kegan, 1994; Meacham & Gaff, 2006). Studies performed by several researchers (e.g., Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Benjamin, 2002) confirm that contingent faculty members are often reluctant to challenge students because they fear retribution in the form of dismissal.

Next, in terms of research, compared with the corporate world where research is typically performed for monetary gains, academic freedom in the academy enables
faculty members to conduct the kinds of studies that have led to advances in fields such as medicine and information technology; research for the greater good of society (Brand, 1999). In several legal proceedings (e.g., Sweezy vs. New Hampshire, 1957) the U.S. Supreme Court has asserted that imposing intellectual limitations upon college and university faculty members would be detrimental to the future of our nation as the university system advances knowledge through innovative teaching and research (Tierney, 1998). Without a guarantee of academic freedom, faculty members may be reluctant to utilize creative investigative methods and perform cutting edge research for societal good (Chemerinsky, 1998). In addition, there are those (e.g., Baron-Nixon, 2007; Bataille & Brown, 2006; Finkelstein et al., 1998) who suggest that as a new academic generation comes to fruition there will be more “doctorate toting” contingent faculty members who would like to perform research despite the fact that it is not a requirement of their appointment. To forgo inclusion of contingent faculty members into university policies on protection of academic freedom could diminish the research outputs of these young scholars, especially in academic fields where corporate consulting is limited (Schell & Stock, 2001).

Third, as student consumerism increasingly permeates the American higher education system some argue that colleges and universities must look to tenure and academic freedom to protect institutional integrity and quality (Delucci & Smith, 1997). The current literature suggests that students are matriculating to college and university campuses with a vocational focus and expectations that they can work less and still receive high grades as a reward for paying tuition (Korgen & Delucchi, 2002; Roosevelt, 2009). This amalgamation of student consumerism, vocational focus, and decreased
student effort threatens degree quality and the idea that a general education curriculum is an essential component of holistic learning and development (Gates, 2000; Keohane, 2006). Straying from a general education curriculum is dangerous for many universities because it deviates from institutional mission statements, compromises institutional integrity, promotes a trade-school mentality, and detracts from holistic student development (Greenwald & Gilmore, 1997).

In order to maintain institutional integrity and programmatic quality, authors such as Korgen and Delucchi (2002) contend that colleges and universities must remind students that degrees are granted on the basis of learning, and not the payment of tuition. In a consumer-driven market, some argue that the concepts of tenure and academic freedom become indispensable as institutions must reestablish their legitimacy and the intellectual authority of the faculty by debunking the notion that the customer is always right (Duderstadt & Womack, 2003; Greenwald & Gilmore, 1997). “To accomplish this, colleges and universities must provide faculty with the authority and institutional support to withstand the potential hostility of displeased students who expect entertainment and an easy A” (Korgen & Delucchi, 2002, p. 106). Tenure and academic freedom provide this support as faculty members, including contingents, would not fear the repercussions of challenging students and making them work for grades. While tenured faculty members have little cause to fear student retribution, tenure-track and contingent faculty members need institutional support if they are going to challenge students in the classroom (Benjamin, 2002). In her chapter Contingent Faculty and Student Learning: Welcome to the Strativersity, Thompson (2003) argues “Surely, contingent faculty members can seldom advocate curriculum reform, support unpopular causes, or take risks
in an atmosphere like this” (p. 44).

In relation, some authors suggest that the increase of contingent faculty members is an attack on tenure, academic freedom, and the faculty themselves as the proliferation of non-tenure eligible individuals detracts from the power of the faculty (Benjamin, 2003; Chait, 2006). Within a changing academic labor system, the use of contingent faculty members often falls under the purview of administrators instead of departmental faculty (Rhoades, 1996). This managerial change represents a power shift within the academy and it adds to an already existing tension between faculty and the administration. In his New Pathways study, Peter Byrne (1997) warns that selection and evaluation of contingent faculty members by administrators instead of a peer review team threatens academic freedom and quality because it “enhances the probability that the decision will be based on collateral factors-ranging from popularity with a benefactor to political affinity” (p. 12).

In addition to decreased academic freedom, some (e.g., American Association of University Professors) argue that another consequence that comes with a more contingent labor force is the loss of faulty voice due to limited shared governance opportunities (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). Faculty participation in campus governance has a storied history in higher education and it was an important component of the 1940 AAUP Statement on Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure. For generations, faculty members have served in academic governance capacities within a shared governance model. In Trakman’s (2008) article An Outsiders View of Governance Models he states “Shared governance reflects the view that colleges and universities ought to be run by their most immediate stakeholders, primarily by faculty, professional staff, and students. The
rationale is that governance should inhere in those who have the greatest stake in the university and are best equipped to understand its academic mission” (p. 41). As increased numbers of contingent faculty members with no academic governance rights are employed within higher education, the collective voice of the faculty may be diminished (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

For example, in their research on faculty governance and contingent faculty members, Baldwin and Chronister (2002) found the only 10% of doctoral granting institutions allow contingent faculty members, full and part-time, to serve on the faculty senate or similar academic governance boards. This lack of permissible citizenship indicates a tacit assumption that contingent faculty members are not true members of the university community because they are not tenured or on a tenure-line. Denying contingent faculty the ability to fully participate in the university community is also indicative of both a closed organizational climate and what some have called the academic or faculty hierarchy (Kuh & Whit, 1988). Consequently, this tacit assumption and subsequent denial of governance rights could have negative impacts on the long-term performance of faculties and universities.

For instance, growing numbers of contingent faculty members means that a shrinking number of tenured or tenure-line faculty with a weaker collective voice must share the weight of governance (Rhoades, 2008). In his article *Contingent Faculty: A New Social Movement Takes Place*, Schneirov (2003) argues “The increasing reliance on contingent faculty drains power away from the faculty in relation to the administration…and their [contingent faculty] increasing use makes the model of shared governance less relevant to colleges and universities” (p. 41). As a growing number of
senior level faculty members work towards retirement and cut back on their service commitments, a smaller number of younger full-time, tenure-line faculty members are expected to assume responsibility and give more hours of their time to institutional service (Nutting, 2003; Schneirov, 2003). In turn, increasing service commitments means less time spent with students, time that was already limited because of research pressures. Nutting (2003) argues that under these conditions “full-time faculty find less time to focus on coordinating courses and assessing, developing, and revising institutional practices and degree programs” and that “teaching and learning are compromised, and faculty, staff, and students suffer” (p. 38). For many young faculty members, the increased service commitment due to institutional restraints on who can participate in faculty governance leads to increased stress and exhaustion (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

To help relieve some of the burden of institutional service commitments several authors (e.g., Baron-Nixon, 2007; Lyons, 2007; Nutting, 2003) are calling for a more inclusive academic governance structure that would allow contingent faculty members to participate. Allowing contingent faculty members to participate in academic governance or institutional service initiatives (e.g., committees, task forces) would also help promote developmental organizational climates as active participation would help them (1) connect with peers throughout the university, (2) become more aware of institutional and departmental policies and procedures, and (3) learn more about how the courses they teach connect with the larger departmental or university curriculum (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Schell & Stock, 2001). Research by Baldwin and Chronister (2002) indicates that while some contingent faculty members do not want to participate in university service
initiatives, a great many desire to participate in academic governance so they can influence policies that have an immediate impact on their roles as instructors. Inclusion of contingent faculty members in institutional life also sends several powerful messages including that they are a vital component of the university system, that their opinions, needs, and experiences are important, and that they can have unique perspectives that tenure-line faculty and administrators may not possess (Baron-Nixon, 2007). Embracing the inclusion of contingent faculty members in academic decision making and governance also helps promote a climate that is characterized by openness (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

In addition to the dominant faculty culture, within university environments there are also a host of subcultures that may have individual subcultural styles which stand in opposition to traditional cultural norms (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988). In our everyday lives we are all part of multiple cultures in diverse contexts. Many of us are in one way or another connected to the dominant culture whether it is by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other overarching characteristic which we may overlook on a day-to-day basis. In contrast, most of us are also members of smaller, less recognized cultures that may be invisible to the majority population but which may be significant in our day-to-day lives (Hebdige, 1979; Tierney, 1988). These smaller, unique cultures can be termed subcultures.

On most college campuses the dominant faculty culture is that of tenured and tenure-line faculty members (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). Consequently, as the needs and interests of this dominant culture are emphasized and met, many historically underrepresented or unrecognized groups such as graduate teaching assistants and
contingent faculty members are forced onto the margins; they become invisible and are ignored. Hebdige (1979) and others (e.g., Brokfield, 2005; Horkheimer, 1974) have referred to this societal domination and naturalization as hegemony and Clark (1993) states that “hegemony means precisely the domination of major aspects of society through the control of the major social institutions, and the shaping of society’s culture in the image of that of the dominant class” (p. 189). It is here, against the dominant aspects of society and institutional cultures that subcultures are formed (Kuh & Whit, 1988).

The domination of specific cultural entities on university campuses and beyond creates and maintains specific sets of norms. Hebdige (1979) referred to norms as the “normally hidden sets of rules, codes and conventions through which meanings particular to specific social groups (i.e., those in power) are rendered universal and ‘given’ for the whole of society” (p. 9). Critical theorists (e.g., Brookfield, 2005; Reinelt & Roach, 2007) call these norms ideological beliefs. These norms, or ideologies, are sustained through the process of hegemony as the dominant social groups exert complete authority over subordinate groups (i.e., subcultures) and create the illusion that the will and norms of the dominant class are legitimate and natural. It is important to note that contemporary critical theorists such as Brookfield (2005) and Kincheloe and McLaren (2003) argue that ideological beliefs are much more subtle and ambiguous than traditional critical theorists suggest. While they do not deny the power or existence of dominant ideological beliefs and structures, what these authors are suggesting is that they are not overtly imposed on people by a secret cohort of ruling-class bureaucrats or power seekers.

Whether overt or covert, Hebdige (1979) and others assert that this tension between the norms of the dominant class and those of subordinate groups can be found
on the surface of subcultural *style*. Clarke (1993) argues that “the stylistic core (if there is one) can be located in the expression of a partly-negotiated opposition to the values of the wider society” (p. 177). In defiance of the dominant culture or in order to adapt to their unique environment, some subcultures create a complex and unique style (i.e., culture) of their own which reflects the values, norms, and beliefs about who they are and what they stand for or against (Kuh & Whit, 1988; Schein 2010). Clarke (1993) states, “The eventually produced style is more than the simple amalgam of all the separate elements—it derives its specific symbolic quality from the arrangement of all the elements together in one whole *ensemble*, embodying and expressing the group’s self-consciousness” (p. 179).

Every subcultural style consists of multiple elements which when combined form the foundation and identity of individual subcultures (Schein, 2010).

Subcultural style is composed of elements such as artifacts, behaviors, language, and a group consciousness that have specific meanings which have been transformed, rearranged, or created to provide a uniqueness that stands in contrast to the dominant cultural norms. Hebdige (1979) asserts that “Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance” (p. 18). The individuals in these subcultures use the concept of *bricolage* to re-order and re-contextualize objects, behaviors, and activities into a group consciousness or subcultural style. Clarke (1993), with reference to (Levi-Strauss 1966, 1969), asserts that these *bricoleurs* transform specific “objects to communicate fresh meanings, within a total system of significances, which already includes prior and sedimented meanings attached to the objects used” (p. 177). Subcultural bricoleurs transform the discourse preferred by the dominant culture into a style that correlates with the experiences and consciousness of a suppressed group.
Creating a self-conscious image is at the core of subcultural style. Clarke (1993) suggests “This self-consciousness both in terms of its content…and in terms of its orientation toward symbolic objects is the means through which the style is generated” (p. 179). Subcultures adopt specific artifacts, behaviors, and language in order to help develop a certain self-conscious image which distinguishes them from other groups; the subcultural group must be able to recognize itself and the meanings of the particular symbolic elements it has adopted. The internal structure of subcultures may seem chaotic to outsiders. However, Hebdige (1979) argues that “the internal structure of any particular subculture is characterized by an extreme orderliness: each part is organically related to other parts and it is through the fit between them that the subcultural member makes sense of the world” (p. 113). The internal orderliness that fuses meaning of the stylistic objects with the self-conscious identity of the subculture has been termed homology.

The style of a subculture is also influenced by external environmental conditions such as significant local cultural situations (e.g., restructuring of an academic department) or global events. Clarke (1993) asserts that subcultural self-identity “is generated not simply through the internal processes of the group, but by the development of the group in relation to its situation—a situation which includes significant groups of others” (p. 180). The aforementioned elements of style combine to form unique subcultures which often stand in opposition of or as an alternative to the majority culture which suppresses them.

As increasing numbers of contingent faculty members are employed within the system of higher education, yet excluded from full participation because of perceived
institutional status (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Kezar, Lester, & Anderson, 2006; Lyons, 2007), it’s possible that they will develop sets of norms, expectations, assumptions, and subcultural styles that stand in contrast to the dominant faculty or university culture. Within the current literature there are a limited number of studies addressing concerns related to contingent faculty involvement within academic environments and how this lack of active citizenship is impacting organizational culture and climate. In response to gaps in the literature, several contemporary authors (e.g., Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Levin & Shaker, 2011; Tam & Jacoby, 2009) are calling for critical research that focuses on questions related to (a) the norms, expectations, and experiences of contingent faculty members within specific contexts and (b) ways to development inclusive academic environments that are empowering rather than marginalizing.

**Integration of Contingent Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants**

Finding ways to integrate contingent faculty members into the university community is important because to sustain quality educational environments all faculty members need to feel as if they can contribute to the creative, intellectual, and administrative fabric of their institution (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Gappa, 2008; Lyons, 2007). In addition to contingent faculty members, another growing teaching constituent on university campuses, graduate teaching associates/assistants, needs to be woven into the structure of college and university systems as their role has become a vital component of the U.S. system of higher education.
Shifting Roles of Graduate Teaching Assistants in the Academy

Within the contemporary landscape of higher education, graduate teaching assistants/associates (GTA) are steadily becoming a larger component of college and university instructional staffs (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006; Wood, Hart, Tollefson, DeTora, & Libarkin, 2001). The U.S. Department of Labor (2011) defines GTA as individuals who “Assist department chairperson, faculty members, or other professional staff members in college or university by performing teaching or teaching-related duties, such as teaching lower level courses, developing teaching materials, preparing and giving examinations, and grading examinations or papers”. Data from the U.S. Department of Labor (2011) indicates that there are over 107,000 GTA working on college and universities campuses nationwide with some authors (e.g., Branstetter & Handlesman, 2000) suggesting that around 60% of GTA are teaching courses independently.

In the year 2007, GTA made up 19% of instructors within all U.S. institutions, 25% at four-year institutions, and over 40% at public, doctoral granting universities (America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010). Research suggests that GTA provide instruction for approximately 40% of the undergraduate classes taught at research universities and they have responsibilities in roughly 60% of the introductory courses taken by first- and second-year students (Marincovich et al., 1998). In addition, statistics from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF)-Survey of Doctorate Recipients (2009) show that upwards of 35% of doctoral students reported graduate teaching assistantships as their primary source of funding while in graduate school. While the population of graduate student instructors has seen a steady increase over the past decade, the role of the GTA and faculty supervisors has
shifted to accommodate changes within the system of higher education and not the developmental needs of graduate student instructors (National Science Foundation, 2009; Seymour, 2005). Indeed, despite the apprentice or assistant connotation, more GTA are being asked to teach independently as colleges and universities attempt to cut instructional costs (Branstetter & Handlesman, 2000).

GTA positions are designed to provide a means of funding for graduate students while simultaneously offering them a chance to gain teaching experience at the collegiate level (Andrews, 1985, Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). The term “assistant” or “associate” in the GTA title suggests that graduate students are still in the beginning stages of their academic or teaching career and thus they will serve alongside a more experienced instructor who will help socialize them into their specific academic discipline and possibly the professoriate (Curzan & Damour, 2006; Nyquist & Sprague, 1989; Prieto & Meyers, 2001). In his book Strengthening the Teaching Assistant Faculty, Andrews (1985) asserts “The TA role is the basis of an apprenticeship system that enables graduate students to learn teaching skills through modeling and practice and to ease gradually into the role of professor” (p. 1).

While it’s true that not all GTA have ambitions to become professors, research indicates that many of them do have such goals; thus they seek to gain teaching experience while in graduate school (Nyquist, Abbott, & Wulff, 1989; Russell, 2009). In their study of 19,000 doctoral students from nine of the ten University of California campuses, Mason et al. (2009) found that 45% of the men and 39% of the women surveyed indicated that they wanted to pursue careers as professors when they started their PhD programs, but only 36% of men and 27% of women still felt this was their
primary career goal at the time of the survey. While a large percentage of graduate students still seek professorships, several scholars note that the decreased interest in the professorate is indicative of a new academic generation, one that is concerned with work-life balance (Finkelstein et al., 1998; Quinn, 2011). In a study of graduate student attrition, Golde (1998) found that a common reason for departing was the realization that careers in higher education are not conducive to work-life harmony.

**History of GTA Development**

Dating back to the 1970s and continuing through to today, the topic of GTA development has been and remains a relevant subject within the field of higher education (Andrews, 1985; Austin & Wulff, 2004). Throughout the 20th century, the role of graduate students and the importance of their development have evolved. In her chapter *Preparing Graduate Students to Teach: Past, Present, and Future*, Nancy Van Note Chism (1998) suggests there are four phases of higher education history that describe the evolution of teaching preparation for GTA, phases include: (1) Nothing to Say, (2) Private Conversations, (3) Can We Talk?, and (4) Extending the Conversation (p. 1).

The first phase that Chism (1998) describes is entitled *Nothing to Say* and it encompasses the first appearances of GTA around 1910 and extends until about 1960. During this period, GTA development was a topic that was not considered worthwhile because the numbers were minimal and because teaching was viewed as inborn skill, something that could not be taught. The second phase, *Private Conversations*, began in the 1960’s as undergraduate populations began to grow and diversify (Chism, 1998). In the years following World War II increased access to higher education via the GI bill
created a need for more courses and instructors (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Cole, 2009). Facing increased numbers of students, colleges and universities sought a solution to the teaching shortage and found the answer in GTA. Chism (1998) asserts “During this time, formal efforts to prepare graduate students to teach began, largely at the departmental level and largely in the departments with many TAs” (p. 3). Within these departments, private conversations were held concerning the need for training and support services to foster GTA development. During this historical phase, research projects concentrating on GTA began but were primarily limited to issues of effectiveness in the classroom (Chism, 1998).

The third phase of GTA development, *Can We Talk?*, began in 1986 and started to address the professional development of GTA in a more direct fashion (Chism, 1998). The start date of this phase is notable because it marks the first national convention focused explicitly on issues and concerns surrounding the increasing use of GTA as course instructors (Tice, Gaff, & Pruitt-Logan, 1998). Chism (1998) states “During this phase, large institutions came together to publically talk about a situation that they had previously treated cautiously: the fact that TAs were carrying a large part of the undergraduate load and that efforts to prepare these graduate students to teach were in their infancy” (p. 4). New conversations between universities and national professional groups such as the Council of Graduate Schools spoke to practical aspects of the GTA experience including the selection of GTA, workloads, stipends, and unionization (Chism, 1998). One result of these conversations was the development of the Preparing Future Faculty program which focuses on supporting GTA in their current and future teaching endeavors and is accessible via centralized campus offices. Conference
proceedings, newsletters, GTA training handbooks, and the existence of centralized programs like Preparing Future Faculty led to increased awareness about the GTA position and the developmental needs of these individuals (Tice et al., 1998).

In the early 1990’s the professional development of GTA moved beyond merely talking about the issues into the stage called *Extending the Conversation* (Chism, 1998). During this phase, legislatures and government officials became important constituents as issues surrounding institutional budgets, international GTA, and national education policies became topics of interest within the public sphere. Chism (1998) asserts that for international GTA development, this phase marked a new focus on the cultural component of training, often addressing intolerance of U.S. students. In addition, new leadership in the areas of GTA training and development emerged from professional associations (e.g., American Chemical Society) prompting interdisciplinary collaboration and increased research on the GTA experience (Chism, 1998). From this research, institutions began to learn more about the diverse needs of this population of instructors and several models of GTA development came to fruition (e.g., Sprague & Nyquist, 1991).

**GTA Development Models**

Within the higher education literature, there are references to several GTA development models (e.g., Kagan, 1988; Prieto, 2001; Stoltenberg, 1981; Stoltenberg, McNeil, & Crethar, 1994). However, the most commonly cited and utilized GTA development model comes from Sprague and Nyquist (1991) and it offers three phases of progression: (1) Senior Learner, (2) Colleague in Training, and (3) Junior Colleague (p. 37). Sprague & Nyquist’s (1991) GTA development model suggests that GTA should
progressively develop capacities for teaching through an apprenticeship with an experienced faculty member. While the authors do recognize that some GTA may come to the university with more teaching experience than others, they also assert that mentoring during the initial phases of teaching new courses is imperative for pedagogical growth and the development of confidence.

During the first phase, Senior Learner, GTA feel anxious about teaching because they may be unfamiliar with disciplinary language along with university policies and basic rules of instruction. Throughout the Senior Learner phase GTA are meant to assist and be mentored by a senior faculty member whose role is to frequently assess GTA performance as it relates to teaching (Sprague & Nyquist, 1991). Senior Learners rely on faculty supervisors for support and feedback as they try and learn the appropriate ways to teach within an academic department and discipline (Nyquist & Sprague, 1998).

Theoretically, self-confidence for teaching and classroom duties (e.g., grading) improves as supervising faculty members gradually delegate more responsibility to GTA throughout their first year. After a yearlong apprenticeship with an experienced faculty member, GTA should be prepared to take on a larger role in courses. Nyquist and Sprague (1998) assert that “In the ideal situation, the assignments for TAs should show a …progression from specified duties or an assisting role to assuming responsibility for class sessions or even a whole course” (p. 84). In the same chapter, the authors also suggest that skipping steps in the GTA development process can be detrimental because like in other student development models (e.g., Kegan, 1994), the next phase of growth is founded on successful mastery of the initial phases. For Nyquist and Sprague (1998) and other GTA development theorists (Kagan, 1988; Prieto, 2001; Stoltenberg, 1981;
Stoltenberg et al., 1994), faculty supervision, support, and feedback for GTA during the first year of teaching is crucial to their success in the classroom.

The second phase of Sprague and Nyquist’s (1991) GTA development model, Colleague in Training, emphasizes the building of teaching skills through direct practice and the acceptance of more responsibility. During this phase, GTA are challenged to take on a larger role in courses as they may be asked to lecture or even teach their own section. Despite growing comfort with their teaching skills and disciplinary knowledge, supervising faculty members must remain diligent in their supervision of GTA because as instructors they still have room to grow and develop (Sprague & Nyquist, 1991). During this phase of development, supervising faculty members should begin to ask GTA for input on curricular and classroom decisions, especially if the mentoring faculty member does not teach the course him or herself (Sprague & Nyquist, 1991).

Asking GTA to contribute to the improvement of curriculum and other course decisions can help promote self-authorship and it aligns with Baxter-Magolda and King’s (2004) Learning Partnerships: Theory and Models of Practice to Educate for Self-Authorship. The Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) outlined by Baxter-Magolda and King (2004) is designed to promote self-authorship and stimulate growth in the three dimensions of student development: (a) cognitive- the way we view knowledge; (b) interpersonal- the way we view our relationships with others; and (c) intrapersonal- the way we view our own thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. Baxter-Magolda and King (2004) suggest that growth and development in all three dimensions can be promoted if: (1) learning is situated in the students’ experiences; (2) students are validated as knowers, not just knowledge receivers; and (3) faculty and supervisors learn to mutually construct
knowledge with students. In an effort to promote this type of development, faculty supervisors must consistently challenge GTA to think about their teaching in new ways while also offering support for their current skill set (Kegan, 1994; Sprague & Nyquist, 1991).

As GTA move into Sprague and Nyquist’s (1991) third and final stage of development, *Junior Colleague*, the focus has shifted from internal concerns about their own teaching to outward concern for student learning. During this phase GTA feel increasingly confident in their teaching abilities, and their professional identity is more solidified. Sprague and Nyquist (1991) assert that in the Junior Colleague phase “TAs are able to transcend, combine, and create systems of instruction and to express their academic knowledge in a variety of vocabularies” (p. 45). Faculty members who supervise GTA in this phase should begin to see GTA as the types of individuals who would be applying for assistant professorships or other highly qualified appointments. In turn, faculty mentors should try to develop opportunities for GTA to make professional judgments and try out new educational techniques (Sprague & Nyquist, 1991). The progression from Senior Learner to Junior Colleague will be different for each GTA, but two elements necessary for their development are mentoring and support from experienced faculty members.

