

TEACHING FROM THE MARGINS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
TEACHING PRACTICES AND LABOR CONDITIONS OF  
ADJUNCT FACULTY IN COMMUNICATION

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Media and Communication

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the teaching practices and labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty at three universities. Since the late 1960s, the number of faculty who are part-time and contingent is increasing and adjuncts are now more than 70% of college and university faculty (AAUP, n.d.). In this study, I examine the neoliberal university's reliance on the teaching labor of part-time faculty and interrogate the use of adjunct labor for skills-based, vocationally oriented elements of the media and communication curriculum. The history of higher education, the literature of teaching and learning, and the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu's practice theory and Freire's critical pedagogy situate this qualitative study of adjunct faculty teaching practices and labor conditions. A multi-method approach includes textual analysis of course syllabi and university documents; eight interviews with administrators, department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, and university leadership; three interviews with union activists; eleven interviews with current or former adjuncts; semester-long participant observation of teaching practices of thirteen courses taught by nine adjunct faculty; and three student focus groups with nineteen total participants. This study reveals media and communication adjuncts as key members of the academic community who apply student-centered practices and who are responsible for important elements of the curriculum, and at the same time, marginalized as a flexible, on-demand, and disposable labor force that serves the neoliberal university. This study offers insights to improve the labor conditions of adjunct faculty. I conclude that the COVID-19 global pandemic and the disruption of higher education's normal tempo reveals a changing higher education landscape with threats of financial exigency and increased precarity for all faculty.

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my mother, who never let me quit, and to my family:  
my Aunt Marg who was the first person to tell me I could do anything;  
my Aunt Ginny who fosters my love of reading;  
Renee, my sister, who teaches me to be real;  
Miranda, my niece who bewilders me and keeps me young;  
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Universities and colleges are structured around the work of research, teaching, and service. “Like most higher education systems around the world, the American system ascribes to a tripartite mission composed of research and discovery, teaching and education, and public service and outreach” (Furco, 2010, p. 380). The work of achieving this mission focuses on the creation, distribution, translation, communication, and exchange of knowledge. “Knowledge is the unique claim of higher education” (Marginson, 2011, p. 414). Faculty are the intellectual laborers responsible for the creation and transmission of knowledge. In service, universities look to faculty to consider the ways in which they can support the institution, the community, and most broadly, society. Service includes work on campus committees and the work required to participate in a scholarly society or association, including serving as a journal editor or planning a conference (Thelin, 2017, p. 97). In research, universities look to faculty to create or produce new knowledge. In addition to the actual research process, research includes applying for grant funding and producing peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books. In teaching, universities are translating, communicating, and distributing knowledge, and faculty, as instructors, are expected to provide students with both the theory that explains a concept and the practical, career-oriented skills to perform in the workplace. While teaching also includes chairing graduate dissertations and theses, this study focuses on undergraduate teaching by adjunct faculty in media and communication. In this way, faculty responsibilities for research, teaching, and service represent the intellectual and academic work of knowledge production in higher education.

### **The Rationale for this Dissertation**

In 1975, 58% of all faculty were tenured or tenure track (Gappa, 2008, p. 50), and now most faculty are off the tenure track as illustrated by the recent report of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2018) on contingent faculty that showed non-tenure track faculty (NTT) “accounted for 73 percent in 2016, the latest year for which data are available” (para. 2). These non-tenure track faculty (NTT) may be full-time or part-time. While adjuncts are teaching more classes, the role of adjuncts in academe remains at the margins.

While this study grew out of my interest in pedagogy, it emerges as an examination of labor conditions that reveal the complexities and experiences of teaching and learning labor within the neoliberal university. The story of Mary Margaret Votjko, a Duquesne University adjunct (Anderson, 2013), stuck with me, not in an activist way that said, "you should go do something about this," but in the nagging way that happens when a problem reveals itself and understanding it becomes part of you. While Votjko planted the seed, pedagogy and learner-centered teaching were the soil; and Bourdieu (1977) and Freire (1970) were the sun and the shovel that guided this interrogation, serving as theoretical and methodological tools to examine adjunct labor.