**Mentoring and Socialization of GTA**

Throughout the literature on higher education and GTA development, the concepts of mentoring and socialization have been identified as key elements (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Calkins & Kelly, 2005; Colbeck, 2008; Gaia, Corts, Tatum, & Allen, 2003;
Johnson & Huwe, 2003). Within the higher education literature, mentoring has been generally defined as a nurturing process through which a more skilled or experienced faculty member, serving as a role model, counsels and encourages a less experienced instructor or student for the purpose of promoting professional and personal development (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Darwin & Palmer, 2009). In the book *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, Johnson (2007) states “Mentoring is one of the more important and enduring roles of the successful faculty member. Few professional activities will have a greater impact on students (even if you are a great teacher) and will afford the faculty member greater psychological benefit” (p. 3). Research suggests that faculty mentoring of graduate students can lead to positive outcomes in terms of academic achievement and persistence (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), dissertation success and degree completion (Johnson & Huwe, 2003), research and publication productivity (Dohm & Cummings, 2003), and the development of a professional identity (Russell & Adams, 1997; Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson, 2011). In addition, studies on faculty mentoring of graduate students with regards to teaching (e.g., Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006) have shown positive results, especially when it comes to GTA self-efficacy for instruction.

**Developing Individual Self-Efficacy**

Individual self-efficacy is defined as the confidence that one can successfully execute behaviors required to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is a central component of Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, in which it is described as an influential source of initiation, intensity, and persistence of behavior. Researchers
such as Tuckman (1999, 2011) indicate that identifying ways to develop self-efficacy is important because it functions as a mediator for performance in both students and instructors. Sources of self-efficacy stem from four main forms of influence: (1) mastery experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) social persuasion, and (4) physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997).

**Mastery experiences: Developmental scaffolding and training.**

Educational social cognitive researchers (e.g., Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Morris & Usher, 2011; Tuckman & Monetti, 2001) assert that the most effective way of developing a strong sense of efficacy is through *mastery experiences*. Mastery experiences provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can achieve success and thus they have the greatest impact on self-perception and beliefs about accomplishment (Bandura, 1982). Achieving successes through incremental steps (i.e., developmental scaffolding) helps build self-efficacy and prepare individuals for more difficult or complex tasks (Tuckman, 2007). Bandura (1997) states “Developing a sense of efficacy through mastery experiences is not a matter of adopting ready-made habits. Rather, it involves acquiring the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory tools of creating and executing appropriate courses of action to manage ever-changing life circumstances” (p. 3). For GTA, preparing to teach their own courses requires that they build efficacy for instruction by incrementally taking on new responsibilities, and some suggest that it is the job of faculty supervisors to provide this developmental scaffolding (Prieto & Meyers, 2001). A healthy balance of challenge and support early in the career of a GTA can provide the foundation for efficacious beliefs for teaching along with the development of resilience (Bandura,
However, asking GTA to teach courses with little support or training could be detrimental to the self-efficacy of new GTA and negatively impact classroom performance and the quality of undergraduate education (Prieto, 2001).

A number of studies addressing the training of GTA have suggested that inadequate or limited training is a common phenomenon on many college and university campuses. For example, in their study of psychology GTA representing 116 departments nationwide, Prieto and Meyers (1999) found that approximately 30% of the respondents received either no training or no supervision. Prieto and Altmaier (1994) showed that 50% of their GTA sample had received no training prior to being assigned teaching duties and 25% indicated that they were teaching without any type of supervision. Branstetter and Handleman (2000) discovered that less than one-third of their sample had been required to participate in training before entering the classroom as individual instructors, less than 10% had participated in training while teaching, and over 47% had never been required to engage in supervision with a faculty member with regards to their teaching performance. In the same study, more than a quarter of the GTA reported that they were required to teach a course outside of their area of specialty and nearly 90% said they had taught material they had not yet mastered themselves.

Additionally, in a study of over 32,000 graduate students performed by the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (2000), 45% of the respondents reported not receiving appropriate preparation and training before they entered the classroom. While these studies represent a small percentage of those listed throughout the literature, these data indicate that concerns about GTA training and
support are pervasive and need to be addressed. If mastery experiences lead to the
development of efficacy and improved teaching, making sure that GTA receive an
appropriate amount of training should be a primary goal for administrators and faculty

**Vicarious experiences: Role modeling and socialization.**

The second influence on the development and strengthening of efficacy beliefs
manifests itself in the form of *vicarious experiences* provided by social models (Bandura,
1986; Tuckman & Monetti, 2001). Also known as developmental or participant role
modeling, it is believed that if people view individuals similar to themselves having
success through perseverance and effort, it raises the observers’ beliefs that they too have
the ability to succeed in similar situations (Newman & Tuckman, 1997). Role models do
more than just provide a benchmark for people to measure their own capabilities.
Bandura (1997) asserts “People seek proficient models who possess the competencies to
which they aspire. Through their behavior and expressed ways of thinking, competent
models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies for
managing environmental demands” (p. 4).

Historically, the role of social model for GTA has been played by full-time,
tenured or tenure-line faculty members because they were viewed as the representations
of academic balance (Wood et al., 2001). Indeed, in the most frequently cited GTA
development models (e.g., Sprague & Nyquist, 1991), there is an assumption that full-
time faculty members have the time, desire, and incentive to mentor GTA. However, in a
new era of higher education where research dominates teaching, some authors (e.g.,
Jacob, 1997; Mendoza, 2007; Meyers & Prieto, 2000) suggest that relying on full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty members to mentor GTA with regards to teaching could be problematic. Indeed, Jacob (1997) asserts that “mentoring is the forgotten fourth leg in the academic stool” and it is often ignored in faculty review processes (p. 486). In her research on preparing GTA to become faculty members, Austin (2002) stated “Particularly noteworthy and a cause for concern is the lack of systematic professional development opportunities, minimal feedback and mentoring from faculty, and few opportunities for guided reflection” (p. 104). Shifts in academic labor trends also make it more likely that GTA will become contingent faculty members and not full-time, tenure-line professors (Schuster et al., 2008). Therefore, the traditional role model system in higher education may need to be revised to meet the demands of the new academic generation (Finkelstein et al., 1998; Finkelstein & Schuster, 2001).

Lack of faculty interest in mentoring GTA is also problematic because they provide the foundation for certain aspects of graduate student socialization. Socialization can be broken down into several classifications but for GTA the two categories frequently represented in the literature are socialization into the role of graduate student and academic socialization (Mandoza, 2007). Graduate school socialization is described as the process through which newcomers are made members of an academic department in a specific discipline. Golde (1998) asserts “The socialization of graduate students is an unusual double socialization. New students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession” (p. 56). Weidman et al. (2001) suggest that socialization for graduate students occurs in four stages: Anticipatory, Formal, Informal, and Personal.
The *Anticipatory* stage occurs as students enter their program and learn new roles, procedures, and agendas to follow. During this stage, graduate students will seek information and listen attentively to directions as they become increasingly aware of the expectations of their new role (Weidman et al., 2001). The *Formal* stage is characterized by observations of experienced students while still learning about role expectations and how they can be accomplished. Students in this stage are primarily concerned with task accomplishment and “communication becomes *informative* through learning course material, *regulative* through embracing normative expectations, and *integrative* through faculty and student interaction” (Weidman et al., 2001, p. 13). During this stage, novices transition into veteran newcomers as they are validated through successful completion of formal examinations and coursework. Despite their growing comfort level and increased competence, for success to continue graduate students must also venture into and become members of the informal culture.

As graduate students enter into the *Informal* stage of socialization they learn more about the often unwritten role expectations; frequently this knowledge is disseminated by peers. Weidman et al. (2001) state “Through adept communication and immersion in the new role culture, students receive behavioral cues, observe acceptable behavior, and, it is hoped, respond and react accordingly” (p. 14). In some graduate programs, cohorts of students band together through informal social relationships to develop a support network for one another. In addition, during this stage of development students begin to realize that some flexibility exists for graduate students, especially as it relates to individual career choices. Once this realization has occurred, graduate students begin to develop a more professional sense of self and the primacy of student identity begins to fade away.
The Personal stage of graduate student socialization is the final phase of development and it is characterized by the internalization of a professional identity. During this stage graduate students form an individualized professional identity and reconcile the incongruity between their previous self-image and the newly constructed one (Weidman et al. 2001). In addition, as their professional identity develops, students begin to separate themselves from their department because they realize their program is preparatory in nature and not a real professional experience. Weidman et al. (2001) suggest that at this point, students begin to assess their chances of success in their chosen profession and work to develop competencies that will further their career beyond just graduation.

Some scholars (Golde, 1998; Mendoza, 2007) suggest that socialization into the role of graduate student requires the accomplishment of four tasks: (1) intellectual mastery, (2) learning the realities of being a graduate student, (3) learning about the profession they are preparing for, and (4) integration into a department. In relation, Tinto’s (1993) theory of doctoral student retention and persistence offers a similar socialization process as graduate students progress through three fundamental stages: (1) transition and adjustment, (2) development of academic competence through the attainment of candidacy, and (3) completion of the dissertation or research project. As graduate students find their professional niche through assistantships or work experience and learn to cope with the academic tasks associated with being a student, an increased sense self-confidence develops and balance is attained.
The second type of graduate student integration frequently cited in the literature is *academic socialization*, which is often split into two common subsets, *disciplinary* and *professional*. Discipline based socialization includes gaining an understanding of theoretical underpinnings of a specific academic discipline; the paradigms, language, traditions, criteria for excellence, and accepted methodological approaches (Gardner & Mendoza, 2010). Discipline-specific socialization often serves as the primary source of faculty members’ identity and expertise, making it likely that the same standard practices, assumptions, and knowledge will be imparted to graduate students (Gardner, & Barnes, 2007; Gardner, 2008).

In contrast to discipline based socialization which is often narrow and specific, professional academic socialization encompasses a set of core values that stretch across disciplinary and institutional boundaries (Mendoza, 2007). Some traditional core values of the academic profession include academic freedom, truth seeking, collegiality, service to society through the production of knowledge, and education of youth (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Scholars such as Gardner and Mendoza (2010) suggest that academic socialization is one of the most important aspects of the graduate school experience. The combination of disciplinary and professional socialization allows graduate students to develop a foundation for their professional identity, especially if they seek faculty or academic positions. Professional identity is defined as the perception of oneself, not only as a professional, but as a specialist in a specific area of concentration (Sweitzer, 2008).

Despite the positive outcomes associated with socialization (e.g., self-confidence), some authors (e.g., Jacob, 1997; Mendoza, 2007) are concerned that socialization of GTA by full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty mentors will promote the idea that research and
publication are more important than teaching, because that is what faculty reward systems endorse (Fairweather, 2005). Authors such as Sweitzer (2008) assert that as academic positions become more competitive, graduate students who aspire to become faculty members will concentrate on what is rewarded and place little effort into endeavors (i.e., teaching and service) that will not help in the hiring or tenure process. Wood et al. (2001) argue that “Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the professional development of GTAs is the pressure (emanating from the faculty reward system and reinforced by the lack of faculty interest in GTA development) to emphasize research over teaching, especially in Research I universities” (p. 37). One potential result of this emphasis on research and publication during the graduate school socialization process is the proliferation of careerism. Huber (2002) defines careerism as the devaluing of quality research in favor of quantity of publications and waiting until later in an academic career to pursue areas of personal interest such as teaching and service.

Another unintended consequence of the socialization of graduate students by full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty is a fragmented perception of faculty work (Sweitzer, 2008). Colbeck (2002) suggests that this type of career fragmentation occurs when teaching, service, and research are viewed as separate entities that are in constant opposition with one another. Some authors (Chait, 2002; Kreber, 2000) suggest that this misconception of faculty work is creating a generation of aspiring faculty members who are ill-prepared for a career in academia. The promotion of research over teaching during graduate school is also problematic for undergraduate students because without proper guidance GTA may fail to see the value in developing the pedagogical skill sets necessary for success in the classroom (Prieto, 2001). For some authors such as Smock
and Menges (1985), failing to provide support and guidance for GTA is an ethical issue for universities, as they have promised to provide undergraduate students with a quality educational experience.

**Social persuasion and physiological/emotional states.**

Self-efficacy is also boosted through what Bandura (1986) called *social persuasion*. Bandura (1997) asserts “People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise” (p. 4). Research suggests that when GTA receive feedback on their teaching and have the opportunity to discuss this feedback with a faculty mentor, they are more likely to sustain motivation, interest, and pleasure in their teaching assignments (Heppner, 1994). Weimer, Prieto, and Meyers (2004) also found then when GTA have meaningful conversations about their teaching with faculty members and peers, they are likely to learn to teach more effectively.

Successful efficacy builders do more than just provide positive feedback, they structure situations in ways that bring success and avoid placing individuals in circumstances where they are likely to fail (Tuckman & Monetti, 2001). Because individuals also rely on their *physiological and emotional states* when judging their capacities, how they react and perform in stressful situations can be either positive or negative (Bandura, 1986). Placing people into difficult situations prematurely can undermine self-efficacy and cultivate disbelief, ultimately leading to decreased effort for challenging tasks (Bandura, 1997). For unprepared GTA, being placed in a classroom
with little support and limited supervision could lead to increased levels of stress and
decreased levels of motivation and effort as self-efficacy declines. Indeed, some authors
(Heppner, 1994; Komarraju, 2008) suggest that while the GTA experience is meant to be
developmental and positive, when GTA are thrown into courses with little to no
preparation and limited supervision they will develop an aversion to teaching, ultimately
placing the quality of undergraduate education and the future of the professoriate in
jeopardy.

**Collective Self-Efficacy and Academic Cultures**

Individual efficacy beliefs also help form the foundation for what Bandura called
*collective-efficacy*. Bandura (1997) defined collective-efficacy as “a group’s shared belief
in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to
produce given levels of attainments” (p. 477). Similar to other organizations, within
institutions of higher education the collective-efficacy beliefs of groups can impact goal
setting, motivation, effort, and persistence (Fives & Looney, 2009). The collective beliefs
of groups also help shape institutional culture. Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest four types
of school culture, each with a set of shared faculty beliefs that have a direct influence on
internal actions and student achievement. Types of school culture include: (1) Culture of
Efficacy, (2) Culture of Trust, (3) Culture of Academic Optimism, and (4) Culture of
Control. In the following sections, each culture will be briefly reviewed.

Within any organization, the shared beliefs about the capacities and abilities of
participants are important factors that contribute to success (Bandura, 1997). Hoy and
Miskel (2008) state that within schools, faculty and administrative beliefs play an
important role in student success and achievement; this collective sense of ability is called \textit{collective teacher efficacy}. “Collective teacher efficacy is the \textit{shared perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students}” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 188). As faculty members and administrators increase efficacy through the four aforementioned forms (i.e., mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, physiological/emotional reactions), they simultaneously evaluate themselves individually and collectively. This assessment is critical as it directly influences beliefs about collective faculty efficacy. “Strong school culture of efficacy seems to promote high student achievement, in part because it leads to the acceptance of challenging goals, strong organizational effort, and a persistence that leads to better performance” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 191). In an environment where public accountability, unique challenges, and shared responsibility are common, establishing collective efficacy is important as it is a stable property that improves organizational performance.

The second type of educational culture offered by Hoy and Miskel (2008) manifests itself in the form of a \textit{culture of trust}. Within schools, trust is an important component of the faculty belief system as it facilitates cooperation, promotes group cohesiveness, and ultimately improves student achievement. “Trust relationships are built upon interdependence; that is, the interests of one cannot be achieved without reliance upon another” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 191). Indeed, for individuals to trust one another a sense of self-vulnerability must be present and faculty members must be confident that others will not act in ways that are detrimental to them. Additionally, Hoy and Miskel suggest that five other factors must exist for trust to become pervasive; factors include: (1) benevolence, (2) competence, (3) reliability, (4) honesty, and (5) openness. Within
schools, several trust relationships exist with the most important being trust between the instructors (e.g., GTA, CFM), their supervisors, and each other. “Faculty trust is the teachers willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 192). When faculty members trust the aforementioned parties, a comprehensive culture of trust becomes pervasive as groups work together to increase student achievement and create a positive organizational culture.

Another way to conceptualize the culture of an educational institution is through the collective optimism of the faculty and administrators. Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest that optimism in schools is a function of three collective properties working together to positively impact student achievement, they include: (1) efficacy, (2) trust, and (3) academic emphasis. The collective power of these three properties creates a positive educational environment called academic optimism. “Academic optimism is a collective set of beliefs about strengths and capabilities in schools that paints a rich picture of human agency in which optimism is the overarching theme that unites efficacy and trust with academic emphasis” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 194). The conception of academic optimism offered here includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that are directly related to the aforementioned properties. The collective efficacy of faculty and administrators is a group belief and thus it is cognitive. Faculty trust in administrators and one another is an affective response from the school while academic emphasis is the behavioral enactment of efficacy and trust (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Similar to a culture of trust, a culture of academic optimism creates powerful learning environments that can promote student, instructor, and institutional achievement in a myriad of areas.

96
The final way Hoy and Miskel (2008) conceptualize educational culture is in terms of the dominant beliefs faculty and administrators hold about control. Control within educational institutions is a salient aspect of school life and thus can be used to distinguish between types of institutions. “The model for a custodial culture is the traditional school, which provides a rigid and highly controlled setting in which maintenance of order is primary” (Hoy & Miskel, p. 196). Custodial cultures are often characterized by rigid hierarchies and a downward, unilateral flow of communication and power. Institutions with a custodial culture tend to have higher levels of faculty disengagement, lower levels of morale, and stricter administrative supervision. In contrast, Hoy and Miskel suggest that “The model for humanistic culture is the school conceived of as an educational community in which students learn through cooperative interaction and experience” (p. 196). Humanistic schools incorporate open communication systems, self-discipline, and a more democratic state founded in psychological and sociological terms. In general, custodial schools tend to alienate faculty members while humanistic cultures create healthier climates that foster development, motivation, problem solving, and a serious attitude towards education (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

The institutional and departmental cultures that GTA operate in, who supervises them, who they are mentored by, the types of socialization they experience, and the levels of self-efficacy they develop will all impact their growth as both students and professionals. These factors will also partially determine the quality of instruction GTA provide to undergraduate students. As more responsibility for undergraduate education is placed upon GTA, exploring new avenues of mentoring, socialization, and integration
into the academic environment becomes more important than ever.

Within the current literature there are a limited number of publications and studies that address the experiences and feelings of GTA as independent instructors. Indeed, as more GTA are asked to teach independently several key questions that are not currently addressed in the literature need to be explored. First, are there environmental conditions or teaching partnerships that can help independent GTA develop as instructors? Second, if there are environmental conditions or partnerships that can help promote GTA development, can administrators and non-tenure line faculty help foster them? Third, as the academic labor force of higher education continues to move away from a majority tenure-line faculty, do the traditional models of graduate student mentoring and socialization need to be revised to fit a new generation of faculty members?

**Conclusion**

The macrolevel trends highlighted in the previous sections illustrate the changing nature of the U.S. higher education system and some of the concerns and issues associated with these shifts. Addressing the changing nature of academic labor and exploring the ways that GTA and contingent faculty members positively contribute to university system is important because without their involvement, many institutions could not sustain their system of operations. Failure to recognize the significant role these individuals play on college and university campuses and to integrate these often overlooked and marginalized constituents could pose long term problems in terms of educational quality and the future of the professoriate. In an era where accountability and cost-effectiveness are paramount, finding new ways to increase the development and
productivity of GTA and contingent faculty members is crucial to the success of many colleges and universities.
Chapter 3: Qualitative Research Design

Introduction and Research Questions

The purposes of this research project were fourfold. First, to explore some of the macrolevel trends impacting the institution of American higher education and ascertain their possible impact on a specific academic unit, including the individuals who work and teach in said environment. Next, to explore the individual experiences, feelings and perspectives of graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and contingent faculty members (CFM) within a specific educational context. Third, this research project investigated the relationships that exist between these growing university constituents as they may have implications for improved practice and increasing GTA and CFM status within the university teaching hierarchy. Finally, in an effort to empower marginalized groups, this research project explored the cultures created by GTA and CFM within a certain environment while also exposing and challenging some of the hegemonic ideologies prevalent on many college and university campuses. With these purposes in mind, the following research questions were offered:

- How do GTA view the CFM they work with within a specific context?
- How do CFM view the GTA they work with within a specific context?
- What types of relationships do GTA have with CFM within a specific context?
• Do GTA and CFM develop unique subcultures?
• How do GTA and CFM distinguish themselves from one another?
• What types of local knowledge do GTA and CFM develop?
• What ideological beliefs impact the status of GTA and CFM within the university teaching hierarchy?
• Are there aspects of the environment that contribute to the development of relationships and community amongst instructors within a particular context?

**Case Study Approach**

Across the landscape of higher education, colleges and universities play host to a range of disciplinary subcultures that all have unique beliefs about and approaches to education and teaching (Becher, 1989). Within academic disciplines, instructors use diverse forms of pedagogy depending on disciplinary norms, departmental expectations, and individual preference. For example, while the lecture method seems to pervade all disciplines, other classroom formats such as tutorials, field trips, case studies, and laboratory practicals can also be found throughout the university environment (Neumann, 2001). The vast array of pedagogical approaches and disciplinary subcultures present on any university campus makes it difficult, if not impossible, to offer sweeping generalizations about teaching across disciplinary boundaries. However, discipline specific case studies involving detailed observation and interviewing of academics about their beliefs, assumptions, and experiences can be informative and useful. In her article *Disciplinary Differences and University Teaching*, Neumann (2001) suggests “Micro studies such as these have enormous potential to provide greater insights into teaching in the disciplines, as well as to probe the interaction between disciplinary and institutional culture” (p. 140).
Attempting to understand and analyze specific academic subcultures requires in-depth, descriptive information about the contexts in which they operate and how they differentiate themselves from others though the use of artifacts and language (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). As much, I utilized a qualitative research design because qualitative research methods and methodologies “are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). In particular, for this project a case study approach was used. Creswell (2007) states, “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case)…over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case based themes” (p. 73). The case I explored combines aspects of both instrumental and intrinsic case studies. Instrumental case studies focus on specified issues, concerns, or topics and researchers select a case to illustrate these themes (Creswell, 2007). Intrinsic case studies focus on the unique or unusual aspects of the case itself. For this project, I focused on several topics (e.g., GTA-CFM relationships) that manifest themselves in the unique context of the Learning Center.

Whether performing a case study or using another approach, qualitative researchers draw from specific ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigms to help them understand and interpret how participants in a particular setting (e.g., an academic department within a university) construct and make meaning of the world around them (Patton, 2002). The next few sections will explore the particular
paradigmatic assumptions and beliefs that guided this case study.

**Ontology and Epistemology**

Ontology refers to the nature of knowledge and it informs the use of particular research methodologies and methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Glesne (2006) states “The ontological belief that tends to accompany qualitative research approaches portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. What is ‘real’ becomes relative to the specific location and people involved” (p. 6). In line with these ontological beliefs, many qualitative researchers subscribe to the epistemological conviction that reality is subjective in nature and constructed by individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002). As well, qualitative researchers like me believe that through prolonged interactions and exploration with participants, an increased understanding of their perceptions, experiences, and relationships can be gained.

Historically, two overarching epistemological paradigms, positivism and constructivism, have been prevalent within social science research. The foundations of positivism rest within several assumptions: (1) social facts have an objective reality that exists prior to and independently of human interpretation; (2) real properties are those that can be measured, counted, and quantified; (3) the world is highly systematic, it is filled with regularities, uniformities, laws, and absolutes, and this extends to social science research; and (4) knowledge is that which is logically deduced from theory, measurable, and empirically replicable (Glesne, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002). In contrast to positivism and its underlying tenants of objectivity, scientific methods, and quantification, stands the constructivist paradigm which offers a critical view of objective reality and value-free research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).
In particular, this case study was developed and conducted under the framework of a constructivist paradigm. Glesne (2006) asserts, “This paradigm maintains that human beings construct their perceptions of the world, that no one perception is ‘right’ or more ‘real’ than another, and that these realities must be seen as wholes rather than divided into discrete variables that are analyzed separately” (p. 7). Constructivists suggest that reality is assembled by each knower according to an individualized set of subjective principles that are developed through lived experience, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Sipe & Constable, 1996; Wadsworth, 2004). The purposes of constructivist research are to contextualize, understand, and interpret experiences and perspectives through interactions and subjectivist explorations with participants (Patton, 2002). The constructivist paradigm was chosen for this case study because the experiences, feelings, and relationships that were explored are socially constructed. In turn, the methodological frameworks and theoretical perspectives that served as the foundation for this project correlate with my beliefs in knowledge construction as a subjective act.

Methodological/Theoretical Perspectives

In accordance with constructivist beliefs and in order to help understand graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and contingent faculty members (CFM) as potential subcultural entities, this research project was partially founded in a symbolic interactionist perspective. Sweet (1999) suggests that “symbolic interactionists stress that selves are socially constructed and that people play an active role in shaping direction of their own and each others’ behaviors through the use of symbols” (p. 358). Utilizing a symbolic interactionist perspective is appropriate when researching marginalized or
hidden subcultures as they are socially constructed groups of individuals who use the meanings of specific symbols, behaviors, and beliefs to give rise to a new self-conscious identity (Herman-Kinney & Verschaeve, 2003). Embedded in the symbolic interactionist perspective are two elements which have specific relevance to subcultural research: the *material* and *social selves*.

One of the most critical elements of symbolic interactionism, as well constructivism, is the notion that selves are constructed (Herman-Kinney & Verschave, 2003). Sweet (1999) states, “Symbolic interactionists assert that the self is highly malleable and is constantly being shaped and reshaped, … the self is better characterized as a process than an object” (p. 358). Symbolic interactionists (e.g., Blumer, 1986; Goffman, 1959) suggest that the individual and group self is as much made up of social and material objects as it is by inner desires and traits. This notion of material objects defining part of an identity has been called the *material self* and it is one of the foundational elements of symbolic interactionism and influences aspects of many cultures (i.e., majority and minority). Goffman (1959) asserts that material objects demonstrate to us and others who we are as individuals and constitute part of our identity. As individuals surround themselves with these material objects, they enhance the degree to which the culture becomes part of their identity. Excellent examples of this material self can be seen all over university campuses as certain cultures do or do not value specific items which link them to the appropriate social group or culture (Kuh & Whit, 1988). For example, contingent faculty members and graduate teaching assistants within a specific context may collect and utilize objects or sets of knowledge that symbolize their individualism along with membership in a specific subculture.
In addition to the material self, symbolic interactionism highlights the importance of social interactions or the *social self*. Sweet (1999), with reference to James (1980/1983), states “the social self… is the set of relations we have with other people… and a great deal of any individual’s identity is comprised of his or her social relationships” (p. 359). Social relationships, like those established by graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members, shape the identities of the individuals in the group and create an overarching identity for their culture.

In correlation with the social self, symbolic interactionists highlight the concept of boundary-building as a way to maintain solidarity and exclusivity. This concept is extremely important when researching subcultures as their foundation is often built around this very notion of separating themselves from the dominant culture (Hebdige, 1979; Kuh & Whit, 1988). Dividing themselves from others also requires the manipulation of linguistics as subcultures define situations based on their group ideology (e.g., fraternities call hazing a tradition not a beating). The use of a symbolic interactionist perspective correlates with a constructivist epistemology, is a frequent foundation for other subcultural and case studies (e.g., Kuh & Whit, 1988; Sweet, 1999), and was an appropriate theoretical foundation for this project.

In conjunction with a symbolic interactionist perspective, I also drew from the tenets of critical theory to help identify ideological assumptions about contingent faculty members and graduate teaching assistants and the ways these conjectures help create and maintain hierarchical power structures within colleges and universities. With reference to critical theory Patton (2002) states, “Influenced by Marxism, informed by the presumption of the centrality of class conflict in understanding community and societal
structures, and updated in the radical struggles of the 1960s, critical theory provides both philosophy and methods for approaching research and evaluation as fundamental and explicit manifestations of political praxis (connecting theory and action) and as change-oriented forms of engagement” (p. 548). In order to bring about change within universities, it is necessary to critically analyze and critique the ideologies that justify and reproduce inequities within the existing system. In his book *The Power of Critical Theory*, educational critical theorist Stephen Brookfield (2005) asserts “critical theory and its contemporary educational applications…are grounded in an activist desire to fight oppression, injustice, and bigotry and create a fairer, more compassionate world. Central to this tradition is a concern with highly practical projects—the practice of penetrating ideology, countering hegemony, and working democratically” (p. 10). Critical theorists contend that an examination of these systems of power will bring about an awakening of consciousness and awareness of social injustices, motivating self-empowerment and social transformation (Brookfield, 2005; Held, 1980).

The concept of ideology is a key element of critical theory. Ideological belief systems are those that seem natural even though they serve to reproduce existing, often oppressive, systems, institutions, and behaviors (Eagleton, 2003). Brookfield (2005) states “Ideology is the system of ideas and values that reflects and supports the established order and that manifests itself in our everyday actions, decisions, and practices, usually without our being aware of its presence” (p. 67). Ideological beliefs help create hierarchical class systems (e.g., faculty hierarchy) and maintain the power of a dominant group by portraying ideas that serve their interests as universally true (Held, 1980).
Historically, two ideologies are frequently critiqued by critical theorists: ideology of capitalism and ideology of bureaucratic rationality (Brookfield, 2005; Held, 1980). In their book Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) analyze the ideology of capitalism and they argue that under the system of capitalism the value of work has been commodified. From this critical perspective, labor is seen as being worth what individuals are willing to pay for it; thus, well-compensated jobs are deemed inherently more valuable. Brookfield (2005) states, “In a commodified world people develop their identity and calculate their sense of self-worth in purely economic terms” (p. 70). Commodified labor works in conjunction with what Horkheimer (1974) called formalized or subjective reason which is at the foundation of the ideology of bureaucratic rationality.

Bureaucratic rationality is the belief that life can be ordered or organized into specific, formalized categories. Horkheimer (1974) argues that within bureaucratic systems the individual capacity to reason becomes dominated by a more formalized sense of reasoning, one that emulates bureaucratic rationality and is essentially concerned with means and ends along with procedures and purpose. With regards to formalized reasoning, Brookfield (2005) asserts “Reason is applied to solve problems of how to attain certain short-term social and economic objectives. In the scramble to achieve short-term ends, the application of reason to abstract universals such as justice, inequality, and tolerance becomes increasingly impossible” (p. 71). In short, through economic rationalization, bureaucratic organizations (e.g. universities) often ignore issues of equality and produce hierarchical labor systems that marginalize many in favor of economic gain. Part of this research project was to analyze the ways that the ideologies of
capitalism and bureaucratic rationality may be impacting the institution of American higher education along with the graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members who teach within this system.

Exploring the ways ideological belief systems impact universities and individuals may lead to the empowerment of marginalized workers; this type of advocacy is at the heart of critical theory (Brookfield, 2005). Sipe and Constable (1996) argue “The project of critical theory is to discover what is just and to take action; since knowledge is a form of power, it can be used to change the world into a more just and equitable place for all groups of people” (p. 159). Exploring the ways that GTA and CFM contribute to the community of higher education may contradict traditional ideological beliefs about their involvement and impact, possibly leading to increased status within the university system.

**Research Design**

**Setting and population.**

The context for this case study is an individual academic unit embedded in a very-high research activity (Carnegie Foundation, 2010), state funded university, located in the Midwestern portion of the United States. The academic unit under review is a Learning Center with a staff of 10-12 course instructors, four undergraduate learning specialists, and three staff members, including the founding director who also serves as a tenured faculty member. Course instructors in the Learning Center are divided into two categories: graduate teaching associates (GTA) and lecturers. This year, Learning Center GTA are all full-time graduate students who teach part-time while pursuing doctoral degrees. Learning Center GTA range in the number of years they have been in their PhD
programs; one is a first year graduate student, one is in her second year, and five are in their third year or beyond. GTA ages range from the mid-20s to mid-30s, five of the seven GTA interviewed for this project are female, and two of the GTA identify as international students while the rest of the cohort identifies as White.

The lecturers in this context can be considered contingent faculty members (CFM) as they are part-time instructors hired on a quarterly basis. All three Learning Center CFM earned their Master’s degrees over five years ago and since then they have been teaching at the K-12 or undergraduate level. Learning Center CFM are all females and one CFM identifies as African-American while the other two CFM identify as White.

Within the Learning Center, three courses are taught with the primary class being a 5-credit hour, undergraduate course on learning and motivation in the academic environment. The learning and motivation course was developed using the research and textbooks of Dr. Bruce W. Tuckman, a Professor of Educational Psychology at The Ohio State University and a Fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association. The course uses Dr. Tuckman’s (2008) textbook Learning and Motivation Strategies: Your Guide to Success, and it draws from his research on student achievement (Tuckman, 1999, 2003), the benefits of frequent testing (Tuckman, 2000), the use of developmental scaffolding (Tuckman, 2007), and the success of first-year students (Tuckman & Kennedy, 2011). Longitudinal research performed by Dr. Tuckman demonstrates that the course helps raise student grade point averages and improve student retention rates. Dr. Tuckman’s research, textbook, and framework for the course have been utilized by several universities to develop similar learning and motivation classes and his Active-Discovery-And-Participation-thru-
Technology (ADAPT) model has also been employed in various academic settings (Tuckman, 2002). Typically in the Learning Center there are 10-12 sections of the learning and motivation course taught per academic quarter with a total quarterly enrollment of roughly 350 students.

In the past, these courses were coordinated and supervised by an Associate Director who was also in charge of curriculum development, student disciplinary cases, and GTA/CFM development and support. Throughout the academic year, GTA and CFM would meet with the Associate Director for bi-weekly meetings which served as both professional development sessions and experienced-based information exchanges as instructors shared common concerns, successes, and possible curricular changes. In September 2010 the Associate Director accepted a position at another university and the vacancy was not filled because of funding reductions. For the past year, the GTA and CFM have been operating with limited formal training, professional development opportunities, and ways to engage with the curriculum. It is under these conditions and in this setting that this research project unfolded.

**Sampling strategies.**

The research context chosen for this case study was selected using purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) asserts “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230). Purposeful sampling helps researchers identify cases or contexts that will illuminate the questions under study. The context for this study is one in which GTA and CFM have regular contact with one another; thus it was purposefully chosen to help
illuminate the above-mentioned questions. In addition, the Learning Center was also chosen because it operates within a large, state-funded, research-focused university that has been subjected to many of the macrolevel trends impacting the U.S. higher education system and highlighted in the literature review. The context and participants under study were also chosen because I believe they represent a critical case. Patton (2002) states “Critical cases are those that can make a point quite dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important to the scheme of things” (p. 236). Looking for a critical case is also important when funding and time restrictions are factors to consider and as a graduate student with limited funding and time, using a critical case approach was appropriate.

The context for this research case study was selected using criteria set forth by Spradley (1980) in his book Participant Observation. First, Spradley recommends the exploration of a single social situation (i.e., case) as it offers the researcher a chance to improve practices while also performing original work. Next, Spradley asserts that social situations offer varying degrees of accessibility and recommends choosing a site where access will not be problematic. Spradley (1980) states “As you consider your own interests and the remaining criteria, keep in mind that the greater the accessibility of a social situation, the better your opportunities for learning” (p. 48). Third, choosing a research site where the investigator can operate with a low degree of obtrusiveness is important. Spradley (1980) argues, “Rather than seeking to eliminate all obtrusiveness and concealing your presence completely, it is probably best to weigh carefully the extent to which a social situation will call attention to your activities…you will increase the chances for successful research by selecting a setting that does not call direct attention to your activities” (p. 48).
Next, Spradley suggests selecting a research site where gaining permission from gatekeepers will not be a time consuming activity. The site I have selected is a combination of what Spradley termed free-entry and limited-entry levels of permissiveness. Free-entry refers to social situations where investigators can perform certain aspects of research without permission from a gatekeeper (e.g., observations in a public library). For this case study, permission was not necessary to gain entry to the Learning Center; it is a public space. However, in order to gain access to instructor meetings and office spaces, I needed and obtained permission from one or more people as these are classified as limited-entry spaces.

Finally, Spradley contends that an important criterion for selecting a research context is the frequency of recurrent activities. Finding a social situation where certain activities are acted out repeatedly will help the researcher compare actions over a period of time and it will help the investigator determine timeframes to engage in observations. The activities that I observed (e.g., class sessions, office hours, instructor meetings) occurred on a frequent basis in the Learning Center thus fulfilling this aspect of Spradley’s criterion. Following these guidelines for selecting a research setting can increase the chances of a successful study while also helping the investigator hone his/her research skills.

**Research participants.**

Research participants were selected using a purposeful, criterion sampling strategy. The logic of criterion sampling is to purposefully review/study cases and individuals that meet predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2002). For this project, the important criteria for participant selection included employment in the
Learning Center and instructor title (i.e., GTA or CFM). Based on these predetermined criteria, I interviewed and observed ten GTA and CFM and two learning center staff members. GTA are all full-time students enrolled in several different academic departments and their experiences in the Learning Center ranged from a few weeks to over two years. CFM are hired as part-time instructors, their academic backgrounds vary, and their experiences in the Learning Center ranged from three to five years. The Learning Center staff includes both full-time and part-time employees. The full-time employee’s experiences in the learning center ranged from a few weeks to over five years. Participation in this research project was voluntary and all participants were over the age of 18.

**Informed consent.**

Prior to observing or interviewing, participants were introduced to the project and researcher and asked to sign an Institutional Research Board (IRB) approved informed consent document. Thorne (1980) suggests that “The notion of informed consent helps put into focus specific strands in the relationship between fieldworkers and those they need to study. According to regulations, informed consent is consent which is *knowledgeable*, exercised in a situation of *voluntary* choice, made by individuals who are *competent* or able to choose freely” (p. 285). The IRB approved research protocol and consent form provided participants with detailed information about the research project, my role as a researcher, and their rights as participants.

At the beginning of the research process I introduced myself to all participants and identified my role as a graduate student researcher. During this time I identified myself as a former graduate teaching assistant who is performing research for my
doctoral dissertation. In addition, during the introduction process, I answered questions about myself, my role as a researcher, the project goals, and issues of confidentiality.

**Collection methods and confidentiality issues.**

First, for this project all participants were given pseudonyms to help protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. In this case, the participants were separated into four categories depending on their title and the amount of time they had been teaching in the Learning Center. GTA with one or more years of experience teaching in the Learning Center were given the pseudonym Experienced Graduate Teaching Associate (EGTA). GTA who were new to the Learning Center this year were given the pseudonym New Graduate Teaching Associate (NGTA). All Learning Center lecturers were returning instructors and thus they were all given the pseudonym of Contingent Faculty Members (CFM). Learning Center staff members were given the pseudonym Staff Member. Throughout the interview, participant observation, and writing processes these pseudonyms were used to refer to research participants.

While confidentiality can never be totally guaranteed, as a researcher it was my ambition to protect participants to the best of my ability. Throughout the participant observation and document analysis positions of this project, detailed field notes were taken. To help insure privacy and confidentiality, these documents were kept in a locked office or in the privacy of my home. The semi-structured interviews were documented using a digital audio recorder and were personally transcribed by the researcher. Digital transcription was performed using the Express Scribe program. When transcribing, all names were changed to the aforementioned pseudonyms and any comments that would
directly identify the speaker were removed. Throughout the project, the digital audio files were securely stored on a password locked, digital storage device (i.e., a jump-drive) as were the text version of the transcriptions. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the audio files were destroyed. When writing, the researcher used the aforementioned pseudonyms when referring to data collected via interviews, document analysis, and observations.

**Methods of data collection.**

The methods of data collection chosen for this research project included qualitative components that align with constructivist paradigmatic assumptions, a case study approach, and with symbolic interactionist and critical theory methodologies (Herman-Kinney & Verschaeve, 2003; Patton, 2002). Glesne (2006) states that qualitative research methods are used to increase understanding of social phenomena from the viewpoints of those involved, to contextualize concerns or trends which are part of participants’ particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to advocate for the transformation of social conditions. Methods for this particular research project included three qualitative components: (1) document analysis, (2) participant observations, and (3) semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In order to gain a more holistic and authentic organizational perspective, qualitative researchers often act as *bricoleurs* as they employ several methods simultaneously. In theory, the more items one can compare the more trustworthy the data become (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers are viewed as bricoleurs because they weave together a series of interpretations and representations from context-specific situations in order to create a
It is important to note that when performing qualitative inquiries many researchers evoke the method of emergent design as it provides the flexibility and openness to study changing contexts (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). With respect to emergent design, Patton (2002) states “While the design will specify an initial focus, plans for observations, and initial guiding interview questions, the naturalistic and inductive nature of the inquiry makes it both impossible and inappropriate to specify operational variables, state testable hypotheses, or finalize either instrumentation or sampling schemes. A naturalistic design unfolds or emerges as fieldwork unfolds” (p. 44). As this research project progressed and new themes emerged from the data, I did indeed use the concept of emergent design to make appropriate alterations to interview questions. For example, the importance of office and classroom spaces was not part of my original research agenda. However, as time unfolded and this theme became an ongoing topic of discussion amongst participants, I felt it was necessary to address it through the interview process. Additional unforeseen themes such as the importance of instructor meetings were also addressed through the use of emergent design.

**Document analysis.**

The first component of the methodological bricolage assembled for this project manifested itself in the form of document analysis. Sources of data for the document analysis came from institutional websites, unit reports, unit publications, and other forms of written data such as instructor meeting agendas. Document analysis is a valuable
component of qualitative inquiry because it can provide direct information about individuals and organizations while also offering new directions for interviews and observations (Patton, 2002). Reviewing organizational documents can also provide valuable background information and offer a closer look at how certain processes, rules, and procedures came into being (Glesne, 2006). Patton (2002) asserts that documents provide the investigator with information about many things that cannot be observed and they may also reveal important information about events that took place before the evaluation began. Finally, performing document analysis is usually an unobtrusive strategy that can be employed without affecting institutional operations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

While documents and other historical artifacts can be a valuable form of information, Prior (2008) suggests that documents are more than just containers of content, they are active agents for interactions and schemes of social organization. Prior asserts “Indeed, once a text or document is sent out into the world there is simply no predicting how it is going to circulate and how it is going to be activated in specific social and cultural contexts. For this reason alone, a study of what author(s) of a given document (text) ‘meant’ or intended can only add up to limited examination of what a documents ‘is’ ”(p. 824). By focusing on documents as more than static resources, researchers will begin to see that documents are active components of a social network, and like their human counterparts, they too can drive and shape activities and beliefs. Understanding and performing document analysis from this perspective has allowed me to explore previously hidden domains of information which elicited valuable knowledge about individuals and the organization. For example, a review of past instructor meeting
agendas revealed certain beliefs (e.g., GTA and CFM are professional instructors) that staff members hold about Learning Center instructors, beliefs that in-turn impact classroom behavior and teaching practices.

**Participant observation.**

Next, over a six month period from October 2011-March 2012, the researcher engaged in participant observation at several Learning Center events including class sessions, instructor meetings, office hours, and informal social events. The majority of the participant observation sessions took place in the Learning Center classroom and office spaces. Throughout the fieldwork experience extensive field notes were taken during all observations and later added to a field notes database or case record. Glesne (2006) states, “Through participant observation-through being part of a social setting-you learn firsthand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words; see patterns of behavior; experience the unexpected as well as the expected, and develop a quality of trust, relationship, and obligation with others in the setting” (p. 49). DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) describe a continuum of participant observer roles with passive/non-participatory on one end and complete participation at the other extreme. For this project, my role as a participant observer was moderate in nature. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) state “Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer is present at the scene of action, is identifiable as a researcher, but does not actively participate, or only occasionally interacts, with people in it. This level of observation could include structured observation as well as very limited participation” (p. 20). As a researcher in a context that was familiar, I did not help teach courses, participate in instructor meetings,
or grade any assignments; in short, my role as a participant was limited.

The data collected from participant observation consisted of detailed descriptions of activities, behaviors, and a range of interactions and organizational processes that were part of observable human experience (Patton, 2002). Jorgensen (1989) indicates that participant observation is extremely useful when little is known about a culture or phenomenon, there are distinct differences between the views of cultural insiders as compared to outsiders, and the culture is somehow obscured from the view of outsiders. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) suggest that as a method, participant observation provides researchers with several advantages including enhancing the quality of data obtained during fieldwork, enhancing the quality of the interpretation data collected through observation or other methods, and it encourages the development of new research questions grounded in on-the-scene experience (p. 8).

Additionally, participant observation can help researchers become familiar with common language used by subcultural entities within a specific context, also known as *indexical language* (Rogoff, 1990). Indexical language and expressions develop meaning within certain contexts and situations and one cannot fully understand the discourse unless present when the conversation or interaction takes place. Rogoff (1990) insists that “In oral language, the context and the interaction between the speaker and the listener help to establish the meaning, which can be negotiated in the interaction” (p. 53). Within organizations a chain of indexical expressions is often linked together to form meaning for those involved; it is local, social, and in turn situated. Schuetz (1944) states “There are in any language terms with several connotations. But besides these standardized connotations, every element of the speech acquires its special secondary meaning derived
from the context or the social environment within which it is used and, in addition, gets a special tinge from the actual occasion in which it is employed” (p. 505). While outsiders can learn the terms and jargon of a specific culture, the indexical nature of language allows insiders to develop an in-group code that is only relevant and meaningful to those who have participated in common experiences or helped give rise to the traditions connected with the culture. Performing participant observation over the past six months has helped me learn about in-group coding and meaning-making of particular forms of knowledge relevant to culturally-valued activities within the Learning Center.

**Interviews: Semi-structured and unstructured.**

Finally, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with CFM, GTA, and Learning Center staff members. The types of open-ended, often informal interviewing that were performed throughout this project correlate with the participant observation method of data collection outlined above (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Jorgenson, 1989). For this project, *semi-structured interviews* were those discussions that were set up at a specific time and place while *unstructured interviews* refers to the conversations that happened spontaneously while in the field. Semi-structured interviews ranged from 19-45 minutes and were conducted with seven GTA, three CFM, and two Learning Center administrators. All participants were interviewed once in the semi-structured format with additional unstructured interviews conducted at least three times per interviewee throughout the participant observation period.

Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the various, unique perspectives of participants are meaningful and informative and it is important to draw
from a myriad of perspectives because different participants will have diverse views of the context and phenomenon under review (Patton, 2002). Glesne (2006) argues “As a researcher, you most likely have an opinion on the topic into which you are inquiring. But as researcher, you want to learn the respondents’ beliefs, experiences, and views rather than to persuade them of your perspective” (p. 95). For this reason, the interviews I conducted were not fully structured in the traditional manner which usually entails close-ended questions asked by a researcher from a script that is not deviated from.

Instead, the semi-structured interviews were open-ended as I began with a set of questions but allowed the conversation to move beyond the predetermined scope of these questions. This type of flexibility led to unexplored avenues of information drawn from participant experiences and perspectives; several of these emergent themes will be highlighted in Chapter 4 of this document. Fontata and Frey (2005) state that structured interviewing “aims at capturing precise data of a codeable nature so as to explain behavior within preestablished categories”, whereas semi or unstructured interviewing “attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (p. 706).

In addition, learning about the people and context through participant observations served as a basis for forming new interview questions and provided the opportunity for unstructured interviews (Glesne, 2006). DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) assert “The basic rule in carrying out interviewing or conversing during participant observation is that the researcher is intent on following the lead of the informant, exerting only minimal impact on the topic and flow of the interaction” (p. 120). In both conversation and semi-structured interviewing I tried not to direct the topic of discussion
unless necessary. Rather, I explored and followed-up on points of interest raised by participants. The combination of active listening, spontaneous development of discussion prompts, clarifying questions, and respect for the participant’s feelings, values, and experiences led to informative interviews and conversations (Glesne, 2006).

**Methods of data verification.**

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the positivist criteria used for judging the adequacy of evaluation do not directly apply to constructivist studies, thus leaving open the question of validity in qualitative research. In response to the question of research validity, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested that trustworthiness is a more appropriate term for qualitative inquiries and they provide what are referred to as the *parallel* or *foundational* criteria of trustworthiness; criteria include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The trustworthiness criteria are referred to as parallel because they are meant to correspond with the positivist rigor criterion of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

For Guba and Lincoln (1989), *credibility* “is parallel to internal validity in that the idea of isomorphism between findings and an objective reality is replaced by isomorphism between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them” (p. 237). Instead of focusing on an assumed objective reality, the focus shifts to establishing the match between the constructed realities of participants and the realities represented by the researcher in their analysis. Credible representations can be obtained, in part, through prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observations, peer debriefings, negative case analysis, monitoring of investigator biases, and member
checks (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Transferability, as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1989), parallels the positivist notions of external validity or generalizability. Random sampling from the same population provides the foundation for positivist generalizability. However, “In the constructivist paradigm, external validity is replaced by an empirical process for checking the degree of similarity between…contexts” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241). From a constructivist perspective, transferability between settings depends on the degree to which relevant conditions match or overlap and the major technique for determining the degree of similarity comes from thick description of the research context. It is important to note that even with accurate descriptions of context and experiences, the conditions needed to declare transferability may change as the design and purposes of the inquiry are altered during fieldwork. Therefore, what constructivist researchers should aim to do “is to provide as complete a data base as humanly possible in order to facilitate transferability judgments on the part of others who may wish to apply the study to their own situations…or situation in which they have an interest” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), dependability parallels the conventional criterion of reliability in that it is concerned with the stability of data collection and analysis over a period of time. Dependability in this sense excludes methodological alterations that surface during fieldwork as that would void one of the strengths of qualitative work, emergent design. Indeed, Guba and Lincoln argue, “Far from being threats to dependability, such changes and shifts are hallmarks of a maturing-and successful inquiry. But such changes and shifts need to be both tracked and trackable
(publicly inspectable) so that outside reviewers…can explore the process, judge the decisions that were made, and understand what salient factors led the evaluator to the decisions and interpretations made” (p. 242). Determining the dependability of methods and analysis requires a dependability audit that reviews the extent to which the process is an established, trackable, and documentable course of action.

Finally, Guba and Lincoln offer the construct of confirmability as a parallel to the conventional criterion of objectivity. Confirmability is concerned with assuring that collected data, interpretations, and outcomes of qualitative inquiries are founded in actual contexts and people apart from the evaluator. In contrast to a positivist notion of objectivity which draws assurances from collection methods, constructivist confirmability draws assurances from the data itself. Guba and Lincoln (1989) assert “This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study” (p. 243). Determining the confirmability of data and analysis in qualitative inquiry requires the development of a conformability audit, a detailed account of the original data sources.