The September 2013 National Public Radio (NPR) story about the 2013 death of a long-time Duquesne University adjunct, Margaret Mary Votkjo, and the later media coverage highlighted the challenges of adjunct labor conditions. Anderson’s (2013) coverage of the Votkjo’s story revealed an institution, Duquesne University, that initially supported and then fought adjuncts' unionization. Duquesne, a private, Catholic university, used religion to withdraw from earlier agreements to abide by the National

Labor Relations Board (NLRB) administered secret ballot election to form an adjunct faculty union (para. 27 – 32). According to Stabile (2012), the NLRB’s “approach is to examine whether the educational institution has a ‘substantial religious character’ in the absence of which it will exercise jurisdiction” and provide collective bargaining through the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) (p. 1318). “In the absence of a union, Duquesne had gradually cut Vojtko’s teaching load from three courses per semester to two and then to one” (Anderson, 2013, para. 32). Duquesne University’s (2018) press release reasserted the lack of NLRB jurisdiction over religious institutions using a quote from Duquesne University President Ken Gormley, stating, “The NLRB decision ignores ‘decades of United States Supreme Court and Federal Court rulings that the NLRB has no jurisdiction over religious educational institutions like Duquesne’” (para. 4). This matter remains unresolved, as evidenced by the recent federal appeals court ruling that contends “Duquesne University’s status as a Roman Catholic institution exempts it from National Labor Relations Board’s rules on forming an adjunct union” (Jaschik, 2020, para. 1).

Vojtko’s story reveals the structures and practices of higher education institutions and it is also an illustration of the everyday realities faced by adjunct faculty. Her story suggests subordination, both open and concealed, of many contingent faculty, including contract precarity, low pay, no benefits, exclusion from governance, few opportunities for interactions with tenured colleagues, and generally inferior work conditions (no office space, lack of basic supplies/computer equipment, and limited administrative support). It also exposes the ways in which higher education institutions, both religious and non-religious, challenge and resist the right to organize and collectively bargain for the benefit of all workers. Media coverage of Vojtko’s death, the realities of adjunct faculty who are

teaching from the margins, and even the seemingly secure positions of tenured and tenure track faculty require an examination of what the reliance on adjunct faculty means for higher education as institutions responsible for the creation of knowledge.

In addition to being located within schools of media and communication, this dissertation is a media and communication project in three ways. First, teaching is a communicative practice. The course syllabus, the lectures, the interactions with students are all acts of communication in teaching and instruction. Sprague (1992) described this as “instructional communication” which she noted, “has been narrowed to the point that researchers have failed to ask a number of important questions about how communication works in conjunction with social and political forces that constrain it and define it” (p. 5). Second, to fully consider the social and political, it is necessary to examine teaching in the broader context of higher education, especially when increasing amounts of teaching performed by part-time, adjunct labor. This examination becomes significantly more important as a media and communication study when considering higher education's role in shaping culture. While cultural studies are typically focused on the media producers or the media themselves, American higher education is a cultural [re]production site and schools of media and communication are producing the future professionals and leaders in media. Finally, this study takes a critical turn and employs critical pedagogy to examine power and privilege within higher education institutions with an emphasis on how higher education's neoliberal influences are reflected and represented in the classroom and in practice—thus bringing this project full-circle to consider how neoliberal practices influence teaching and ultimately impact higher education's role as a public good.

## **Background**

The work of colleges and universities is intellectual and academic, which Tierney (2006), higher education and organizational scholar, defines as “the creation, transmission, and refinement of knowledge” (p. 82). Sprague (1992) contends “Communication plays a central role in the creation of knowledge” (p. 9). More than eighty years ago, Dewey (1938/1963) noted that societal structures are a form of communication, and our understanding of the world is shaped by the communicative nature of these structures. To examine labor conditions and teaching practices, it is important to locate practices and structures of higher education within the idea that the structures and practices of colleges and universities can support a well-functioning and democratic society (Dewey, 1938/1963).

### ***The Purposes of Higher Education***

“Higher education is a contested space, and subject to *power* struggles to shape or reshape the field, and further influenced by struggles in the field of power” (Webb, Burke, Nichols, Roberts, Stahl, Threadgold, & Wilkinson, 2017, p. 144). These struggles are represented in the long history of competing purposes (Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965). As the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) noted in the 2007 report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*, “all educational institutions and all fields of study . . . share in a common obligation to prepare their graduates as fully as possible for the real-world demands of work, citizenship, and life in a complex and fast-changing society” (p. 4). This sentence illustrates the tensions in meeting the demands of contemporary higher education. Higher education is pulled between the classic liberal arts orientation as represented by the

historical and theoretical context or what Fernback (2015) described as “transmitting cultural knowledge” (p. 23), Dewey’s (1938/1963) idea of preparation for citizenry, and the neoliberal thrust of preparation for the world of work as represented by employment and career outcomes.