**Enhancing trustworthiness.**

To bolster trustworthiness of qualitative inquiries, Creswell (2007) and others (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989) have described eight verification procedures often used by qualitative researchers. Throughout the duration of this research project I used several of these processes as a guide to help insure trustworthiness and quality. The first verification process is prolonged engagement and persistent observations, including extended time in
the field so trust can be established, culture can be explored, and initial research premonitions can be checked. For this project, I spent over six months observing, interviewing, and performing document analysis. During this period of time, I spent at least 4 days a week in the research setting with additional time spent at other related events (e.g., instructor meetings) as appropriate. Times spent in the Learning Center were intentionally staggered as to provide several glimpses of the diverse relationships that exist between GTA, CFM, and staff members.

Next, verification can be partially achieved through the use of *triangulation*. Triangulation includes the researcher’s use of multiple data collection methods, multiple sources of information, and multiple theoretical perspectives (Patton, 2002). As outlined previously, throughout the duration of this project I used three different qualitative data collection methods, several sources of information, and multiple theoretical frameworks to help accomplish this goal. While triangulation may be viewed by many as a validation technique, skeptics such as Bloor (1978) suggest that is must be used with caution as it is not a means to validity because qualitative inquiries are not seeking to produce knowledge that is “true” in some absolute or essentialist sense. Therefore, while triangulation helped uncover new avenues of exploration and verified participant accounts, it did not create a foundation for discovering objective truths.

Third, *peer review and debriefings* help the researcher explore the biases inherent in all qualitative work while also offering input on current and new directions for the project. Prior to entering the field and periodically throughout the research process, I debriefed with two doctoral peers, one from my academic program and another from a different academic department. In these sessions my peers and I would discuss recent
findings from my observations and interviews along with the ways that these findings did or did not parallel my own experiences as a graduate teaching assistant in the Learning Center. In addition, on a weekly basis, I would discuss emerging themes with a member of my dissertation committee.

Next, researchers must clarify their biases by reflecting on their own subjectivity and discussing how they will monitor their biases throughout the research and analysis processes. It is important to recall that constructivist theorists such as Vidich and Lyman (2003) argue that inherently all research is partially qualitative in nature because the observer is at the center of the research process. This means that the findings produced by any methods represent no more than the particular reality of the observer at a given point in time. Indeed, the individual perspectives with which researchers approach, conduct, and analyze a research project are embedded within the foundation of all research processes; this is called researcher subjectivity. Subjectivity is viewed by qualitative researchers to be an important component of the research process that cannot be avoided and should instead be articulated. Peshkin (1988) suggests that all researchers, qualitative or quantitative, should identify subjective elements of their research as “these qualities have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, and misconstrue what transpires from the onset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (p. 151).

Prior to entering the field, I discussed and documented known assumptions about the project and detailed my prior experiences working in the setting. Throughout the research process, I kept and shared a reflective journal that highlighted biases and changes to the research design.
Fifth, a conscious search for negative cases and deviant evidence can help challenge previously held investigator assumptions and redefine working hypotheses. Throughout the research process, I continually looked for and found cases or situations that deviated from others, and often times these deviant cases led to new avenues of exploration. Indeed, the search for negative cases and the reformulation of working hypothesis is one of the strengths of qualitative inquiry and was part of this project.

Sixth, member checking helps insure trustworthiness of data and interpretations as researchers share their transcripts, analytical thoughts, and drafts with participants (Lather, 1986). Through member checks, participants can either verify or deny the representation as accurate. Bloor (1978) argues that “The main requirement for validation…seems to be an adequate level of involvement among respondents in one’s research or a degree of ‘commitment’ (cf. Becker, 1960) to the research topic. Inadequate involvement or commitment may result in uncritical evaluation of one’s findings by respondents” (p. 551). Periodically throughout the research project I shared insights with my participants as a form of member checking. Cautiously using feedback from respondents, I evaluated my findings and made alterations when appropriate. Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue “It is difficult to maintain false fronts, or support deliberate deception when information is subject to continuous and multiple challenges from a variety of stakeholders…The opportunities for error to go undetected and/or unchallenged are very small is such a process ” (p. 244).

Subsequently, qualitative researchers should provide rich, think descriptions that allow readers to enter into the research context. Detailed information about the context can only be obtained through extended time in the field; thus it demonstrates the
persistence of the researcher along with his/her familiarity with the context and participants (Patton, 2002). Throughout the research project, I kept detailed field notes and journal entries that describe the research setting, the observable actions of participants, the research processes, and my own biases and feelings.

**Organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data.**

Data analysis involves organizing what was seen, heard, and read, and making sense of what was learned throughout the course of this project. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In particular, I used a case study approach to the analysis of the collected data as this project purposefully concentrates on a particular context. The case study approach to qualitative analysis includes a specific way of collecting, organizing, and interpreting data and typically includes three components: (1) raw data, (2) case record, (3) case report or study (Patton, 2002). From the case study perspective, data analysis is an ongoing process that is done simultaneously with data collection, thus focusing and shaping the study as it proceeds (Glesne, 2006). The first step in the analysis process is the collection of raw data which took place over the course of six months. For this case, raw data included interview transcripts, institutional and Leaning Center documents, and field notes from participant observations.

The second step, which actually began while still collecting raw data, was the development of a case record (Merriam, 1991). The development of a case record for this project began by annotating and indexing the data gathered through document analysis,
participant observations, and interviews. Annotating is the process of writing notes on or about the data that has been collected (Jorgenson, 1989). As I collected data for this project, I simultaneously annotated field notes, Learning Center affiliated documents, interview transcripts, along with my own journal entries and reflective activities (e.g., notes from peer review partners). From these annotations, I was not only able to organize the data into indexical lists and a database, but I was also able to revisit the information periodically which helped bring forth new questions and avenues of exploration (Patton, 2002).

Throughout the research project data collected from field notes, participant observation sessions, and participant interviews was hand coded and separated into roughly 15 large categories (e.g., GTA-CFM interactions, training/mentoring, use of space, how GTA and CFM view one another, Learning Center teaching community culture, etc.), many of which correlated with the initial research questions. Revisiting the annotated and indexed information on a periodic basis allowed me to use new insights gained from the field to identify emerging categories (e.g., importance of instructor meetings), and reinterpret notes, transcripts, and observations from a more experienced, and nuanced lens (Merriam, 1991; Yin, 1994, 2009). In addition, revisiting the indexed data helped me identify themes that existed across categories and allowed me to reduce the information into manageable, organized, and accessible files (Merriam, 1991; Patton, 2002). Annotating, indexing, and coding also constituted the beginning stages of abstracting, integrating, and synthesizing the information.

As the case record evolved and became more detailed the case report began to materialize. Several themes were drawn from the case record along with participant
narratives and these data will be illustrated in Chapter 4 of this document. Once the case report was complete, the two theoretical lenses that informed this project, educational critical theory and symbolic interactionism, were applied to the report leading to an analyses of the collected data along with recommendations for administrative practice and future lines of research.

**Ethical Concerns**

Because qualitative researchers are at the center of the data gathering and analysis process, there are ethical dilemmas that may present themselves. The first ethical dilemma I was concerned with was the researcher-respondent relationship. In qualitative inquiries, the researcher and respondents often develop personally meaningful relationships that are built on trust and rapport. Indeed, qualitative researchers often go to great lengths to develop this rapport and spend inordinate amounts of time with respondents in *their space* (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). When this happens, several ethical dilemmas could present themselves.

First, I was concerned with the hazards that result from over-identification with respondents, what some have called *over-rapport* or *going native* (Glesne, 2006). Because of my prior experiences working in the Learning Center, this concern seemed especially pertinent at the offset of this project. However, as the case study progressed I found that participants were operating within an environment and subcultural community that differed from my own experiences in several ways (e.g., different norms, relationships, use of space) and thus diminished several of the following hazards. The first hazard is *researcher selectivity*; primarily talking with people that we like or find sympathetic. Following such a path may increase the pleasure of qualitative research, but
it will also distort the findings as the sample is limited to only those we find appealing. In addition to a limited sample, qualitative researchers may also censor questions or avoid difficult topics because they do not want to offend those they consider to be friends.

Another hazard that may become prevalent when developing friendships with respondents is their tendency to over-identify with the researcher. Glesne (2006) states, “In doing so, they may begin to act in ways that they perceive the researchers want them to act or in ways to impress them” (p. 117). Clearly, it would be difficult to gain an increased understanding of people, cultures, or events if the participants were acting abnormally to impress the researcher. Finally, developing friendships with respondents may also prevent the researcher from gaining access to others who their “friends” do not like. Indeed, relationships are complicated and when developing them within a research context, the qualitative inquirer must be cognizant of the benefits and the limitations of friendship. For this project, these ethical concerns were addressed by (1) inviting all Learning Center instructors and staff to participate, (2) asking difficult questions to all participants, and (3) making sure that participants knew my role was as a researcher and not an active member of the Learning Center community.

The second ethical dilemma that concerned me is also related to the researcher-respondent relationship but has more to do with recording information. When trying to establish trustworthiness with respondents it helps to gather information that outsiders are not privy to thus enhancing the depth of the research. Magolda and Weems (2002) propose that “As the inquiry process ensues, paradoxically, respondents are more at risk for harm because they begin to share personal information that could incriminate them or at least cast a negative light on their behavior” (p. 499). Smith (1990) suggests that
because the nature of qualitative research is so different from quantitative studies, it is important to make sure respondents understand the consent they give by agreeing to participate. Magolda and Weems (2002) state that “Clearly communicating the unique aspects of qualitative research to respondents is a prerequisite to minimizing harm” (p. 497). In order to prevent harm, many researchers promise confidentiality through coding or pseudonym usage, but total anonymity is not something that can be guaranteed. For all researchers, it is important to understand the limits of confidentiality before guaranteeing it, but also work diligently to try and maintain it. In addition, researchers must make sure that participants know that they can choose to stop participation at any point if they feel uncomfortable or threatened. As was indicated earlier, in order to address these ethical concerns the researcher: (1) provided participants with IRB approved copies of the research project protocol and the informed consent document, (2) communicated to participants that their participation was voluntary and they could stop at any point, (3) used pseudonyms whenever possible to protect participants from harm, and (4) informed participants that total anonymity was not guaranteed.

The third ethical dilemma that concerned me is related to entry into the field site. For researchers, it’s important to try and gain entry into research sites as quickly and smoothly as possible and this process often requires the permission of gatekeepers. By definition, gatekeepers are those individuals who oversee or are somehow in charge of the proposed potential research site and they often are the determining factor in gaining entry. Glesne (2006) states, “When meeting the gatekeeper, be prepared to negotiate your access. This involves presenting your lay summary, listening and responding to concerns and demands, and clarifying the overarching issues” (p. 45). It is important for
researchers to be honest with gatekeepers and attempt to engage them in frank conversations about: (1) potential harms, (2) confidentiality, (3) what the research will deliver, (4) the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, and (5) ownership of collected data (Glesne, 2006; Magolda & Weems, 2002). While some gatekeepers will be astute and protective, others may be distanced from the research site and thus aloof to investigator warnings. When gatekeepers are distanced, it may be tempting for researchers to enter the site without properly notifying the respondents of the aforementioned research ambitions and limitations; in my opinion this is an unethical decision. In as much, before entering the research site for this project the appropriate gatekeepers were notified, informed of the potential harms and outcomes of the project, and entry was negotiated. In addition, before any observations or interviews were conducted with Learning Center instructors and staff members, informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The fourth ethical dilemma that concerned me has to do with interpretation. Because researcher subjectivity is an important component of qualitative inquiry, it is important for qualitative researchers to use what Lather (1986) called *face validity* to help develop credibility of the collected data. Indeed, along with Lather, other qualitative theorists (Glesne, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002) suggest that face validity or member checking should be a standard component of all qualitative inquiry. Researchers can gauge the accuracy of their interpretations based on respondent reactions to their manuscript drafts. Glesne (2006) states, “Obtaining the reactions of research participants to your working drafts is time consuming, but doing so may (1) verify that you have reflected their perspectives; (2) inform you of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons; and (3) help you develop new ideas
and interpretations” (p. 167). In addition to member checking, qualitative researchers can enlist friends and colleagues to conduct outsider audits on field notes and the subsequent drafts and interpretations. For this project, member checks with participants were conducted on a regular basis, often resulting in new insights for the researcher. Additionally, peer and faculty reviewers provided audits with regards to researcher notes, interview questions, drafts, and emerging ideas.

**Conclusion**

The results of the qualitative case study outlined above will be represented in the next chapter via a case report. The case report will reflect data gathered throughout the research project and it will provide readers with an in-depth, detailed account of participant actions, narratives, beliefs, and perspectives. It is important to note that the case report is subjective in nature as the researcher has chosen components that are relevant to this research project.
Chapter 4: Learning Center Case Report

This chapter presents the findings from the case study and is organized by the major themes, including: (1) Learning Center GTA/CFM perspectives of one other, (2) the culture of the Learning Center teaching community, (3) elements that contributed to the development of the teaching community, and (4) GTA/CFM perspectives on institutional status. Included in this chapter will be details about the relationships, physical spaces, cultural characteristics, perceived status within the university setting, and sets of subcultural knowledge that are all components of the lived experience within the Learning Center teaching community. The following sections will represent several elements of the Learning Center teaching community along with the feelings, perspectives, and voices of the individuals who work and teach within this environment. A large percentage of the evidence appears in narrative form. The frequent use of narratives was intentional as they help illustrate the genuine voices and experiences of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Clandinin, 2007). Several of the themes represented in the subsequent sections directly reflect aspects of the original research questions along with additional topics that have emerged as the project unfolded.
Key Terms & Abbreviations

Throughout this case report and the following chapter several key abbreviations will be used; they include:

- **GTA** - Graduate teaching assistant(s)/associate(s)
- **CFM** - Contingent faculty member(s)
- **Staff** - Learning Center staff member(s)
- **NGTA** - New graduate teaching assistant(s)/associate(s); (less than 1 year of experience in the Learning Center)
- **EGTA** - Experienced graduate teaching assistant(s)/associate(s); (more than 1 year of experience in the Learning Center)

Graduate Teaching Associates’ Perspectives on Contingent Faculty

One of the primary purposes of this project was to discover how GTA view and interact with CFM within a specific academic context. Over the past six months, through both observations and interviews it has become apparent that new and experienced Learning Center GTA view and interact with the CFM in a positive manner. Throughout the course of this research project several important themes related to the GTA-CFM relationship were discovered and will be highlighted in subsequent sections.

While it is true that not all of the GTA have the same types of partnerships and interactions with the CFM, it is clear that mutual respect and the desire to work together in order to achieve student success are at the foundation of the GTA-CFM relationships in the Learning Center. Despite the varying strengths of the GTA-CFM relationships, the positive partnerships that exist between these two constituencies in the Learning Center is encouraging as it represents one way that GTA and CFM can work together to improve the quality of instruction thus making a positive impact on undergraduate students. The data represented in the following sections illuminate the multifaceted aspects of the
relationships which exist between these two teaching constituencies in the Learning Center with a focus on the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the GTA.

**CFM as a support mechanism.**

First, all of the GTA interviewed for this project felt that the CFM they worked with were an important part of the Learning Center teaching community and that like their graduate student peers, the CFM offer support in various ways. The types of CFM support that were talked about during the GTA interviews and observed over six months manifest themselves in several forms, including: answering questions about teaching the course, helping with grading and course technology, talking to the GTA about graduate school and their course assignments, and sharing teaching resources. It is important to note that the GTA also offered support to one another in the same capacities along with several others which will be discussed in a later section on the unique aspects of the GTA subculture within the Learning Center. When asked about the types of support they received from CFM, the following comments from interviews with EGTA and NGTA offered insight:

Last year CFM was in here a lot at the same time…so I talked to her a lot about how to structure suggestions for how I should approach teaching material; how I should approach structuring the class. How much should I lecture? How little should I lecture? Ideas for, especially group discussions with the Hope videos at the end, how to lead those (EGTA 2).

I did talk to a couple of the CFM about that [teaching], they had some good observations about how to work with students and how to deal with them and because they are more experienced than I am I kind of relied a lot on what they said, and it worked. It seems like because they had more experience, not just teaching here, but at other schools and in other capacities as well, they had some good advice to lend. So we talked about the handling of students, working with
students, we talked about grading, we talked about using different things [resources] in class (EGTA 1).

It ranges…from personal to just general things about teaching, and then about teaching this particular course; you know, some ways to be able to handle some difficult students, to be able to approach them, and also to encourage the ones who are really struggling so we discussed that. And we also discussed the technical aspects of the course, the technology, how to do the grading and other stuff (NGTA 1).

I used CFM a ton last quarter and I would check my PowerPoint against hers and kind of come in and watch to make sure I was doing a similar thing. Especially with grading and expectations. It has gone much smoother this quarter because of some of the things CFM told me last quarter about expectations and things, stuff that I am not having to deal with this quarter... CFM is probably the person I talk to the most (NGTA 3)

The comments made by these GTA are indicative of what was observed over a period of six months in the Learning Center. On almost a daily basis, the observed interactions between the GTA and CFM were not only positive and supportive, but also informative in nature. For example, on numerous occasions I witnessed and made note of GTA and CFM engaging in informative dialogue about the course they teach and the students they work with. These conversations varied in length from less than one minute to almost half an hour and included a range of topics such as pedagogical philosophies, grading strategies, allowing students to add the class, how to lead class discussions, working with students who have learning disabilities, how to handle student conduct issues, and how to work with some of course specific technology.

In addition to the conversations between GTA and CFM with regards to teaching the course, on multiple occasions in the shared office spaces, I witnessed CFM on the computers with the NGTA, showing them how to set up different course components
such as online grade books and discussion forums. During an observation session in the large office space in late October 2011, I watched a CFM sit next to a NGTA for roughly half an hour and together they talked about and performed several functions related to grading efficiency and providing feedback to students. Indeed, through observations and conversations with the GTA and CFM, I have learned that these types of one-on-one help sessions, or *technology mentoring* as one NGTA described it, have been a common occurrence in the Learning Center for some time.

The technology mentoring between CFM and GTA was not just limited to the computers in the offices spaces but it also transcended into the classroom arena as well. For example, the in-class course instructors show a series of videos related to a supplemental textbook and when the time came to air the films, I witnessed a CFM helping a NGTA set up the DVD so it could be shown to the class. Together, side-by-side at the instructor podium, the CFM walked the NGTA through the steps to get the video set-up and how to start the class discussion afterward. Additionally, in order to prevent confusion amongst the other instructors, the CFM also placed a label on the DVD indicating which computer program to use when showing the videos in class.

Finally, the CFM in the Learning Center offered many of the GTA support and encouragement with regards to their coursework and other academic endeavors. Several of the GTA interviewed for this project indicated that the CFM would frequently inquire about their academic programs, and even though they are not students themselves, the CFM would offer advice and words of support for the GTA. In reference to CFM supporting GTA in their academic coursework, the following statements were made:
I will talk about courses and it's nice because they [CFM] understand because they have gone through it. I mean they are not just random people who come in and teach. I mean, it's not that they have the same degree as I do but they understand the pressures of grad school and that it's hard and so it's kind of nice because, you know, one of the CFM in particular has been pretty reassuring about doing well in grad school (EGTA 1).

Oh yea, I think that CFM is who I talk with most of the time, and not just about teaching but about grad school…some of the difficulties and some of the adjustments that we have to make to classes and exams, for dissertations too (NGTA 1).

While these examples of CFM supporting GTA represent only a few of the many that I observed and heard about throughout the interviews and participant observation sessions in the Learning Center, it is clear that in this context the CFM serve as more than part-time instructors, they serve as informal guides and peer mentors as well.

**CFM as peer mentors.**

In addition to offering support during conversations and help sessions, through interviews I learned that several of the GTA feel that CFM can and do serve as teaching mentors for individuals who are both beginning and experienced instructors. The CFM-GTA relationship was characterized by all the interviewees as being collegial and equal rather than hierarchical in nature; the guidance was also described by many of the GTA and CFM as peer mentoring. When asked during interviews if CFM can serve as teaching mentors to GTA in the Learning Center, the following responses were elicited:

Definitely, I think so, because they [CFM] are knowledgeable about the courses, they experience the day to day activities of working with students. What are common problems students face? What are common issues you are going to face when teaching the course? (EGTA 2).
I mean I’ve gone to them [CFM] specifically for mentoring I would say, it's more informal, but you know like I said they do have a lot of good things to offer and a lot of it has to do with teaching. I mean, the content I teach is not the same content I learn in my PhD program but learning how to be a teacher is part of what I really learned here, and I've learned a lot of it from them… The lecturers [CFM] are good teachers and they are here to teach and so I guess in that way looking towards them to be mentors is something I would definitely see as being a positive aspect of my experience here in the Learning Center and it might be something that, you know, I guess a lot of GTA don't get that because they don’t have the same space we have. And we have training ahead of time and it was nice to hear their [CFM] experiences (EGTA 1).

Yes, and I think I would say it's kind of a peer-to-peer sharing…but I would say I’ve benefited more so it might be mentoring. It's not like we sit down and I say I want you to mentor me, it's just that they [CFM] are there and because they are more experienced and have been doing this for a long time I trust the information I get from them (NGTA 1).

Yea, it's a peer-to-peer relationship and it's self-initiated. But CFM is very helpful and asks me how I am doing and stuff like that, and I go to her when I need things that have to do with the class (NGTA 3).

The comments above indicate that CFM in the Learning Center offer peer mentoring to GTA in several developmental ways. The first way is through mastery experiences. The interactions highlighted in the previous sections and quotes demonstrate forms of mastery experience as the CFM work with the GTA, especially the NGTA, to try new experiences in a secure environment where failure is unlikely. This type of experiential learning is important for all instructors because mastery experiences provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can achieve success and thus they have the greatest impact on self-perception and beliefs about accomplishment (Bandura, 1982).

In a more indirect way of mentoring, many of the GTA stated that they have watched the CFM lecture or perform class activities and that it was a valuable use of time
to do so. In interviews with both new and experienced GTA, they commented on the value of watching the CFM teach as they asserted:

From my first day of instruction I made it a point to watch because I think I learn through modeling, watching people sometimes. So…before I started instruction I watched CFM teach the first class. After the first day I did my own personal style, but those first two classes, by watching, helped me realize that it's not that difficult to teach… I think the CFM, sometimes when I watch them, it seems as if they have more examples, more insight into the some of the materials they are teaching. You know, probably because they have done it for many years (NGTA 1).

CFM was good to have…teach before me last quarter because I would come in a little bit early and hear her lectures and implement some of her ideas in my own class and then I would ask her about it and… it was tremendously beneficial, especially as a new instructor in this course (NGTA 2).

The informal knowledge in the way I have seen them teach has been very valuable and I would even say that incoming people who will be teaching here next year, if they can come and watch the CFM …and talk to them about teaching it will probably help improve their classroom performance. I know when I first came I had taught before but I did not understand the content as well and I kind of had to find myself a little bit as an instructor and part of what did that was watching the CFM or listening about their experiences and just, watching them infuse their personality in their course and realize it does not always have to be about the content (EGTA 1).

The first NGTA quote above highlights the learning that can take place through vicarious experiences and in the Learning Center many of the GTA indicated that the CFM serve as teaching role models, especially to those who teach before or after one of the CFM. Along with mastery experiences, vicarious experiences (i.e., social role modeling) can help boost self-efficacy and the examples presented here are just a sampling of those that occurred between CFM and GTA over the past six months. Furthermore, as was noted earlier, the CFM offer support through encouraging words
which is a form of social persuasion and Bandura (1986) asserts that social persuasion can be a factor in developing self-efficacy, especially for beginning instructors like NGTA.

**CFM as quality instructors.**

The stereotype of CFM as gypsy academics that travel from university-to-university, having limited contact with students and colleagues, and seeking full-time positions as faculty members, is alive in both the higher education literature and in the public eye. During conversations and interviews with both new and experienced GTA, I learned that many of them had similar preconceived notions about CFM, especially part-time instructors, but that these assumptions had been debunked during their tenure in the Learning Center.

For example, one EGTA indicated that she originally thought that part-time instructors were people who wanted full-time teaching positions. However, through her experiences with the CFM in the Learning Center she realized that many people teach part-time because they have other obligations (e.g., family), but that does not mean they are not quality instructors. In fact, this EGTA indicated the opposite as she stated “I think lecturers [CFM] provide just as much valuable information if not more than someone who is a full-time professor because they are working just with the students as opposed to taking on other tasks and responsibilities such as research” (EGTA 2). In addition to possessing valuable information about the student population and the course, several of the GTA were impressed by the dedication of the CFM, both to the undergraduate students they teach and the GTA themselves. The subsequent quotes represent the voices
of two of the GTA with regards to their perspective on the contributions and dedication of CFM in the Learning Center:

I am impressed with how they teach…They are interested in student's success, they don't try to get through the material quickly and they are interested in helping students which is impressive. I mean, from what I understand most CFM earn less than GTA so you might perceive them as people who just come and get the job done and because there is that option to lecture as little as possible and try to get as much grading done in class and then going home and have little else to do. So I am impressed with the time and the effort they put into the class and the actual class time they spend talking or doing activities…What I have found is that they are always willing to help, even when I frequently interrupt them, and they drop what they are doing if they can to help me (NGTA 2)

I see the CFM as… people I look up to because they are doing this. I mean I am doing it for free tuition and things like that, but they are doing it because they really like teaching and I respect that. I mean, they are not getting paid a lot to do it but it does not change the fact that they are here and they want to contribute and they work hard and I have a lot of respect for people that do that…I know they don’t get paid a lot but they still work hard, and this is the thing too, it's not just their teaching but the attitude towards students…they are not here just to make money and leave, they are here to make a difference and contribute and help out…Part of the reason I took a GTA position was because I wanted a teaching experience and so I guess I kind of do look up to them, I think it's pretty cool that they teach and that they have other parts of their lives but when they come here they are really committed to teaching and making it a better experience for students (EGTA 1).

The voices highlighted above illustrate the fact that several of the GTA in the Learning Center recognize that despite their low pay, the CFM are committed instructors who have a desire to help students be successful. In addition, as one NGTA indicated above and several others have discussed during informal conversations, the CFM are also committed to helping other instructors in the Learning Center even though it is not necessarily required.
The evidence presented in the preceding sections highlights some of the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of the Learning Center GTA, and based on these data, it appears that the CFM have a positive impact on the GTA they interact with. Additional evidence collected through participant observation and document analysis confirms the perspectives offered throughout the previous sections and it further solidifies the contention that many CFM contribute significantly more to the university community than just teaching a course or two.

**Contingent Faculty Members’ Perspectives on Graduate Teaching Associates**

In addition to the perspectives of the GTA highlighted in the previous sections, exploring how the CFM view the GTA they work with in the Learning Center was also a key component of this project. Developmental relationships are often interdependent and thus if one side does not view the other with respect and collegiality, negative results could occur. For example, in the case of the Learning Center, if CFM were to view the GTA with disdain or were unwilling to collaborate with them, there could be negative consequences for the instructors themselves and for undergraduate students who take courses with these individuals. The data from the previous section represent the voices of the GTA, which paints a picture of working in partnership with CFM to help develop some of the capacities and skills to effectively support one another and to teach undergraduate students. While the information from the previous section is encouraging, it is also one sided and thus limited. In order to better understand the relationship between these two constituents it is necessary to explore the perspectives of the CFM, and in the following sections those voices will be highlighted.
CFM as peers, mentees, and mentors.

Throughout the observation period it appeared that the relationships between the GTA and CFM were both positive and collegial; but it was not until I sat down and interviewed the CFM that I discovered more about their opinions, perspectives, and experiences with regards to this topic. In all the interviews conducted with the Learning Center CFM, it was made clear that they respect and enjoy working together with the GTA. Through observations and additional conversations with CFM, it was also apparent that their relationships with GTA in the Learning Center are multifaceted and often mutually beneficial. For instance, when asked about their relationships with the GTA in the Learning Center the following responses were elicited by CFM:

I would say they were pretty positive, most of the GTA were very helpful, especially those who had been there for a while when I was first starting. I was able to ask them…questions, get advice from them. So, I think the relationships were good; I have positive relationships with them (CFM 1)

I think that we just have a kind of a peer, or colleague relationship and I don’t think they are treated any differently than I am, not being a grad student. And I think if there is any difference, it's based on the fact that I have been here longer and may be more experienced teaching this particular course; but, I think it's a very even relationship (CFM 2).

It’s very collegial and …it means I can feel free to ask them questions and vice versa. That we support each other, if someone understands how to do something with the course technology or if there is a problem we feel free to talk about it with each other in a supportive environment (CFM 3).

The comments above demonstrate not only that the CFM have positive working relationships with the GTA and that they view them as equals and peers, but also that the relationships go beyond the CFM and GTA simply coexisting. For example, the first quote illustrates the idea that when CFM are new to the Learning Center they may look to
experienced GTA to help them develop as instructors. This is not an aspect of the relationship that I have frequently observed throughout my time in the Learning Center, probably because all the CFM who currently teach are returning instructors and thus are not seeking the type of assistance the first CFM eluded to above. However, the fact that some of the CFM viewed the experienced GTA as mentors is interesting because it indicates the existence of an educational environment where all instructors, both GTA and CFM, are relying on one another to help develop the skills and capacities to become quality teachers. In as much, the following quotes from Learning Center CFM represent the types of mutually informative and supportive relationships that I witnessed and was told about:

I think it [relationship between GTA and CFM] was very positive because we learn from each other, I think we were essentially doing the same job, so that brought us together. And you know, there was not a separation or division, I felt like we were all working towards the same goal. We were all teaching and doing the same thing (CFM 1).

What’s so wonderful about the people I work with is that we all have different experiences, some work, some school, and I think that brings a lot. Many of them [GTA] are already teachers or have been, they may have a foundation in how to teach and the fact that they are back in school enhances their ability to contribute to my learning (CFM 3).

An important component of many successful educational environments is the willingness of experienced instructors to not only learn from and collaborate with new instructors, but also to help new instructors become acclimated into the setting by teaching them the formal and informal norms that are associated with the particular department. Through observations and based on interviews with CFM, GTA, and Staff, it seems that CFM play an important role when helping new instructors acclimate to the
Learning Center teaching community. For example, even though mentoring new GTA is not a formal component of their role in the Learning Center, several of the GTA said that it was happening. In relation, several of the CFM indicated that they felt comfortable helping new NGTA “learn the ropes of the course” and that they enjoy doing so. When asked if they could help mentor GTA with regards to teaching, the following responses from interviews with Learning Center CFM were elicited:

Yea, totally, I mean, I think as I begin a transition to search for other potential [teaching] positions, that's something that I put down; I have had the opportunity to mentor some of the GTA. I mean, I have had some of the GTA and teachers come to me and ask questions about teaching and services and I actually like that feeling (CFM 1).

Yea, I would like to think so (laughing). Yes, and I don’t know if it's because I am a lecturer versus just the fact that I have more experience doing it. I think just naturally anybody who has taught any given class multiple times is going to have more insight and hopefully be helpful to anybody whether that person be a lecturer or a GTA (CFM 2).

Yea, as much as I can. I mean, usually it [mentoring] happens when I have co-workers or GTA who have just started teaching…if they have questions and they are teaching right before me or after me. If anyone would ask a question I would be glad to help them out (CFM 3).

The types of mentoring may vary depending on the CFM and the GTA, but during observation sessions I witnessed the following: (1) CFM having conversations with GTA surrounding the course content and teaching in general, (2) interactions where the CFM would help NGTA with some of the course technology, (3) discussions where CFM were encouraging GTA with regards to both teaching and graduate school, and (4) communications where the CFM and GTA were sharing resources with one another. Additionally, in an interview with one of the CFM it was made clear that discussions
about graduate school with GTA are a common phenomenon, and that as an individual with an advanced degree it is possible for this particular CFM to be empathetic to what the GTA are experiencing while also offering advice when appropriate.

The narratives presented in this section substantiate similar sentiments offered by the GTA with respect to the nature of the GTA-CFM relationships in the Learning Center. The evidence presented in the previous two sections helps solidify the notion that GTA and CFM can develop positive, meaningful, collaborative relationships with one another and that they can work together to improve classroom performance. While the data presented in the previous segments is encouraging, they do not tell the full story of the development of these positive relationships. In order to gain a more holistic understanding of the development of the GTA-CFM relationships in the Learning Center it is necessary to explore the culture that surrounds them along with additional environmental conditions that may have contributed to the growth of these partnerships; the following sections of this chapter will examine these topics.

**Culture of the Learning Center Teaching Community**

Within academic units like the Learning Center, unique cultures can develop and have a powerful influence on the relationships of the individuals who work within these communities. Unique organizational cultures and subcultures are often influenced by a range of factors such as physical spaces, individual personalities, history of the organization and unit, leadership, and norms, expectations, and assumptions. Over the course of the past six months I have had the opportunity to observe and discuss the culture of the Learning Center teaching community with the individuals who not only operate within it, but who have also helped create and shape it.
In the following sections, several of the culturally-related themes that emerged throughout this research project will be highlighted. The themes that have emerged from the data collection process indicate that a unique teaching culture exists within the Learning Center, and elements of this culture have a direct influence on the GTA-CFM relationship. Additionally, according to participants, a smaller GTA subculture is also prevalent amongst the Learning Center instructors.

**Elements that Contribute to Learning Center Teaching Community Culture**

Culture is a difficult concept to define, but if we choose to identify it as a system of shared orientations that hold a unit together and give it a distinctive identity, then the Learning Center teaching community definitely has its own unique culture. The Learning Center teaching community has several characteristics in common with the larger university teaching community but there are also distinct elements that mark its uniqueness and contribute to an individual subcultural style. Along with shared orientations, members of certain communities frequently give meaning to particular artifacts, adopt certain behaviors, and develop a common vernacular; a unique and indexical language created and used by participants of a particular culture. The following segments will illustrate some of the shared norms, expectations, and assumptions of the Learning Center teaching community along with a selection of the behaviors, traditions, and idioms that contribute to a unique subcultural style.

**Norms, expectations, and assumptions.**

The first elements of the Learning Center subculture manifest themselves in the form of the norms and expectations that the instructors and administrators hold. Through
conversations, interviews, and document analysis, the GTA, CFM, and staff members of the Learning Center indicated that there were both formal and informal norms that contribute to the development of the Learning Center teaching community subculture. Examples of the formal norms were evident in both conversations and Learning Center documents (e.g., instructor meeting agendas) and they included showing up on-time to teach courses, notifying other instructors if a student would be sitting in on their exam period, holding regular office hours, getting grading done within a reasonable timeframe, etc. The formal norms of the Learning Center teaching community were established by the administration, and are frequently reinforced by the management through trainings and other various communications such as emails. In addition, the formal norms of the Learning Center teaching community mirror several items described in the departmental and university faculty handbooks.

In contrast to the administratively developed and reinforced formal norms, a host of informal norms and expectations were discussed by GTA, CFM, and Staff, and they included helping one other with course technology, being available and willing to engage in discussions about teaching the course, meeting with students outside of class, incorporating a range of resources and pedagogical styles into class sessions, covering class when individuals had personal or professional commitments that prevented them from teaching, treating students with respect, etc. These informal norms are not part of GTA and CFM contracts, or something that the administrators try to force upon instructors in the Learning Center. Rather, these expectations and norms are disseminated and reinforced socially, through conversations and actions between experienced and new instructors.
For example, during an observation session on November 8, 2011, I learned that a NGTA would be covering class for a CFM and, in return, she was going cover one of his classes later in the quarter. The NGTA thought this was a great system because it allowed him to attend a professional development event while “still knowing that my class is in good hands”. When asked if he felt it was a norm of the Learning Center culture to help out others, with a smile the NGTA stated “Yes, definitely. I think people, when we send out emails asking for help, there was a good response, and I trust that the CFM who led my class did a good job. That's one of the things I like about our community; that people will cover or help one another because that's important” (NGTA 2).

In accordance with the espoused and enacted informal norms just mentioned, one of the CFM described the Learning Center culture as a “culture of trust and sharing”. In particular, one informal norm that was prevalent in multiple conversations and interviews with CFM and GTA was the sharing of resources with one another. The norm or expectation of sharing resources was also evident throughout the observation sessions as I witnessed many of the GTA and CFM using similar PowerPoint presentations, handouts, online videos, and discussion prompts. Indeed, in talking with EGTA, CFM and Staff, it appears that this informal norm has a history in the Learning Center as instructors have been abiding by it for years. When asked if there were norms or expectations related to sharing resources within the Learning Center teaching community the following statements were offered:

In my experience yes, people are willing to share ideas and resources. I don’t know that it's a very formal process even though we do have the shared drive. I don't know how detailed that is, what even is actually on there and available for
instructors to use. But I think that, for example, I can remember a couple of weeks ago one of the GTA was in here and she was saying how for the particular lecture, that she did not have a lot to add above and beyond what was in the book. And so we were talking about ideas and the things that I have done in the past, and some ideas that she had and sharing ideas that way. So I feel everybody is willing to do that and it's very helpful, but it's more informal than a formalized process (CFM 2).

Definitely, I like to share resources, and… I have been very open to sharing just because coming into something new you don’t necessarily know what works best or how to set things up so sometimes it's good to get what other people created, tweak it a little if you need to and try it out. Especially with the first day of class; having the Power Point already… knowing from the start where to go, how to cover the policies and assignments and because the course has a lot of different moving components, making sure I had a presentation that addressed each one was very helpful. I know like EGTA’s spreadsheet for tracking attendance, I'm so thankful for that, she shared it with us this year and I think a lot of the instructors use it (EGTA 2).

Oh yes (very emphatic), yep, that was the main sharing; we were able to share those resources. I was able to see some examples that I would use and then modify, and that was one of the biggest parts of sharing and that was really good. (NGTA 1).

The preceding narratives offer evidence of the culture of trust and sharing that exists between instructors within the Learning Center as they openly distribute resources and rely on one another to help improve instructional quality. Commentary from the GTA and CFM revealed that, for new instructors in the Learning Center, the resource sharing by experienced instructors also helped them adjust to teaching the course and allowed them to feel more confident in their ability to deliver the content in a consistent manner. The following quotes represent just three of the several conversations that took place regarding the importance of shared resources for NGTA:
It really helped a lot. I think without that, people sharing Power Points and some of their class notes and knowledge, I could have done it, but…the transition would have been more strenuous. With the sharing it makes the transition to teaching and being an instructor kind of smooth and gives you the sense that you can do it (NGTA 1).

It [sharing resources] was tremendously beneficial, especially as a new instructor in this course because I want to be consistent with all the other sections, at least I think that it's important to be consistent… But, now I realize there can be more variation than I did upfront, but upfront it was very important, I did not know and I wanted to make sure I was consistent with the curriculum and it gave me that confidence (NGTA 2).

To be able to just go and look at them [other instructors’ presentations] gave me some confidence and was helpful…and like I said, I did not use all of them but the ones I did adapt were good and it was nice to know they had been tested by experienced instructors like the CFM (NGTA 3).

The voices above illustrate the notion that sharing of resources can improve classroom performance and give NGTA confidence which they indicted is an important component of successful teaching. Accordingly, several of the GTA and CFM indicated that the informal norm or expectation of sharing resources also had an influence on the instructor relationships within the Learning Center as it helped establish a sense of trust and community amongst them. This sense of community is also representative in several of other subcultural stylistic elements which will be highlighted in the following segments.

**Unique language of the Learning Center.**

The informal norms of the Learning Center teaching community are also accompanied by a distinctive language that the instructors use on a daily basis, one that is created, altered, and learned through experience teaching the course and through interactions with veteran GTA and CFM. Indeed, everyday conversations between
Learning Center instructors are riddled with elements of a cultural language that has been created and molded over several years; a language that separates those who teach the course from those who do not.

The unique dialect of the Learning Center teaching community incorporates several phrases and acronyms created by Dr. Bruce W. Tuckman, they include idioms such as LMS (i.e., the textbook Learning and Motivation Strategies: Your Guide to Success), stACHs (i.e., Strategies for Achievement), and Quickpractices and Spotquizzes (i.e., two types of assignments) (Tuckman, Abry, & Smith, 2008). There are also a host of other words that have a distinct meaning to the Learning Center instructors, a meaning that has been transformed from the everyday use of the word; examples include: Hope (i.e., the book A Hope in the Unseen); Cedric (i.e., the first name of the main character from the Hope book); modules (i.e., chapters from the LMS book and a title from the course technology system); portfolios (i.e., individual reflective papers students complete); etc… (Suskind, 2005; Tuckman et al., 2008). In an interview with an EGTA the unique language of the Learning Center teaching community became apparent as she asserted:

Just the way we talk, about Hope, and stACHs, and Cedric, and LMS, I always have to tell my students the first week that there are stACHs and this means Strategies for Achievement, and LMS means Learning and Motivation Strategies, and I am holding up the book and I don’t want to have to say the title every time because it's a long title so we just call it LMS and they start to know what I am talking about. Oh yea, I also have to explain portfolios all the time because I tell people that students are writing portfolios and they are like-'is there a whole bunch of papers in it?’-and I am like no, it’s just a two-page paper they do even though it sounds like a big thing (EGTA 3).
While the unique language of the Learning Center teaching community may be well-known by EGTA and CFM, throughout the first month of observations I witnessed NGTA asking for clarification about some of the language used during instructor conversations, trainings, throughout the shared PowerPoint presentations, and in the course technology. Indeed, on many occasions throughout the participant observation period conversations about the indexical language were held in the shared office and classroom spaces, usually with experienced instructors informing NGTA about the particulars of the vernacular. However, as time passed I observed the NGTA adopting and using the indexical dialect on a more consistent basis and eventually it became, as one NGTA described it, “just second nature”.

In addition to the acronyms and unique words, throughout the observation period I also overhead some of the GTA and CFM referring to the week of the academic quarter by using the number of the LMS module they are currently in. For example, in separate interactions on October 31, 2011, when asked what week of the academic quarter they were currently in, two EGTA responded “we are in Module 6”. In relation, in an interview with one of the NGTA the unique language of the Learning Center teaching community was a topic of conversation and he asserted that if outsiders who have never taught the course were to overhear a conversation between instructors about the course they might be lost (NGTA 2). Understanding and using the indexical language of the Learning Center teaching community indicated partial socialization into the community and helped strengthen the relationships between new and experienced instructors as they began to speak a common language. In the words of one NGTA, as he learned the unique language “It just became easier to talk to people about the course and the technology and
stuff like that, and it kind of made me feel more a part of it [teaching community]” (NGTA 2).

GTA and CFM redefining space.

The distinctive language is one of several elements that define the style that is recognizable as the subculture of the Learning Center teaching community. There are also actions and behaviors that signify being part of this teaching community. For example, while presenting information, guiding discussions, or leading activities, all the Learning Center instructors, both GTA and CFM, position themselves close to the students and away from the instructor podium. Initially I thought this was an individual preference but after observing for several months the behavior appears to be a common one. According to some of the GTA and CFM, this behavioral norm is important because it signifies the Learning Center instructors altering the classroom space to meet their needs and to accommodate shared assumptions about teaching and learning. In contrast, on several occasions I witnessed external presenters using the classroom space and in 90% of the cases the instructor spoke from the podium as students observed the projected presentation.

Classroom spaces often present opportunities for knowledge acquisition but many learning spaces also create substantial barriers to this objective as students and instructors are, by design, intentionally separated from one another (Chism, 2006). Educational spaces like university classrooms are often constructed using assumptions about who holds knowledge, who is doing the learning, and the types of spatial arrangements that are most conducive to student learning (Chism & Bickford, 2002). Unfortunately, as some scholars argue (Chism, 2002; Oblinger, 2006; Strange & Banning, 2001), the
assumptions that are used to design many classroom spaces are founded in a transmission theory of learning which suggests that students passively listen and take notes while instructors convey information from a pulpit.

Hebdige (1979) illustrates this classical spatial arrangement when he states “the hierarchical relationship between teacher and taught is inscribed in the very layout of the lecture theatre where seating arrangements….dictate the flow of information and serve to ‘naturalize’ professional authority. Thus, a whole range of decisions about what is and what is not possible within education have been made, however unconsciously, before the content of the individual courses is even decided” (p. 12-13). When classroom spaces are constructed using the transmission theory of learning as a foundation it limits the ways that instructors and students can interact and the ways knowledge can be taken in and disseminated. In her work *Space as a Change Agent*, Diana Oblinger (2006) suggests that classroom spaces carry messages to both students and instructors about how learning should take place and she uses the term *built pedagogy* to reference the ability of a space to define how individuals should teach.

In the Learning Center, the classroom space has many aspects that reflect a transmission theory of learning. For example, within the Learning Center classroom space there is a clearly marked front to the classroom that houses the instructor podium and desk along with one of the overhead projectors and screens. Some scholars (e.g., Chism, 2002; Oblinger, 2006) argue that a single focal point (e.g., instructor podium, projection screen) at the front of the classroom sends a strong message to both students and instructors about how learning will occur in the space. Spaces that focus solely on the instructor or a projection screen passively rely the message that knowledge will be
disseminated from an authority figure and the student’s job is to listen and absorb this information. While this method of knowledge delivery may have merit, several contemporary authors (Chism, 2006; Graetz & Goliber; 2002; Kuh, 2009) suggest that as student populations continue to change, the way that learning is defined and instructors convey information must also evolve or be rendered ineffective. One way to accomplish this goal is for instructors to deviate from the built pedagogy inherent in many classroom spaces and this type of digression appears happening in the Learning Center.

While the classroom in the Learning Center may be instructor centric, all of the GTA and CFM who operate within this learning environment deviate from the built pedagogy in several ways. First, as was previously mentioned, when addressing their classes all of the Learning Center GTA and CFM move away from the instructor podium into the center of the room where they frequently engage in conversations with students. Instead of lecturing on the course material from the podium, the GTA and CFM move closer to the students and allow them to actively participate in the production of knowledge. For example, on countless occasions over the past six months I witnessed GTA and CFM mingling amongst their students, asking for examples from students’ lives and experiences that might relate to the material being covered in class.

Second, at one time or another, all of the Learning Center instructors had students perform individual or group activities and discussions that required them to move away from their individual computer stations/screens. These activities symbolize the instructors using the classroom space in a manner different from the built pedagogy. Indeed, during conversations with several of the GTA and CFM they made it clear that while the Learning Center classroom is not designed to support group work, that type of interaction
engages many learners and so instructors try to alter the space to accommodate the needs of their students.

This altering of the classroom space symbolizes two commonly espoused Learning Center teaching community assumptions. First, that students have the ability to contribute to knowledge construction, and second, that student experiences should be heard because they can learn from one another. In numerous conversations with GTA and CFM these cultural assumptions were made clear as they insisted on using students’ experiences to help illustrate course themes. Indeed, on a daily basis throughout the six month observation period, I witnessed this espoused assumption being enacted in the classroom as many GTA and CFM relied on students to help drive the conversations about particular course topics.

**Subcultural knowledge.**

It is also common for subcultural members to possess and share a unique set of knowledge, one that is founded in experience. Indeed, over the past six months, through observations, interviews and document analysis, I have learned that the GTA, CFM, and Staff of the Learning Center feel that the instructors possess and share a unique knowledge set, one that is based on experience in the classroom and an on-going, in-depth engagement with the course content and materials.

Through daily conversations and interactions the GTA and CFM of the Learning Center discussed and displayed elements of their unique knowledge set whether they be about the course content, the student population, or best practices in the classroom. For example, during observation sessions I witnessed GTA and CFM sharing insights with one another about student attendance during certain times of the academic quarter and
how they can use creative tactics to help insure that students do not lose focus. When asked if the Learning Center instructors possess a unique set of knowledge that was based on teaching the course, GTA, CFM and Staff offered the following:

I think so, and I think that sometimes you don’t even realize how much you know or how much you have acquired because you are, I'm always thinking what don’t I know, what else can I learn, what else do I need to do to become a better instructor. So, sometimes you forget how much you already know and how much you can really contribute (CFM 2).

Oh yea, definitely. Even one of the staff members [who has] never taught here, I think that he feels that he does not quite get it. He has seen us teach, even gone through the coursework a little bit, but still, not having taught the class he does not understand. I mean, I am just paraphrasing his own words that he does not understand exactly what we do. So I feel the instructors have a very important perspective (NGTA 2).

From the systems designer standpoint there were at least subtle changes made to the course every quarter premised in feedback from the GTA and the CFM. Based on their experiences in the class and working with the system. Certainly based on their experiences, it was never their first quarter that they were giving me the feedback; it was always after they had exposure to the course. I think for a while there EGTA was in the middle of a bunch of course changes and I know we made small changes, I think every quarter, premised not in top-down decision making, but middle management decision making because the teachers were the ones working with the system and knew what would work (Staff 2).

As expressed above, the distinct knowledge set the Learning Center instructors possess is one that combines elements of past experiences with new insights learned through teaching the class and engaging with the course materials and technologies.

Despite their experiences in the classroom, several contemporary authors argue that often times because of their status within the university teaching hierarchy, GTA and CFM practice-based knowledge may not be fully recognized or utilized in course development. The following accounts from Learning Center instructors represent just a sample of the
responses to inquiries on whether or not GTA and CFM feel that they can use their unique knowledge set to constructively contribute to course development:

Yes, I do. I don’t think it just comes from the repetition of teaching. I mean, I think that every quarter teaching it [the course] I have more to add and a better understanding of it...why things were done a certain way and kind of what the rationale was and I feel like I get better at that...every quarter. But I do feel like I have really good understanding of the course and would be able to be helpful [if asked to help with course development] (CFM 2).

Oh definitely, and I think that has happened. If I remember correctly, when we gave feedback last year and they made some changes. So I think when you do teach it three times a year over the course of three quarters you kind of figure out where students struggle during the quarter, what parts do they know, what parts could be combined or adjusted. So in teaching the course you definitely learn what items might be able to be adjusted or what items to keep or maybe change (EGTA 2).

Yea, and I think it's important because I am teaching it, the other instructors are teaching it, so I would hope that they would get our input. It seems like that would be important information when making decisions (NGTA 2).

Yea, definitely, the different types of students, I know the kind of feedback that they give to each of the assignments and what feedback is complaining and what feedback is good and valid. Because when you have more experience with that you recognize the benefit of why we drill this or that. So yea, for sure, I could definitely contribute to course development if asked (EGTA 3).

In part, the GTA and CFM feel that they have valuable perspectives and knowledge that can contribute to course and curriculum development because in the Learning Center they are frequently asked to do so. In reviewing multiple Learning Center documents such as staff member emails, instructor orientation schedules, and instructor meeting agendas, it is evident that the GTA and CFM are recognized as experts in the course they teach and that the Learning Center administrators frequently draw on that expertise to elicit change. Furthermore, interviews with Learning Center staff...
members and instructors corroborate the notion that GTA and CFM possess expertise with regards to the course and the subsequent responses articulate this idea:

Things that need more emphasis and things that need less emphasis, we know that kind of stuff…and every time I come with a problem, Staff will say ‘can you write that down so we can avoid that in the future?’ and at the end of the quarter, specific modules that we liked or did not like, there is already a difference between this quarter and last quarter where changes have been made which is good. So yea, they [Leaning Center staff] definitely ask for feedback and use it (NGTA 3).

I feel like in the [Learning] Center I am treated very well. The CFM and GTA are the only ones who pretty much teach in here so it's kind of like we are the people, the ones who are experts in the class we teach, especially the people who have been doing it for a while. In here [Learning Center], I guess what used to happen was…we were asked about changes in the courses that we would do and that was pretty cool because we got to see, based on our input and experiences, the course change a little bit. I mean, not drastic changes all the time, but they did redo some of the assignments and things like that based on our experiences and perspectives and I thought that was good because we had a direct say in what was happening in the classes we teach. Even when I taught in other places it and was not a grad student I did not have that input; it was like here is the curriculum and just teach it. We would deviate a little bit, but the content and assignments were the same for standardization purposes. But here it was good that in our instructor meetings we could talk about the pros and cons of switching or making changes and I guess it seemed like we had a bit more ownership over the course (EGTA 1).

As the final quote above indicates, the perspectives and opinions of GTA and CFM within the Learning Center were often solicited from administrators during instructor meetings. Currently, instructor meetings and trainings are not as frequent in the Learning Center because the position responsible for coordinating and leading these meetings has been eliminated. While abolishing the position may have been an economically sound decision for the university, the following sections demonstrate that these meetings were an important component of the Learning Center teaching community.
and eliminating them could have long-term, negative consequences on GTA-CFM relationships along with undergraduate education in the Learning Center.

**Influence of instructor meetings.**

In addition to the individual and sometimes small group mentoring that was highlighted in previous sections, in the past, instructor meetings appear to have been a knowledge haven for all the Learning Center instructors. A review of previous instructor meeting agendas and GTA, CFM and Staff interviews shows that in the past, frequent instructor meetings provided opportunities for GTA mentoring with the CFM and between NGTA and EGTA as well. During participant observations and in the interviews conducted with CFM, GTA, and staff members, the idea that instructor meetings used to be part of the Learning Center culture was repeatedly mentioned. Throughout the research process several themes related to the importance of instructor meetings became evident and will be highlighted in the following sections.

**Created opportunities to develop relationships and community.**

According to the Learning Center CFM, EGTA, and staff members that I spoke with and who attended instructor meetings in previous years, the gatherings offered a chance to develop relationships and community among instructors and administrators. During observations and in several conversations with EGTA and CFM I learned that getting to know fellow instructors and staff members during these meetings times was one of the positive outcomes. Indeed, during interviews with instructors and staff members, when asked about the importance of instructor meetings to developing relationships and community the following responses were given:
As we began to meet more and have more interactions with one another, especially during instructor meetings, we were able to kind of connect with each other and if we did need some help, we could build relationships with other instructors, and that was positive…So it was a way to come together and be able to connect with them [other instructors] since I did not have as much frequent contact with everyone (CFM 1).

I mean, the meetings themselves had their pros and cons…but in terms of your looking specifically at the relationships, I think, yes, I had more of a relationship with those instructors than I do now (CFM 2).

I always enjoyed instructor meetings when I was part of them a few years back…and the meetings just became part of what we did and we got to be more connected as people; people on a team who were all trying to accomplish the same goals (Staff 1).

The voices highlighted in these quotes make it clear that the instructor meetings were an important component in the building of community among the instructors and staff members. Indeed, several of the narratives above offer opinions on how these meetings contributed to the development of communal goals and a team-like mentality.

While the EGTA and CFM have had the opportunity to develop community through instructor meetings, the NGTA have rarely been offered the same experience. For the NGTA who have only experienced two instructor meetings during their tenure in the Learning Center there seems to be a desire to reinstate the tradition and the following accounts draw attention to these feelings:

I think it [having frequent instructor meetings] would have helped…with just making sure we were all on the same page and it would have helped with the anxiety of being a first time instructor at the university with my own class, and again, the idea how much of the curriculum has to be consistent; where can I deviate and do my own stuff? Having discussions about that would have been really helpful (NGTA 2)
I think to have them, not every week, but once a month would be good, or after you have taught a few classes. I mean I had a bunch of questions after the first two weeks of class when I really started to see themes, the first week I would not have even know how to organize the question but the second week I started to see the patterns and that would have been helpful because in lieu of that I was just randomly asking people and they could have probably been answered if we had a meeting (NGTA 3).

I think it [frequent instructor meetings] will give us access to all the instructors and not just those who we are always around. Sometimes because we teach different days...when you come you see particular instructors, but in the meetings you will see everybody. Sometimes you will be able to ask questions and you don't want to be asking the same people all the time and I remember it was very helpful because...during the orientation all the instructors were there and we had a meeting with them, and I was able to ask a lot of questions; some of the ways to make grading easier and other stuff. That was a one-time meeting and I did not get everything, but the meetings might allow more sharing to come out and that would be helpful and the older instructors will be able to help those who are new (NGTA 1).

These NGTA narratives indicate that they feel it would have been helpful to have more frequent interactions with all the instructors via instructor meetings as they believe the EGTA and CFM could provide both support and firsthand knowledge about teaching the course. The instructor meetings were also important because not all of the GTA and CFM see one another on a weekly basis which limits their opportunities to learn from each other. In fact, during interviews and conversations many of the Learning Center instructors indicated that their teaching time had a major impact on who they would interact with and therefore learn from.

The standpoints highlighted above shed light on the fact that instructor meetings did much more than offer a chance for instructors to get to know one another. Commentary from all Learning Center instructors and staff suggests that these meetings
offered an opportunity for GTA and CFM to discuss best practices and learn from each other’s unique perspectives and experiences.

**Created opportunities to learn.**

Another positive outcome associated with the instructor meetings was the opportunity for individuals to learn from one another and from other university constituents (e.g., academic advisors, student-athletic support services, counseling center). The following comments from CFM and GTA demonstrate a range of topics related to teaching and course management that were covered in the instructor meetings. When asked about the material discussed during instructor meetings the subsequent statements were elicited:

I remember talking about student issues and people had shared how to handle student information and brainstorming as a group what might be a good response for the student and so that was helpful to share what were some of the struggles that were a little beyond grading or just going over information (EGTA 2).

Because of the instructor meetings bringing us together that did help me become a better instructor, getting input from everybody. You know, everybody is different and has their own style and take and I think that was a tremendous help to me personally… I would say we talked about, just challenges were ran up against, like as far as it related to the student population, difficulties, things that the course required or assignments, just those things like that… We also had an opportunity to share positive things, like positive feedback we got from the course. So those were some of the things we discussed (CFM 1).

We used to have instructor meetings, and I thought it was good because they [CFM] always brought different perspectives than the GTA, especially the ones [CFM] who had been teaching for a while about what it was like to teach, and so, I think that it added something different than what a lot of the new GTA brought (EGTA 1).
I think that typically we had some kind of a speaker, somebody from another department within the university and I think that was helpful to us as instructors because a lot of us don’t know what other resources are out there that might be helpful to students. So I think there was obviously discussion amongst the teachers with regard to the speaker and the service. But beyond that we always had time that we would share ideas or if we had an issue that had come up or situation with a student that we had not encountered before bouncing that off to get other instructors knowledge or feedback or to see if they had encountered a similar experience and maybe what they had done (CFM 2).

Well, in the [instructor] meetings we talked about curriculum and that was really helpful. We would talk about grading, we would talk about policies, I think the policies were really helpful because if we are all on the same page then it can really help us help students and yet each instructor has their own individual style and that’s good and should be respected too. I think that was, it was helpful in that respect. And, I think learning about the purposes of the course, you know why are we teaching this course, why it is important. We learned a lot just from the content itself, even if we teach the class over we teach it a different way and there is always something new to add. I think one thing was to have the best practices meeting where we can talk about what's working well for us. Not that everyone has to use it, but just if they want to, because if they want to use those best practices that we have found it can only enhance your classroom experience. Your classroom and especially the student's classroom experience (CFM 3).

The comments above indicate that a significant amount of learning took place during instructor meetings, learning that was essential to instructor confidence and development for many of these GTA and CFM. Next, as several of the GTA and CFM illustrate in their comments, the instructor meetings helped them become more informed about campus resources that are available and how they can be used to support student success. Finally, as one of the CFM indicated in her response, the frequent meetings offered instructors an opportunity to share some of the positive aspects of teaching the course, facets that may not be discussed on a regular basis but are important to building morale.
Created opportunities to contribute.

In addition to the development of community and the sharing of knowledge, the instructor meetings offered GTA and CFM a chance to voice their opinions about issues related to teaching the class and they were also asked to help contribute to course development. It was often during these meetings that GTA and CFM had the opportunity to demonstrate their unique, intimate knowledge of both the course and the student population they work with. When asked about the opportunity to contribute to course development during instructor meetings, the following experiences from EGTA, CFM, and Staff were highlighted:

In our instructor meetings we could talk about the pros and cons of switching or making changes and I guess it seemed like we had a bit more ownership over the course. But, you can't expect the same things to happen, I mean without him [former Associate Director] here, that was kind of his job to do that and so, I guess we kind of have lost a little bit of control over that but at the same time because we don’t have the meetings people turn to one another to ask the questions that were addressed in the meetings, it just more informal. Before it was more formal and now it’s being passed on informally (EGTA 1).

I remember it was not the formal structured part but the fact that someone would mention student issues like ‘people are not showing up to my class, does anyone else have this issue and if so what are you doing’. And those are the parts that I really remember the most and really benefited us the most because we got a sense of ‘is this atypical or is this the norm and how might others work though this?’. Another topic, and this was less frequent, but we did at times have the chance to say did you like this component of the course? Would you like to change it? And so we would have discussions about things like the Hope book, is this a valuable component of the course?...Part of the meeting also was us rallying behind the idea of creating a new final exam which was successful (Staff 1).

We would have an opportunity to do that [contribute course development]. I think just from what I can tell more recently we still have an opportunity whether or not we have meetings or not, to have input into how to change the assignments and I
think that's important to get feedback from the instructors who are teaching the class so it can help with the research and help also with the content of the course (CFM 3).

Yea, I got to have input into that [course development]. I liked it, it made me feel a little more connected to the course, because I could say it was something that I was able to contribute, you know my thoughts and feelings about things, I thought it was very helpful (CFM 1).

In these comments there are conflicting views related to current opportunities to contribute to course development in the Learning Center. However, since the beginning of November, after the first interview for this project, the Learning Center staff has been making a conscious effort to solicit instructor feedback. In an interview with one of the staff members she stated that “Part of the culture that I am trying to encourage, just in terms of what I am asking, is for instructors to feel that they can give feedback on the course and that those changes will be listened to and implemented” (Staff 2). During the instructor meetings I attended -only two took place throughout the six month observation period- the perspectives of the GTA and CFM were the focal point of the agenda and the discussions. Throughout the meetings, staff members listened to instructor feedback related to course technology, in-class discussions, and changes to certain assignments. In addition, the Learning Center staff members indicated to the instructors that they are the experts in the course they teach and that as administrators they are there to learn from the GTA and CFM in order to help develop the course so that students have the best experience. During the instructor meetings one staff member told the instructors several times that she is impressed with the innovative ways they present the course material to their students and that and she hoped the creativity would continue.
**Endorsing instructor autonomy.**

The sanctioning of instructor flexibility and creativity by the Learning Center staff indicates that trust and autonomy are two attributes that are pervasive in the Learning Center teaching community. Several of the GTA and CFM stated that staff members, intentionally or not, demonstrate a level of trust to instructors by endorsing autonomy and allowing them to present information to students in a way that they feel is effective. During the interview process several of the GTA and CFM commented on the attributes of trust and autonomy and the following narratives represent several of these perspectives:

Yea we do have autonomy. I do really like that [having autonomy] and I think we all have our own teaching styles, you know most of us have experience teaching…and so we bring that knowledge, and the knowledge we are building in our grad courses now, and so to be able to apply our own flavor to the class is beneficial and more comfortable for those of us teaching. I am more comfortable being able to at least be able to put my philosophy or attitude into the class and they [Leaning Center staff] trust us to do that (EGTA 2).

I think one thing I particularly appreciated was the autonomy and some of the freedom that I had as an instructor, I did not feel that anybody was breathing over my shoulder, looking over my shoulders, checking on everything I did and I liked that (CFM 1).

I really appreciate that [having autonomy in teaching] and I have been observed many times in this setting and in other teaching settings and I am fine with that. I know if you are teaching something for the first time it can be a little unsettling but it's a good experience because that's how you learn. But I have always felt supported when I have taught here, I have not ever felt like anyone is critiquing me, I mean when people have suggestions that's fine, but I have always felt that this was a very supportive environment for teaching and learning (CFM 3).
I mean, nobody is looking over my shoulder at my interactions, I have never had somebody come to me and say you are not doing this or that right so I don’t feel micromanaged. So I do feel there is autonomy, but there are definitely places you can go if you need help (NGTA 3).

The perceived autonomy has led several of the instructors, especially the CFM, to implement diverse pedagogical styles (e.g., group activities) into their courses; styles that are often mimicked by other Learning Center instructors. One of the Learning Center staff members expressed a strong opinion in an interview that as whole the staff trusts the CFM and GTA to deliver the content of the course in a way that the instructors are comfortable with, even though it may deviate from what has been done historically. As is evidenced in the narratives above, this sense of trust and autonomy is something that the Learning Center instructors appreciate and it helps them feel comfortable teaching.

**Shared spaces.**

Another important component in the development of the positive GTA-CFM relationships and the Learning Center teaching community manifests itself in the form of shared spaces. Within the Learning Center there are several spaces where informal learning and support amongst the instructors takes place. Initially, exploring the developmental capacities of the shared private and public spaces within the Learning Center was not a focus of this project. However, as the case study unfolded this particular theme became one of extreme relevance and required increased attention as it seems to directly influence the GTA-CFM relationships. In response to this emergent theme, during interviews and conversations participants were asked to discuss their experiences related to spaces. The following sections will highlight several of the shared private and
public spaces discussed by research participants along with the perceived developmental capacities of each area.

**Shared office spaces.**

Through observations and interviews it has become apparent that an important component in the development of the GTA/CFM relationships is the office spaces which are both shared and in close proximity to one another and the Learning Center classroom. Because the instructor office spaces in the Learning Center are right next to one another it makes it easy for the instructors to have frequent contact even if they do not share the same space. Over the course of the past six months I have witnessed the shared spaces serving as a hub for informative discussions related to developing and utilizing course materials, teaching philosophies, and handling student situations. The shared office spaces also housed both in-person help sessions related to course technology and grading along with personal conversations that offered “opportunities for the instructors to develop community by learning more about one another” (EGTA 1). Indeed, several of the EGTA and CFM indicated that the shared spaces have always been a hub of informal knowledge dissemination but that they have become even more important as previously frequent instructor group meetings have become less frequent. When asked if the office space served as an area where course and teaching knowledge are exchanged between instructors, the following comments were elicited:

Yes, I would say with the way things are set up now without the [instructor] meetings, probably this quarter, yes, within one of the offices (CFM 1).
Definitely, I have noticed a lot of times NGTA comes in in the evening and I am here in the evening and so we will also talk about what's going on in the course and he will say I saw so and so doing it this way and now I saw you doing it this way and what do you think? And because a lot of things are up to the instructor's individual preference, how they want to handle it, I think the informal meetings that happen in the offices can be beneficial just to figure out the ways that different people do things (EGTA 2).

Yea, I think definitely. You know, because if I think about the other person in the office, just because they are there it's easier…if you have a problem you can just ask somebody a question and they will answer and help you. So that proximity, or closeness, kind of helps us share ideas, how to teach better, sharing…sometimes our personal lives and other class stuff (NGTA 1).

Yea…a lot of the sharing, talking about the course, students, assignments, how to handle student situations, and that kind of support happens a lot in there [large office]. Like, CFM has been talking about a student who she wanted to drop and I was thinking I did not even know I could drop a student. So just informally, stuff like that just kind of pops up as people talk about their experiences. Like when EGTA was going through the student cheating, plagiarism thing, I learned more about the process, it was not formal, it was just that we talked about it a lot in the office and I got the same information (EGTA 3).

Additionally, throughout the interview process many of the instructors, both GTA and CFM, commented on the importance of the offices' proximity to each another and the Learning Center classroom. During interviews and informal conversations Learning Center instructors provided details about the positive and negative qualities of the office spaces; the subsequent comments highlight some of these feelings and perspectives:

The office space we have is not necessarily great, but physically it brings us together and I think that's kind of cool. I mean, we share office space which is hard in terms of privacy but other times it's nice because if they [CFM] are there I can talk to them and if I want to see the other GTAs doing stuff and learn from them I can just show up and it’s been a good learning experience. I think it would be hard not to have an office at all or to have an office space which was not where we teach, it’s nice that our offices are here where we teach because like I said we can really learn a lot from one another (EGTA 1).
It's never overly noisy, it's quiet enough to get work done but there is still people usually coming in and out who you can ask questions of. When I come in early I can chit-chat with people and find out what's going on and plan and stuff… I like having it here, like last week we had to run the [Hope] video so it was a handy reminder once I saw NGTA was asking a staff member to help figure it out and it was nice because I could pop-out and join in and get the tutorial as well since I was going to play it later. I think it's also nice for students to have the office this close so they can pop in (EGTA 2).

It was nice, the logistics setup was kind of different… because if you wanted privacy or you wanted to talk with someone you had that audience around, somebody was around. I don’t know if it was completely conducive to an environment that bred a lot of privacy but you know it was helpful to have everybody around in that space… I mean if something came up in class you could just ask. It was not as frequent for me because I was a later class and not a lot of people were there (laughs). I mean, the times I came there was still staff and some GTA there so I was able to get support and help. I think that was good (CFM 1).

Based on the CFM and GTA narratives highlighted above and from what I observed in the Learning Center, the office spaces not only help the instructors develop relationships and share knowledge, but they also serve as a support mechanism as the GTA and CFM feel they can ask their peers for help and usually someone is there to assist. One EGTA described the support of the other instructors while teaching as “comforting”, especially when one is new to teaching the course. In reference to the comfort of having other instructors around while teaching, EGTA 3 stated “when I first started teaching and some of the EGTA were around and I wanted to know what an assignment was asking I would come and ask and they would look through the book with me or online and that was nice to know the support was there”. Furthermore, NGTA 1 asserted that “sometimes you are teaching and there is some problem or there is something that you just have to figure out and you can just come in and ask one of your colleagues or staff members which I have done a lot of times and it's really good”.

176
As one of the EGTA indicated above and several other NGTA, CFM and Staff have confirmed through interviews and conversations, because the office spaces are directly connected to the classroom the GTA and CFM have opportunities to learn from one another by watching each other teach; what NGTA 1 called “modeling”. The concept of learning through vicarious experiences also connects back to the section discussing GTA views of CFM. When commenting on the learning that took place because of the proximity of the office space to the classroom, the ensuing statements were made:

Sure…just seeing how they [other instructors] teach and how they relate to students, you can always learn about that from watching others. I mean, just because you have taught for a couple of years does not mean that you stop learning and that you don’t have something to learn. So sure, I learn sometimes just by being in the same office space, and seeing or hearing them [other instructors] teach because we do teach in a very open area. So I am constantly learning from people through that (CFM 3).

Yes, for sure, from my first day of instruction I made it a point to watch because I think I learn through modeling, watching people sometimes. So, before I started instruction, I watched CFM teach the first class. After the first few days I did my own personal style, but those first two classes, by watching it helped me realize that it's not that difficult to teach and…sometimes I still just listen to people (NGTA 1).

Yes, the first quarter…I would come in an hour early and I would watch, sometimes it was actually two hours early. I mean, CFM taught at 10 and I was here by 9:30 and I would just watch her instruction and then when she broke off and kids were working I would go back into the office. But I watched CFM a lot, probably the first five weeks for sure (NGTA 3)

Yea, it kind of it gave me ideas of different ways that people would teach the same material, or kind of validated what I was doing, like oh yea they are doing something similar so it must be fine and I am doing ok (EGTA 3).
If CFM and GTA were housed in another building for their office hours rather than our offices I think it would be bad. I know that most GTAs, their first quarter, and all of us, meaning the staff, would listen to people teach, especially in their first year and sometimes I would just listen to certain lectures because I knew they were good. So people are eavesdropping on the class to borrow their tricks and their good habits and their strategies, their effective strategies. People are eavesdropping to steal the activities, like the paper airplane activity that CFM does every quarter. You watch it from afar, if you could not hear what she was doing and applying it you would think it’s insane; but if you hear how CFM is applying it to the class the students can totally see how their leaning skills work and they are applying it just from that activity (Staff 2).

Moreover, several of the GTA also commented on the self-confidence they gained by watching the other instructors. For example, one NGTA indicated that originally he felt that it was necessary to present information to students only using examples from the LMS book and in a primarily lecture based format. However, after watching one of the CFM engage in multiple class activities as a way to convey information to students, and after watching several of the EGTA use personal examples to demonstrate elements of the course content, the NGTA became confident that in he could utilize diverse pedagogical styles and examples that extend beyond the book.

Despite the positive aspects of the shared office spaces highlighted above, initially as was indicated earlier, there also appeared to be a negative aspect to the shared office spaces in that they seemed to offer limited privacy for the instructors to meet with students. When originally asked about the topic of the shared office space some of the instructors felt this arrangement was problematic. However, upon revisiting the topic later in the project the same instructors who talked about the lack of privacy also indicated that students usually approach them in the classroom space rather than their offices and in the event that they have needed to meet privately their office mates were
willing to step-out for a few moments while the conversation took place. In relation, one CFM indicated how important it was that she was not isolated in an office space when having to interact with students, especially if the conversation was surrounding academic misconduct or course policies. In the past, conversations on academic misconduct or other sensitive topics would have been held in the Associate Director’s office and in his presence. However, because the position no longer exists the instructors have had to adapt and utilize their office space for these purposes, thus heightening the importance of the shared area as a support mechanism.

*Hidden spaces.*

While the office spaces provide opportunities for informative dialogue, support, and for instructors to observe one another, in a conversation one of the EGTA indicated that the walkway between the offices which leads to the classroom also serves as an important point for interactions. While initially overlooked, once the EGTA explained the importance of this space I began to observe and hear conversations taking place in this seemingly inconspicuous area. The types of conversations that took place in this walkway were similar to those held in the office spaces but usually they were shorter and less detailed. In addition to instructors, I also observed Learning Center staff members interacting with one another and with the instructors in this space thus heightening the importance of the previously unnoticed area.

Another hidden space that served as an information hub and support mechanism for GTA and CFM manifests itself in the form of a shared network drive. Frequently referred to as the *shared drive* by GTA, CFM and Staff, this private, digital communal space allowed instructors and Learning Center staff members to post resources such as
Power Point presentations, directions for class activities, handouts for students, and substitute assignment options (e.g., alternative portfolios). Instructors could access the shared drive via their office computer and several of the GTA and CFM stated in interviews and conversations that throughout their time teaching in the Learning Center that this space has been an important source of support and development. The shared drive also provides a window into the history of the Learning Center as it houses resources from previous instructors, thus indicating the long held subcultural norm of instructors freely distributing resources to one another.

The norms, expectations, assumptions, physical spaces, behaviors, and events highlighted in the preceding sections have all contributed to the development of GTA-CFM relationships and the Learning Center teaching community subculture. While the Learning Center teaching community has its own unique subcultural style that contains and is influenced by the aspects highlighted in the previous segments, within said community the GTA also have a smaller shared culture that separates them from the CFM and the staff members.

**GTA interactions.**

In my observations and conversations with the GTA and CFM I was told that the separation between these two teaching constituents is not palpable or negative, but as many of the instructors indicated, it certainly does exist. In several interviews and conversations with Learning Center GTA the topic of a separate subculture was alluded to and the ensuing comments highlight a few of these conversations:
Most of the time we [GTA] talk about grad school, you know, candidacy exams and courses, and just adjusting to the campus and the school schedule…and because of that I felt stronger bonds with some of the GTA initially because I would talk to them a lot longer. Just because I know that they are students too and so we have other issues that we will be discussing for school work and advisors and such. Where the CFM, I am not sure how long they have been done with school (NGTA 2).

I mean with the other GTA we are talking about courses and classes…a lot of us take, not all the same classes, but a lot of the same courses. Like today I needed help with SPSS and NGTA helped me with that, so, I think we just have in addition to the course, we are just going through other common experiences (EGTA 2).

I don’t really talk about my courses with CFM; sometimes I talk to them about the courses I am taking, but in terms of the GTA, I compare and contrast, and especially those who have experiences in the classes I am taking. I mean when EGTA is around my discussion is different from what I talk with CFM about. So they are different because with GTA we can talk about some of the classes we have taken, some of the professors, what we are planning, conferences that we are going to attend and those types of things. Apart from the class that we are teaching, with CFM mainly I talk about the class, the adjustments with the students, on a few occasions we just talk about my classes, especially if I just feel like discussing anything (NGTA 1).

These narratives indicate that the GTA relate to one another in a different way because they share the common experience of being current students, most of who are in the same department. Throughout the participant observation period I witnessed the GTA having conversations with one another about coursework, professors, departmental policies, research agendas, etc. In interviews with the GTA it also became apparent that they are more likely to see one another in multiple settings, often outside of the Learning Center. For example, two of the GTA asserted:
Well, the other GTA I will see in our academic building so we will talk about the job and expectations. I often see one of the other GTA in the library in our academic building and we were talking about class and stuff and he and I work there on our school work as well. I was there working on school work and so was one of the NGTA so we talked about our positions here in the Learning Center and it's less likely that I would run into the CFM in those types of other settings (NGTA 2).

I mean some of them [other GTA] I see in classes, at least initially I recognized some of them from classes and I felt more like we had that to talk about, programs, teachers, professors, research (EGTA 3).

In addition to sharing external spaces and having a different type of relationship with each other, for the GTA in the Learning Center the experience of being a graduate student overflows into their teaching. Throughout the six month observation period I witnessed and noted that all of the Learning Center GTA draw upon their experience as current students to illustrate certain aspects of the course material. For example, during an observation session on October 18, 2011, one of the NGTA told his class "without goals and steps to achieve them it would be nearly impossible to be successful in grad school, especially when it comes writing dissertations and such". Another example came during an observation session on January 23, 2012 as a NGTA used his upcoming candidacy exam to demonstrate ways to build self-confidence and he also asserted that several items from the course had helped him organize and prepare for the writing process. These are just two examples of the hundreds that occurred throughout the observation period from October to March but they help illustrate the unique perspective that GTA in the Learning Center bring to their teaching.
Perceptions on GTA/CFM status as instructors.

Another important theme that emerged during this project relates to GTA and CFM perceptions of their status within the Learning Center and the greater university teaching community. Throughout the project, Learning Center GTA and CFM have indicated a range of views on this topic, perspectives that will be explored in the subsequent sections. This is an important theme because how instructors perceive their status within a community may have a positive or negative impact on classroom performance and the types of relationships individuals develop with colleagues. In addition, if those outside of the Learning Center do not have a clear understanding of GTA and CFM roles and responsibilities, misconceptions surrounding these two teaching constituencies could remain unchallenged.

Status within the Learning Center.

All of the GTA and CFM indicated that they felt respected and treated as professionals and equals. Certainly, the idea that GTA and CFM are equal partners in the Learning Center teaching community was apparent in a range of documents and artifacts. For example, when addressing the GTA and CFM via emails or in meeting agendas the Learning Center staff members do not differentiate between the two types of teachers as administrators refer to them collectively as instructors. Even the name plates on their office doors label the GTA and CFM as instructors thus indicating no sense of difference to students and other Learning Center visitors. While these idiosyncrasies may seem unimportant to many, several of the GTA and CFM expressed their satisfaction about being treated as equals. This is an important note because high levels of egalitarianism...
and satisfaction may have an impact on instructor relationships along with the Learning Center culture and climate. Subsequently, these feelings were evident in several of the interviews I conducted with Learning Center instructors and the following comments elucidate some of these perspectives:

In terms of status, in the Learning Center I have never felt like I was a second tier person at all, never. I've always been treated well and with respect and that's important (EGTA 1).

In here [Learning Center]...I feel we are all valued and are respected as instructors and by the students as well, I think the students come in and see us as someone in a position of authority, someone who is knowledgeable and I think the staff views it that way as well; that we are coming in with knowledge and abilities to teach (EGTA 2).

As far as from the staff, I have all the support I need. There is a balance between the administration and the instructors; the administration does not get too involved but not totally hands off either. Sometimes I feel...the administration was more involved in the beginning but now it's more about [us] giving feedback to help with the course and I like how they are not asking us to change certain things that we do in our classrooms (NGTA 2).

The narratives above illustrate the way that GTA and CFM feel they are treated in the Learning Center and the reviews are positive. Once again, as was demonstrated in other sections of this case report, there seems to be a sense of trust and respect between the Learning Center staff members and the instructors as autonomy and the recognition of GTA and CFM teaching abilities and knowledge are publically propagated.

**Status outside of the Learning Center.**

Despite the perceived positive views of GTA and CFM within the Learning Center teaching community, when it comes to how those outside of the Learning Center view and treat GTA and CFM, mixed opinions were offered. For example, the following
comments demonstrate the fact that several of the GTA and CFM feel they are perceived to be at the bottom of the university teaching hierarchy:

We [GTA] are obviously towards the bottom of the teaching status hierarchy…because we are not really teachers, we are considered grad students. I consider myself to be a teacher because I was one before I came here…and just because I am labeled as a grad student that does not mean I am not a good instructor or that I don’t have viable things to offer but that way it's viewed…. Overall at the university, I definitely consider myself, I am not sure if a peon is the right word, but just towards the bottom [of the teaching hierarchy]. I mean, if I left today I don’t think there would be any red flags thrown up or anything, like ‘wow the university is going to miss this person’. In my department maybe they would, and in the Learning Center people might miss my presence, but even in the department or the school or the college people probably would not even know because you are just not having the same impact, no, impact is not the right word, it’s just that I am not bringing in any grant money so people are not as concerned (EGTA 1).

I would say that as a part-time lecturer that is not really held in as high regard as, you know, a full-time, tenured professor, but that would not, I would not expect it to be; just knowing the natural hierarchy that exists within universities. But to say that I have had the opportunity to be involved in things outside of the Learning Center, I have not (CFM 2).

The EGTA voice exemplified in the comments above indicates two possible trends. First, that GTA are not well respected for the contributions they make to the university teaching community, and second, that status or importance within the university system is frequently attached to research and funding. In addition to these trends, the second narrative above not only indicates where the CFM feels she is on the university teaching hierarchy, but the comments also reveal another common theme which is that CFM are not always viewed and thus treated as equal members of the
university community. Additional comments related to this topic were addressed by another CFM as she asserted:

When you come into the university and you are not already part of the system because it's such a large university and it can be bureaucratic…they don’t make you feel like you are a part of the system even though you are willing to contribute, even though you are willing to contribute as much as you can. And we used to have yearly contracts and now we have quarterly contracts so while you still may be teaching the same amount, you don’t feel the same sense of … connection to the university. The sense of connection in that way, it's more of a feeling of ‘am I valued as a staff member?’ because now instead of a year contract I only have a quarter contract (CFM 3).

The CFM who made the above comments went on to highlight several additional ways that the university does not support CFM, including: (1) failure to address issues with access to university email and course technology in a timely manner, (2) lack of information on benefits, (3) inflexibility in parking options, and (4) lack of opportunities to be involved in any decision making beyond the Learning Center. It is important to note that this particular CFM also made it clear that she does not feel like the deficient amount of support from the university is intentional. Rather, that it is a result of a lack of knowledge about CFM issues combined with a large, often stagnant bureaucratic structure.

**Role confusion.**

Many of the Learning Center instructors and staff members asserted that while they have not been treated with disrespect, they do recognize that many people outside of the Learning Center do not have a clear understanding of the GTA/CFM role which makes it difficult for outsiders to fully comprehend exactly what they are contributing to
the university environment. The following commentaries illustrate these perceptions and feelings:

From an outside perspective, and I have seen this in the political economy within and outside of the college, and in student life, people assume that...the curriculum and curricular decisions are top down and are mandated and that the CFM and the GTA are merely executing a formulaic plan and they could probably handle teaching two of these classes rather than just one. When in fact, each of these courses are being taught with a lot of creativity, there is a lot of flexibility within the curriculum. The curriculum is established in educational psychology research and you know your parameters as an instructor, to execute that with some leeway and there is an awful lot of creativity and ingenuity that is used to do so. So, yea I don’t think people have an idea of how much effort, energy and effectiveness are being employed around here [in the Learning Center] (Staff 2).

I think it depends on whether they [outside observers] know what it is that I do exactly. Because there are different levels of GTA, some where you are assisting in a class, you don't have your own class. But here I have my own class, my own students who I work with, and if they understand I would hope they would have more respect. But, also I think its key, and this is a distinction that I make, and it may not mean anything to many people, but a GTA is not always a TA in the terms of assistant (NGTA 2).

I mean sometimes people [outside observers] just don’t know; they assume that we are TAs and that we don’t have responsibilities for an entire class. Yea, that we are not the ones teaching every week (EGTA 3).

One thing that I think surprises a lot of people is that GTAs are actually instructors of record for the course, because there seems to be an expectation that if you are a GTA you are just grading or leading a recitation. And so, I don’t know how much the larger university community knows about our GTA and the roles that they do play (Staff 1).

The voices above demonstrate that a lack of understanding about GTA/CFM roles and expectations may be a common phenomenon on campus; one that prevents GTA and CFM from getting the recognition they deserve. In particular, both GTA and Staff commented on the common misconception that GTA serve only as assistants to full-time
faculty members, a misunderstanding that diminishes the instructional role that many GTA, including those in the Learning Center, are fulfilling.

While the themes of confusion and perceived lower-level teaching status may have been prevalent amongst some of the Learning Center instructors, several of the GTA had a different perception of their status and the subsequent comments highlight these feelings:

Well, I think within our department GTAs are respected, especially...because most of the undergrad courses are taught by instructors rather than professors for the undergrads, so we really are the undergrads first line of exposure to the department....So I have ways felt fairly respected in that way (EGTA 2).

I think they [faculty in the department] recognize and respect the work we are doing and they see it as good training...so I think it's seen a good, a really good opportunity because I know a lot of people look for that when looking for jobs, if you have teaching experience (EGTA 3).

The narratives above present a different perspective on perceived status as these EGTA both feel respected outside of the Learning Center and they also sense that others, including some of their tenure-line faculty members, appreciate what they are contributing and learning. Consequently, the range of perspectives presented in the preceding sections offers insight into the diverse ways the GTA and CFM may be viewed and treated within the Learning Center as compared to the larger university context. In some cases, the difference was negligible; however, from the perspectives of many Learning Center GTA and CFM there is room for improved understanding and practice at the university level.
Conclusion

The data presented in this case report highlight the perspectives, feelings, experiences, and behaviors of the Learning Center instructors and staff members along with elements of the teaching community’s subcultural style. Throughout the course of the data collection process several important themes have developed and were identified in the preceding sections of this chapter. Certainly, some of these themes are directly related to the original research questions, but several trends (e.g., instructor meetings, shared office space) also emerged as participants’ indicated their importance. Based on this evidence, several conclusions, recommendations for administrative practice, and suggestions for future lines of research can be drawn. The following chapter will address these topics.
Chapter 5: Case Study Findings

Using evidence from the case report presented in Chapter 4 of this document, this chapter offers overviews of important research findings. Throughout the findings sections of this chapter, challenges to some of the ideological assumptions and stereotypes that surround GTA and CFM will be offered, along with recommendations for administrative practice. Finally, the chapter will close with sections on project limitations, recommendations for future areas of research, and concluding remarks.

Finding 1: Existence of CFM-GTA Peer Mentoring Relationships

The first finding generated from this case study is that CFM and GTA can establish supportive peer mentoring relationships that help promote GTA development and improve classroom performance. This is an important outcome because research (e.g., America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010) indicates that across the landscape of higher education there are more GTA entering the classroom on their own and that there is often a lack of preparation, training, and support for these instructors (Branstetter & Handlesman, 2000; National Association of Graduate & Professional Students, 2000; Prieto & Meyers, 1999). In addition to a lack of training and support, several authors (Leslie, 2002; Lucas, 1998; Weidman et al., 2001) conclude that the mentoring of graduate students by tenured or tenure-line faculty members with regards to teaching does not often find support within faculty reward structures. Studies indicate that across institutional types, faculty research agendas have
become the cornerstone of most promotion and tenure systems (Fairweather, 1996, 2002, 2005; Wood et al., 2001), making it less likely that GTA mentoring with regards to teaching and classroom performance will be a priority (Weidman et al., 2001). In reference to this trend, Jacob (1997) asserts that “mentoring is the forgotten fourth leg in the academic stool” and it is often ignored in faculty review processes (p. 486).

Within this type of research-centric academic environment the development of GTA as autonomous instructors needs to remain a focus for administrators because graduate students are increasingly playing a larger role in undergraduate education (America Federation of Teachers, 2007; Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010). In addition, upon completion of their degree many graduate students have the desire to move into the professoriate, contingent or tenure-line, making their preparation during graduate school an important issue (Mason et al., 2009; Russell, 2009). Without a quality instructional foundation, often obtained during graduate school, future tenure-line and contingent faculty members may not be adequately prepared for their teaching assignments. The finding of positive CFM-GTA peer mentoring relationships in this case study is encouraging because it means that GTA may be able to find guidance and support with regards to teaching without having to rely on tenured or tenure-line faculty who might not have time for this type of mentoring.

Evidence from this case study indicates that CFM can help GTA as they progress through all three stages of Sprague and Nyquist’s (1991) GTA development model. During first two stages of the development model, as GTA learn the appropriate ways to teach within an academic unit, it is important for them to receive a balanced combination of support, feedback, and autonomy from experienced instructors. Similar to the faculty
mentors described in several GTA development models, commentary from Learning Center GTA indicated that CFM offered both feedback and support (i.e., social persuasion) while simultaneously treating them as autonomous instructors who had contributions to make to the teaching community. In addition, during first two stages of the development model Sprague and Nyquist (1991) assert that GTA should hone teaching skills and gain confidence through mastery and vicarious experiences. Interviews with Learning Center GTA and researcher observations have confirmed that CFM helped accomplish these ambitions by both serving as teaching role models (i.e., vicarious experience) and performing hands-on activities with GTA related to grading and using course technology (i.e., mastery experience).

Finally, CFM in the Learning Center provided support for GTA who are in the final phase of their development by asking them questions related to professional judgments (e.g., how to work with struggling students) and new pedagogical techniques that GTA may be implementing in their classes (e.g., having student discussions instead of lectures). Certainly, if GTA and CFM can collaborate with one another to promote instructor development and improve teaching practices, as was the case in the Learning Center, it may have direct correlations with increased undergraduate student performance and satisfaction; two areas that are frequently under scrutiny by both internal and external university constituents (Heywood, 2000; Middaugh, 2011).

In addition to the developmental outcomes highlighted above, positive GTA-CFM peer mentoring partnerships could also have two potential long term implications. First, these relationships may help GTA develop into well-prepared contingent and tenure-line instructors who will be charged with teaching future generations of students and potential
scholars. Second, establishing positive relationships with CFM as graduate students may lead the next generation of tenure-line faculty to have increased awareness of and respect for the contributions that these individuals make to the university community. In turn, if tenure-line faculty value and respect CFM contributions it may help discredit stereotypes about this group of instructors while simultaneously socializing future generations of academics to a new set of ideological beliefs (Purcell, 2007). As future members of the tenure-line professoriate come to understand the unique contributions of CFM, the likelihood of establishing collegial relationships, collaborative partnerships in areas such as academic governance, and a stronger, more unified faculty may also increase (Kezar, Lester, & Anderson, 2006).

**Finding 2: CFM as Socialization Agents**

A second important finding generated from this research project is that CFM can serve as socialization agents for GTA with regards to university teaching practices and graduate school. Historically, the role of the teaching socialization agent for graduate students has been played by full-time, tenured or tenure-line faculty members because they were viewed as the representations of academic balance (Wood et al., 2001). For example, in the most frequently cited GTA development models (e.g., Sprague & Nyquist, 1991) there is an assumption that tenured or tenure-line faculty members have the time, desire, and incentives to help socialize and mentor GTA with regards to teaching. However, in a new era of higher education where research dominates teaching and service, some observers (e.g., Jacob, 1997; Mendoza, 2007; Meyers & Prieto, 2000) suggest that relying on full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty members to mentor and
socialize a new academic generation with regards to teaching could be problematic. In her research on preparing graduate students to become faculty members, Austin (2002) argues that there is cause for concern as a lack of professional development opportunities, minimal feedback and guidance from tenure-line faculty members, and few chances for reflection with faculty mentors are prominent trends for graduate students at many universities.

In contrast to previous generations where the majority of graduate students who wanted to enter tenure-line positions would have that opportunity, shifts in academic labor trends are making it more likely that current graduate students will become CFM rather than tenure-line faculty (Schuster et al., 2008). Based on this emerging labor reality, the traditional role model and socialization systems in higher education should be revised to meet the demands of a new academic generation and evidence from this case study indicates that CFM can help with that process (Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Finkelstein & Schuster, 2001).

Working with CFM may present graduate students with different ideas about academic life, career paths, and the value of teaching; certainly that was the case in the Learning Center. For all graduate students, but especially those with a strong passion for teaching, working with and learning from CFM may be an exceptionally valuable experience because in most cases they are hired as teaching specialists (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002). Without the pressures of performing research and service, most CFM, including those interviewed for this case study, spend the majority of their university time commitment concentrating on classroom performance and other course related activities (e.g., grading) (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006; NCES, 2008). Therefore, their knowledge about
teaching and students, while often overlooked because of institutional status, can be extensive and should be viewed as a resource for aspiring academicians (Gappa, 2008).

Despite the positive outcomes often associated with the socialization process (e.g., self-confidence), some authors (e.g., Jacob, 1997; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Mendoza, 2007) are concerned that socialization of graduate students by only tenured or tenure-line faculty mentors will promote the idea that research and publication are more important than teaching because that is what faculty reward systems endorse (Fairweather, 2005). This type of research-centric mentality was prevalent in commentary from several of the Learning Center GTA and CFM as they revealed that from their perspective, within the university community research seems to be tied to prestige and job security and those who do not have prominent research agendas (e.g., GTA, CFM, administrators) are regarded as less important and easily replaceable.

Authors such as Sweitzer (2008) assert that as tenure-line faculty positions become increasingly competitive, graduate students who aspire to become tenure-track faculty members will concentrate on what is rewarded (i.e., research) and put forth little effort into endeavors (i.e., teaching and service) that they perceive to be less valued in the hiring and tenure process. In reference to preparing future faculty, Wood et al. (2001) assert that the greatest obstacle to GTA development is the pressure coming from faculty reward systems to emphasize research agendas over teaching and service, a belief that is frequently reinforced by a lack of faculty interest in GTA mentoring with regards to teaching. The issue of graduate students being socialized to emphasize research over teaching becomes even more problematic when one considers that the majority of faculty positions in higher education are teaching focused and do not come with a research
component (Janke & Colbeck, 2008). While often unintentional, failure to incorporate the value of teaching into the socialization process of graduate students could lead to the development of both a tenure-line and contingent labor force that is well prepared to perform research, but is ill-equipped to offer students a quality classroom experience.

As evidenced by the GTA narratives in this case study and backed by statements from authors such as Baron-Nixon (2007), it appears that CFM can offer graduate students differing views on career paths as they “bring not only their academic credentials and experience, but also the unique perspectives that full-time faculty and administrators may not possess. These include perspectives from the nonacademic world in which they may work… as well as perspectives from other academic institutions at which they have worked” (p. 34). By interacting with CFM who voluntarily choose a part or full-time teaching-focused university position, graduate students may begin to see the value in these types of appointments and alter their career ambitions accordingly. In turn, as graduate students, like some of the GTA from this case study, begin to understand the positive qualities and valuable contributions of contingent faculty positions they may begin to move away from a research-centric outlook and develop a new appreciation for university teaching (Janke & Colbeck, 2008).

Finally, data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) demonstrates that upwards of 80% of CFM at doctoral granting universities have gone through a graduate school experience. Therefore, like their tenured or tenure-line counterparts, CFM may be able to provide GTA with support, advice, and guidance as it relates to the processes of graduate school and the experience of being a graduate student (Kezar & Sam, 2011). Certainly, throughout this case study these types of support and
socialization were indicated by several of the Learning Center GTA. As they earned advanced academic degrees many CFM may have even served as graduate research or teaching associates thus they might understand the pressures of balancing school along with teaching or research and can offer experience based assistance (Baron-Nixon, 2007).

Certainly, as more doctorate toting CFM enter the academic labor force the likelihood that they will have had experiences as GTA increases (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). From this perspective, contingent faculty can serve as influential role models and socialization agents because graduate students may view CFM experiences as similar to their own (Bandura, 1997; Gardner & Mendoza, 2010). Indeed, some CFM may have even been participants in the same department as the graduate students they now teach with, making the opinions, perspectives, and academic knowledge of these individuals even more pertinent.

**Finding 3: Valuing GTA and CFM Knowledge**

The next significant finding generated from this research project is that Learning Center GTA and CFM possess valuable, unique, practice-based sets of knowledge about both the courses they teach and students they work with. This outcome is important for three particular reasons. First, for administrators who work with GTA and CFM, recognizing this knowledge as valuable and using it to implement changes could have a positive influence on curriculum development and the student experience. Since the majority of GTA and CFM work with undergraduate students, using their perspectives and feedback to improve the classroom experience could have a direct impact on student satisfaction and retention; well-known concerns for both internal and external university
stakeholders (Seidman, 2005).

Second, commentary from Learning Center GTA and CFM indicated that administrators recognizing their unique knowledge sets and using their feedback to make curricular changes demonstrated a level of trust between staff and instructors and it helped connect the GTA and CFM to the course itself as their ideas were incorporated into the design. From a student-development theory perspective, allowing GTA to contribute to course development is important because it indicates to them that they are knowledge creators and not just knowledge receivers, an essential component in the development of both self-confidence and self-authorship (Bandura, 1987; Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004). In addition, allowing GTA to participate in discussions on course development is a form of mastery experience that can lead to increased self-efficacy for curriculum design, an important skill for future tenure-line and contingent faculty members. Next, as will be discussed later in this chapter, validating and utilizing the perspectives and knowledges of those who teach can also have a positive impact on departmental cultures and climates along with instructor performance (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Schein, 2010; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Finally, in recognizing that GTA and CFM possess valuable sets of knowledge that full-time tenured or tenure-line faculty members may not, Learning Center staff members and instructors contradicted commonly held negative and often marginalizing assumptions about GTA and CFM. Frequently, because of perceived institutional status, GTA and CFM opinions, perspectives, and feedback as it relates to course development and student trends may be undervalued or ignored (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Kezar et al., 2006; Purcell, 2007). Discounting sets of knowledge because of instructor status...
creates forms of what Foucault (1980) called *subjugated knowledges*. According to Foucault (1980), subjugated knowledges are valuable blocks of information that have always been present but were disguised or ignored within hierarchical systems of power because of individual or collective status. He goes on to suggest that through critical scholarship these frequently disqualified local knowledges can be resurrected to challenge hegemonic and marginalizing ideological belief systems and power structures.

This research project has demonstrated that by deferring to experts (e.g., CFM, GTA) who hold local knowledges, university administrators can utilize the feedback and insights (i.e., subjugated knowledges) from individuals who actually teach the courses to make informed changes to curriculum, assignments, and course technology. In doing so, administrators can also challenge some of the ideological beliefs that serve as the foundation for faculty hierarchies; a class system that marginalizes many in favor of the few (Kezar & Sam, 2011).

Indeed, organizational theorists such as Weick and Stucliffe (2007), Langer (2010), and Schein (2010) support this type of bottom-up management and assessment approach. These authors assert that within large bureaucracies like universities, encouraging the practice of *deference to expertise*, no matter what level of the hierarchy, can help increase flexibility and allow institutions to adjust to rapidly changing internal and external environmental conditions. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) argue, “Expertise is not necessarily matched with hierarchical position, so organizations that live or die by their hierarchy are seldom in a position to know all they can” (p. 74). This should be an important point for university administrators to consider as they attempt to effectively
operate within increasingly tumultuous internal and external environments (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011; Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

**Finding 4: CFM should be Considered Professionals**

The fourth outcome of this research project manifests itself in the idea that CFM are professionals who contribute to the university community in many important ways. The idea that CFM should be perceived as professionals who can help (1) mentor GTA with regards to teaching, (2) socialize graduate students into graduate school, and (3) contribute to course development, stands in opposition to the some of the hegemonic ideologies that serve as the foundation for higher education faculty class systems and hierarchies. A multitude of preconceived notions about CFM permeate the literature on higher education and overall these deficit model assumptions depict non-tenure track faculty as partially skilled laborers and not as professionals (Kezar et al., 2006; Purcell, 2007). Kezar and Sam (2011) argue that the deficit model of CFM creates the assumptions that “In effect, non-tenure track faculty lack qualities that are important to a functional workplace such as commitment, satisfaction, social capital, agency, the ability to learn and form collegial relationships, and the ability to integrate students on campus” (p. 1421). Authors such as Chait (2005) suggest that the deficit model is based on the fact that the majority of those who research non-tenure track faculty are themselves tenure-line faculty who may see the emergence of contingent positions as a threat to tenure and the traditional role of the faculty within the academy. Some scholars (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Kezar et al., 2006; Kezar & Sam, 2011) argue that beneath the deficit model and the negative assumptions that it creates, there is an ideological struggle about
the appropriate role and nature of the professoriate, including arguments about the merit of tenure and what it represents.

Within the academic community there is a long held belief that tenure helps define professional status with regards to teaching and scholarship (AAUP, 2006; Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Chait, 2002; DeGeorge, 1997; Tierney, 1998). Kezar and Sam (2011) assert “Tenure is tied to the notion of being a professional who has internal control of his or her work and autonomy; professionals are granted freedom from external accountability and control in exchange for serving the greater public good” (p. 1422). Indeed, many authors (Finken, 1996; Kezar et al., 2006; Rhoades, 1998) note that scholars are socialized to see tenure as the standard mark of an academic professional who has earned distinction from others (i.e., contingent faculty) via a rigorous peer review process.

From this perspective comes the ideological assumption that faculty members who accept non-tenure positions are deviating from the norm because they lack the same professional capabilities or knowledge as tenure-line faculty members (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002). The widely accepted assumption that tenure is the defining mark of professionalism for faculty members has led to the development of a hegemonic ideological system within higher education, one that marginalizes and diminishes the contributions of CFM and others such as GTA. Kezar and Sam (2011) argue that this ideological belief system gives rise to the assumption that because CFM “are not professionals in the same way, they will not participate in professional development nor continue to advance their skills in teaching and research. Because they are not part of the academic guild, vis-à-vis the tenure process, they cannot be as productive or perform as
well as tenure track professionals who have a higher mission to serve” (p. 1423).

Evidence from this case study contradicts the ideological assumptions highlighted above and supports the arguments that CFM can make positive and significant contributions to the university teaching community and that they deserve to be recognized and treated as professionals. Other authors (e.g., Kezar & Sam, 2011; Purcell, 2007; Shaker, 2008; Rhoades, 1998) also support the claim that the perceived professional status of university instructors should not be tied to tenure, especially because in many fields (e.g., medicine, law, business) tenure is not seen as the hallmark of expertise. Many of these same authors also suggest that the overall strength of the faculty will continue to decline until CFM are accepted by their tenured peers as committed professionals whose perspectives and expertise should be valued and incorporated into the university community.

The previous sections have addressed the reasons why CFM are often not, but should be, treated as professionals. However, currently there is limited research on the topic of whether GTA who teach independently should be treated with a similar sense of professionalism. Evidence from this case study indicates that like their CFM peers, GTA who have responsibility for their own classes may also possess unique sets of knowledge about the courses they teach and the students they work with thus making them worthy of professional recognition. Additionally, commentary from Learning Center instructors also revealed that EGTA can serve as peer mentors to NGTA and new CFM thus enhancing the argument that they too should be treated as more than just partially-skilled laborers. As universities increasingly rely on GTA to teach courses independently, the topics of their actual numbers and status within the university system needs to be
explored in greater detail.

In an effort to validate their roles as autonomous instructors and help integrate both CFM and GTA into the academic community, administrators must play a fundamental role. Using evidence from this case study, the following sections highlight several ways that university administrators can create conditions that will help promote (1) GTA-CFM partnerships, (2) collaborative teaching communities, and (3) departmental cultures and climates that support the ideal that all instructors, regardless of hierarchical status, should be treated as valued, contributing members of the university teaching community.

**Finding 5: Administrators as Supporters of Partnerships and Community**

The existence of positive GTA-CFM peer mentoring relationships and supportive teaching communities, as demonstrated in this case study, is encouraging. However, it would be naïve to believe that these outcomes developed without the influence of other environmental conditions, often created by Learning Center staff members. Indeed, this research project has shown that certain environmental factors may help foster instructor partnerships and collaborative teaching communities and administrators who work with GTA and CFM can help produce these developmental conditions. The following sections offer details about the environmental conditions that played a part in the development of both positive GTA-CFM partnerships and a supportive teaching community within the Learning Center. Throughout the following sections several recommendations for administrative practice will also be postulated.
Shared spaces.

Based on the evidence from this case study, administrators should try to house GTA and CFM in shared office spaces, especially if they teach the same courses or are students in the same program/department. In the Learning Center, GTA-CFM partnerships were influenced by the physical spaces that surrounded them and the shared office spaces were particularly important because informal knowledge about teaching, students, and course content was passed between instructors within these areas. In addition, it was often within these areas that GTA would socialize each other into various aspects of their graduate student roles as they would share insights with one another about topics such as coursework, research agendas, candidacy exams, dissertations, faculty members, and job searches. Authors such as Weidman et al. (2001) suggest that GTA peer-to-peer support with regards to these topics is exceptionally important during both the beginning phases of graduate school (i.e., Anticipatory Stage) and as GTA progress further in their academic career (i.e., Informal Stage of graduate student socialization).

The shared office spaces also allowed Learning Center GTA and CFM to gain hands on, mastery experiences with course technology and other resources; experiences that led to increased self-confidence for using the technology, improved efficiency with regards to grading, and more detailed feedback for students. Additionally, within the shared office spaces the NGTA of the Learning Center were partially socialized into the teaching community as they were exposed to the unique language, norms, and behaviors that are all components of the subculture. Consequently, when instructors feel like they belong to a supportive, inclusive teaching community, increased collaboration amongst
peers and enhanced self-efficacy for instruction are likely to occur (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Both of these outcomes were ubiquitous in the Learning Center teaching community.

Next, if possible, administrators should try to find classrooms that are in close proximity to the instructor office spaces. In the Learning Center, having the classroom within proximity of the shared office spaces allowed the GTA and CFM to observe one another teaching and learn from those experiences. This type of developmental role modeling has been shown to increase self-efficacy for difficult tasks (Bandura, 1986; Tuckman & Monetti, 2001) and many of the GTA and CFM of the Learning Center indicated that directly observing experienced instructors not only contributed to their confidence for teaching, but it also provided new pedagogical insights. Furthermore, the proximity of the offices to the classroom served as a support system for the GTA and CFM as they would frequently turn to one another for assistance, even during class sessions. Commentary from the GTA and CFM of the Learning Center indicated that just knowing immediate support from peers was available helped improve classroom performance as it allowed them to feel more relaxed while teaching.

In addition to the developmental capacities associated with the shared office spaces, another important insight gained through this case study is that GTA and CFM can collaborate by using digital spaces to share resources with one another. Indeed, as illustrated in the previous chapter, the Learning Center’s shared network drive created a space where instructors could learn from one another through the distribution of resources and many of the GTA and CFM indicated that that this communal space was an important source of support and development. This insight should be of great benefit to administrators because creating these shared digital spaces allows instructors to connect.
with one another in an efficient yet cost-effective manner. Given the current economic climate surrounding the U.S. higher education system, finding innovative and cost effective solutions to improve instructor performance should be a priority for university administrators.

**Frequent instructor meetings.**

Another important condition that contributed to the development of GTA-CFM peer mentoring relationships and a supportive teaching community in the Learning Center was the existence of instructor meetings. It is important to note that most of the GTA and CFM interviewed for this project spoke of the importance of instructor meetings in the past tense because the elimination of the Associate Director position 15 months earlier has limited the opportunities for frequent gatherings. The Associate Director position was eliminated for economic reasons, a system wide and institutional trend (i.e., macrolevel) that is having an impact at the departmental level (i.e., microlevel). Despite the current lack of instructor meetings, the finding of the developmental outcomes associated with frequent instructor meetings should be of importance to administrators because all of the GTA, CFM and Learning Center staff members interviewed for this project stated that these group gatherings were productive and informative. The following sections will explore the reasons instructor meetings were an important component of the Learning Center teaching community and reasons administrators who work with GTA and CFM may want to implement similar scenarios.

First, because Learning Center GTA and CFM may not see each other on a consistent basis from quarter to quarter, the instructor meetings helped build community as all instructors and staff members were able to share information regarding their
personal lives along with experience-founded insights about teaching and improving the course. In connection to the previous section, the lack of instructor meetings has increased the importance of the shared office spaces in the Learning Center as that is where many of the conversations that used to be held during instructor meetings are now conducted informally. Commentary from GTA, CFM, and Learning Center staff members revealed that the meetings helped the instructors and staff members share best practices, develop communal goals, and create a team-like mentality as they worked together to try and support one another and improve the course. Interestingly, even though they had only been exposed to two instructor meetings throughout the year, the NGTA of the Learning Center were anxious to reinstate the tradition of more frequent gatherings because as first-time instructors they felt it would be beneficial to connect with and learn from some of the EGTA and CFM who they only interact with on a limited basis because of teaching times. The importance of instructor teaching times will be addressed later in this chapter.

A second benefit of frequent Learning Center instructor meetings, one that administrators should embrace, was that GTA and CFM had a chance to learn about university resources from a variety of campus administrators and faculty members. Because many GTA and CFM may not have been undergraduates at the institution where they now teach, as was the case in the Learning Center, exposing them to a range of campus resources via faculty meetings can help instructors provide support for students and it can also promote increased collaboration between academic and student affairs departments. During both interviews and conversations several of the Learning Center instructors indicated the importance of knowledge about campus resources, especially
during their first year teaching at the university. Without frequent instructor meetings, the NGTA of Learning Center had to either rely on EGTA and CFM to provide them with this information, seek it out on their own, or not be informed of these student support mechanisms.

Next, frequent Learning Center instructor meetings provided GTA and CFM with an opportunity to provide feedback to staff members and to contribute to course development. Administrators should make note of this practice because as was stated earlier, the Learning Center instructors acknowledged that the ability to share feedback from their experiences helped them feel more connected to the class and the Learning Center teaching community and it also demonstrated to the GTA and CFM that their perspectives, opinions, and feelings were valued by the administration. In addition to validating their perspectives and feedback, during instructor meetings Learning Center staff assured GTA and CFM that they had the autonomy to utilize any resources they felt would help students and that instructors could deliver the content of the course in the way that they were most comfortable. Administrative support of instructor autonomy provided GTA and CFM with the freedom to incorporate a range of pedagogical styles (e.g., student presentations, class discussions) and deviate from the built pedagogy of the Learning Center classroom in order to match student learning styles and needs. During interviews and conversations with Learning Center GTA and CFM, an appreciation of this autonomy was noted along with the perceived sense of trust that accompanied it.

**Treating GTA and CFM as equals.**

Another way that administrators can help foster community along with GTA-CFM partnerships is to treat GTA and CFM as autonomous instructors and equals by not
making distinctions between them. As indicated through interviews, document analysis, and observations, despite their university titles Learning Center staff members made an effort to refer to all the GTA and CFM as instructors and as a result the GTA and CFM viewed each other as peers rather than separate teaching constituents. During interviews for this case study several of the GTA and CFM commented on instructor equality within the Learning Center teaching community and the sense of mutual respect they felt for other instructors and staff members because they themselves had been treated as equals. The practice of espousing and enacting instructor egalitarianism should be important to administrators who work with GTA and CFM because in adopting it they may be able to directly impact the types of mentoring relationships that instructors establish with one another along with the departmental culture and climate they operate within.

In relation, during interviews with several of the Learning Center instructors and staff members it became apparent that many of them felt that within the university community there is often confusion about the roles and responsibilities of GTA and CFM and that this uncertainty helped promote misconceptions about their contributions. By publically displaying the belief that GTA and CFM are autonomous instructors with professional teaching abilities who make significant positive contributions to the university community, administrators can help debunk some of the misconceptions that surround these groups of instructors and create a teaching community where they feel valued instead of marginalized.
Teaching schedules.

Based on evidence from this case study, a final way that administrators can help promote GTA-CFM partnerships and community is by being cognizant of instructor teaching schedules. Throughout this research project the GTA and CFM of the Learning Center indicated how important teaching schedules were to the development of relationships with their colleagues. Commentary from the Learning Center instructors demonstrated that having NGTA teach before or after EGTA or CFM had a profound influence on their development as instructors because they could learn by watching or talking with veteran teachers. In order to support the development of peer mentoring relationships between instructors, administrators should try to create teaching schedules that allow for frequent contact between new and experienced GTA and CFM.

Administrator Impact on Culture, Climate, and Beliefs

Evidence from this case study shows that administrators can help contribute to the development of educational environments that promote openness, trust, citizenship, and academic optimism by both promoting the conditions highlighted in the previous sections and acknowledging the specialized capabilities of GTA and CFM. Research indicates that administrator-instructor relationships that are founded on trust have been linked with high levels of intrinsic motivation and productivity (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Schein, 2010). For example, Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest that open climates are marked by cooperation and respect within the faculty and between the faculty and administrators. As was confirmed in this case study, one way to demonstrate this respect is for administrators to treat all instructors as professionals by valuing their opinions, practice-based feedback,
and abilities. Indeed, departments with open climates have administrators and supervisors who are key participants as they actively listen to faculty experiences, are open to suggestions from all internal constituents, provide feedback and praise to instructors, and support the faculty by respecting their professional competencies (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

In the Learning Center, administrators supported an open climate by listening to and utilizing feedback from instructors, respecting the professional capacities of the GTA and CFM, and supporting instructor autonomy. Hoy and Miskel (2008) state that supervisors can develop faculty partnerships founded in trust by allowing instructors to perform duties without close scrutiny (low-directiveness) and trying to avoid bureaucratic trivia whenever possible (low-restrictiveness). An administratively espoused sense of instructor autonomy was an important component of the Learning Center teaching community because it indicated trust between administrators and instructors.

Another important characteristic of open climates is that instructors serve as a support network for one another (high-collegial relations) as they know each other well (high-intimacy) and are committed to shared goals (low-disengagement) (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In this case study, shared office spaces and frequent instructor meetings helped with these ambitions as they improved GTA-CFM familiarity with one another and created a network of support amongst both instructors and administrators. Researchers such as Hoy and Miskel (2008) also assert that departments which promote openness and trust frequently rely on faculty participation in decision making processes. During interviews with CFM, GTA and Staff it became apparent that this type of faculty engagement was common within the Learning Center teaching community and that it helped improve the effectiveness of the instructors, along with the quality of the
curriculum, assignments, and course technology. Commentary from instructors and staff members interviewed for this case study revealed that instructor meetings and frequent administrative inquiries, often via email or one-on-one conversations, were two ways that GTA and CFM could actively engage in departmental decision making.

Incorporating GTA and CFM in departmental decision making processes can help administrators promote *organizational citizenship*. According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), “Organizational citizenship is behavior that goes beyond the formal responsibilities of the role by actions that occur freely to help others achieve the task at hand” (p. 207). Organizational citizenship has five aspects: (1) altruism—giving time and assistance freely, (2) conscientiousness—working efficiently and going beyond expectations, (3) sportsmanship—being constructive and not complaining, (4) courtesy—providing advance notices and reminders, (5) civic virtue—volunteering within the department (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). When individuals within a department (e.g., CFM, GTA) are willing to exert extra effort the overall performance of the unit improves (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Not coincidentally, all five of these aspects were prevalent within the Leaning Center teaching community, in part, because administrators promoted both instructor autonomy and GTA/CFM active engagement in departmental decision making. The combination of the five aspects highlighted above can result in an overall *climate of citizenship* which can be a powerful tool for increasing institutional effectiveness and student achievement (Brown, 2000).

In addition to creating an open departmental climate where active faculty participation is common, by implementing some of the suggestions offered in this chapter administrators can also help develop a *culture of trust*. Hoy and Miskel (2008) assert that
within educational departments (e.g., Learning Center) trust is an important component of the faculty belief system because it facilitates cooperation, promotes group cohesiveness, and ultimately improves instructor performance and student achievement. The same authors suggest that trust relationships are built upon interdependence, whereby, the interests of one party or individual cannot be achieved without reliance upon another. Developing interdepartmental relationships founded in trust requires the presence of self-vulnerability and instructors must be confident that others (e.g., administrators) will not act in ways that are detrimental to them. Narratives and observations from this case study have demonstrated the importance of instructors relying on and trusting in one another for support and guidance and actions such as peer mentoring, instructors sharing resources, and administrators supporting pedagogical autonomy are just a few of the ways that Learning Center GTA, CFM, and staff members demonstrated both vulnerability and trust to one another. In part, peer mentoring relationships and resource sharing within the Learning Center were fostered by communal office areas, frequent instructor meetings, and the creation of a shared digital space. As instructors and administrators develop confidence in each other, as was the case in the Learning Center, a comprehensive culture of trust can become pervasive as these two constituents work together to increase student achievement, develop as professionals, and create a supportive teaching community (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

When instructors and administrators have confidence in one another and believe they can improve student learning by helping each other develop as professionals a sense of collective efficacy begins to build (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Bandura (1997) defined collective-efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and
execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (p. 477).
Within any organization, the shared beliefs about the capacities and abilities of participants are important factors that contribute to success (Schein, 2010). Similar to other organizations, within universities the collective-efficacy beliefs of the faculty can impact goal setting, motivation, effort, and persistence (Fives & Looney, 2009). Researchers (e.g., Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Ross & Gray; 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) indicate that inside educational units like the Learning Center, faculty and administrative beliefs play an important role in student success and achievement; this communal sense of ability is called collective teacher efficacy.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) define collective teacher efficacy as “the shared perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students” (p. 188). As instructors and administrators increase efficacy through mastery experiences (e.g., CFM helping GTA with course technology), vicarious experiences (e.g., GTA and CFM watching each other teach), and social persuasion (e.g., GTA and CFM being told they are professionals who have autonomy in the classroom), they simultaneously evaluate themselves individually and collectively. Researchers such as Hoy and Miskel (2008), Kurz and Knight (2007), and Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) assert that this assessment is critical as it directly influences beliefs about collective faculty efficacy which in turn impacts the departmental climate instructors are operating within. These authors go on to state that a strong sense of collective instructor efficacy correlates with high levels of student achievement, in part because it contributes to the acceptance of challenging goals, strong departmental effort, and a persistence that leads to improved performance.
The combination of collective instructor efficacy, trust-based administrator-instructor relationships, and a willingness to accept challenging goals, can also help lead to the development of a culture of optimism. Indeed, Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggest that developing a culture of optimism in educational units is a function of three collective cultural properties working together to positively impact student achievement, they include: (1) efficacy, (2) trust, and (3) academic emphasis. The collective power of trust, efficacy, and academic emphasis contributes to a positive educational cultural dynamic called academic optimism. “Academic optimism is a collective set of beliefs about strengths and capabilities in schools that paints a rich picture of human agency in which optimism is the overarching theme that unites efficacy and trust with academic emphasis” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 194). The conception of academic optimism offered here includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that are directly related to the aforementioned properties. The collective efficacy of faculty and administrators is a group belief and thus it is cognitive. Faculty trust in administrators and one another is an affective response while academic emphasis is the behavioral enactment of efficacy and trust (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Similar to a culture of trust, a culture of academic optimism creates powerful learning environments that can encourage student, instructor, and departmental achievement in a number of areas.

As more responsibility for undergraduate education is placed in the hands of GTA and CFM it will be important for administrators to promote environmental conditions that allow for the development of interdepartmental relationships founded in trust and confidence along with individual and collective instructor efficacy for teaching and student achievement. Evidence from this case study demonstrates that by adopting some
of the recommendations highlighted in previous sections, university administrators who work with GTA and CFM can intentionally foster an educational environment that is open, supportive, and effective; a setting that can lead to GTA and CFM development along with other positive outcomes.

**Limitations of the Study**

Within any research project there are restrictions and the specialized academic environment of the Learning Center is one of the primary limitations of this project. First, in terms of responsibilities, the Learning Center focuses on developing courses, academic strategies, student support systems, and research projects that help promote undergraduate student success. Second, while the Director of the Learning Center engages in a range of research projects in diverse subject areas, the GTA, CFM, and Staff have a more focused mandate and they utilize a narrower set of knowledge to achieve the Learning Center’s desired ambitions. The combination of specialized responsibilities and academic content along with a relatively small staff make the Learning Center an ideal environment for collaboration among instructors and administrators. By contrast, within larger academic units the types of collaboration described in this project might be limited for the following reasons: (1) these departments may have additional responsibilities beyond those of the Learning Center; (2) they may house several subject areas which need support; (3) faculty in these units may be more competitive as they try to outclass one another in various dimensions; and (4) there may be a host of administrators making decisions about issues such as CFM involvement in decision making. In addition, the fact that Learning Center CFM have limited interactions with tenured or tenure-line faculty
could also be viewed as a limitation of this case study because those interactions may impact they way CFM interact with GTA.

The second limitation of this project manifests itself in the form of transferability. For example, many departments do not employ both GTA and CFM therefore some of the findings of this case study may not be applicable to all academic units. Next, the Learning Center only supports undergraduate courses that do not involve lab work or other specialized learning scenarios (e.g., field trips) thus the some of the findings from this case study might not be transferable to academic units that primarily teach these types of courses or which only house graduate programs.

Despite these limitations, findings from this case study may be transferable to smaller, specialized academic units or to departments whose ambitions are similar to those of the Learning Center. In addition, the contention that CFM should be recognized and treated as professionals who can make valuable contributions to the university community is not limited to specific academic units or specialized subject areas.

**Future Lines of Research**

Case studies are often used as exploratory projects that investigate themes related to specific research questions while simultaneously establishing the foundation for additional case studies or other forms of research (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1991; Patton, 2002; Walton, 1992; Yin, 2009). Throughout this case study several themes related to the nature of GTA-CFM relationships, GTA development, the professional status of CFM, and the fostering of supportive educational environments by university administrators have been explored. While the insights gleaned from this project are both informative and
practical, further exploration is needed. In as much, the following recommendations for future research projects are offered.

First, future investigations into the number of GTA who teach independently and the types of training they receive are necessary because currently there is limited research on these topics. In addition, in order to help support those GTA who do teach their own courses, further investigations into the experiences, feelings, opinions, and needs of these individuals is essential. Next, given the increasing numbers of GTA and CFM who are teaching on college and university campuses, future investigations on the topic of their current or potential relationships could be informative. As evidenced in this case study, the relationship between these two teaching constituencies can be developmental and positive but that does not mean this is the case across the current landscape of higher education. In fact, increased research may reveal negative relationships between these types of instructors, a finding that administrators should be concerned with given the numbers of GTA and CFM who currently teach on college and university campuses. Included in the exploration of these relationships should be inquiries related to the socialization of GTA by CFM, especially doctoral toting non-tenure line faculty, and the environmental conditions that either foster or hinder the development of mentoring relationships and supportive teaching communities.

Third, future investigations exploring the positive contributions of CFM to the university community should be performed. Currently, there are a host of researchers investigating the negative consequences of utilizing a contingent based labor force in higher education but there is limited research exploring the positive, possibly significant roles these instructors play within the university environment. Evidence from this case
study indicates that CFM can contribute to the university community in many ways beyond just teaching and as more non tenure-line instructors are employed within the American higher education system, having an increased understanding of how they can positively contribute to educational environments will be important. In relation, establishing a record of the positive contributions CFM are making will help debunk frequently cited negative stereotypes that surround these instructors while also challenging some of the dominant ideologies that serve as the foundation for faculty hierarchies.

As the academic labor force continues to move away from a majority tenured or tenure-line faculty, topics of exploration should include: (a) updated national-level research on the number of CFM along with demographic data about this group of instructors; (b) the different types of CFM that operate on college and university campuses, including academic titles and responsibilities; and (c) ways to both incorporate CFM into the university community (e.g., participation in academic governance) and increase their collaboration with tenure-line instructors. Increasing CFM involvement within the university community will send a strong message to non-tenure line faculty that they are valued members of the academy and it will also be an important component in the development of a strong, collective faculty voice. Included in these investigations on CFM involvement should be critical research and discussions that focus on academic freedom and job security as it relates to non-tenure track faculty.

Conclusion

While many within the academy may try to ignore or conceal the presence of contingent faculty members, the fact remains that this group now represents the majority
of instructors across the landscape of the American higher education system and changes
must be made to accommodate shifts in the academic labor force. As the American
higher education labor force continues to shift and evolve, it will be important to explore
and reframe the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of faculty members, beginning
with a reconceptualization of what it means to be a professional within the academic
community. Despite the historically marginalizing connotations surrounding non-tenured
faculty, evidence from this case study demonstrates that contingent faculty members
possess professional capacities and the ability to contribute to the university community
in diverse ways. Until the academy changes to be more inclusive of all faculty members,
regardless of perceived status, the existence of a bifurcated faculty with diminished
power and a waning collective voice is likely to continue. In addition, without critical
research related to the professional status of contingent faculty members it’s likely that
the negative stereotyping and marginalizing of these instructors will be prolonged.

Furthermore, as increased numbers of graduate teaching associates/assistants are
asked to instruct courses independently, it will be important for university administrators
to ensure these individuals have the training and support they need to be successful;
evidence from this case study indicates that contingent faculty members could be key
participants in the process. Certainly, if universities are going to rely on graduate students
and contingent faculty members to teach a large percentage of undergraduate students,
ensuring their success could have critical implications with regards to student learning,
satisfaction, and retention along with the future of the professoriate.
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