I contend that the importance of universities is the role they play in supporting and constraining social change (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2002, 2009, 2010, Labaree, 2017; McLean, 2006). Labaree (2017) described higher education’s role in social change as the tension between “social accessibility and social exclusivity, between admitting everyone and limiting access to the elite” (p. 5). Labaree (2017) furthered this argument by using the stratification of contemporary higher education to illustrate the possibility of access for all and the realities of limited access to the top-tier institutions. In this way, higher education has shifted from public good to one designed to meet the workforce needs of big corporations (Giroux, 2010, p. 715). This contradiction and the power struggle can be understood by examining adjunct labor through the lens of neoliberalism. To better understand this shift, I believe it is necessary to examine the significance of the changes occurring in university faculty as evidenced by the increased reliance on part-time, contractual faculty (AAUP, 2018).

A brief history of higher education will provide key events and will foreground the conversation later to come about practices and labor conditions. Using the diverse literature of higher education history (Dorn, 2017; Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965; Zelizer, 2011), faculty labor (Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Childress, 2019; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Gappa & Leslie, 2009; Kezar, DePaola & Scott, 2019), the scholarship of teaching and learning (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman,

2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Weimer, 2013) has established that (1) adjunct faculty are doing increasing amounts of teaching (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Lyons, 2007; Kezar, 2013a, 2013b, Tuckman, 1978) (2) universities rely on adjunct faculty to bring industry and real-world experience into the classroom, and (3) faculty teaching impacts how students learn. (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Freire, 1970; Weimer, 2013). These findings lead to questions on the structures and practices of higher education, particularly the labor conditions of adjunct faculty who are responsible for increasing amounts of teaching.

The independent and growing body of literature on adjunct faculty fall into six categories: (1) high-level studies focused on defining characteristics of adjunct identity and work patterns (Levin & Hernandez, 2014; Tuckman, 1978); (2) best practice studies of department culture, recruitment, hiring, and orientation of adjuncts (Baron-Nixon, 2007; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Lyons, 2007; Kezar, 2013a, 2013b); (3) quantitative studies using U.S. Department of Education data sets or other large survey data sets (Baldwin, Wawrzynski, & Kezar, 2011; Umbach, 2007); (4) studies linking quality measures such as persistence or graduation rates to adjunct utilization (Figlio, Schapiro, & Soter, 2015); (5) works focused on labor and unionization efforts (Angulo, 2018; Berry, 2005; Tirelli, 1997); and (6) opinion pieces focused on the ethical implications of relying on adjuncts (Berlinerblau, 2020, Fulk, 2019; Nagel, 2014).

### *Adjunct Faculty*

Media coverage of adjunct faculty usually refers to adjuncts as the “academic precariat.” Guy Standing is a British economist who has written extensively on the labor markets, the rise of the “precariat class,” and the need for universal income. According to

Standing (2011), “the descriptive term ‘precariat’ was first used by French sociologists in the 1980s, to describe temporary or seasonal workers,” often agricultural laborers (p. 9). In a 2011 article in *Nation Magazine*, William Deresiewicz, an American author and higher education critic, coined the phrase “academic lettuce-pickers,” to link the current condition of adjunct faculty to the migrant farmworkers of the turn of the century. These words describe the increased reliance on a contingent labor force and the broader shifts where students are viewed as consumers or customers (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Fethke & Policano, 2012), and higher education is a commodity-driven by and susceptible to neoliberal market forces.

This study focused on part-time non-tenure track faculty or adjuncts in media and communication and defines adjunct faculty as part-time instructors or professors without a permanent position or tenure. Adjuncts are known by many names including contingents, sessional staff, contractual staff, teaching staff, part-time lecturers, and graduate assistants. Adjuncts work on part-time, semester-based contracts often with low-pay, no benefits, a lack of job security, and limited integration into the academic community. Historically, adjunct faculty were employed to provide “real-world” experiences as part of the college experience. Working professionals were hired to teach specific skills or provide industry-specific experience that supplemented the traditional academic instruction by tenured and tenure track faculty (Gappa, 2008; Schneirov, 2003; Tuckman, 1978). This study found that media and communication departments rely on adjunct faculty for three reasons: (1) flexibility, (2) bridging theory and practice, and (3) connections to industry.

The increased reliance on a largely contingent labor force has implications for educational institutions as organizations, and if we assume that education informs our citizenry, then it also impacts our social structures. The data clearly indicate that changes to the faculty are happening and the gig economy (Angulo, 2018) ensures that these changes are likely to expand. Giroux (1988) argued that teaching is intellectual work and “pedagogy is always related to power” (p. 97). Giroux extends this argument to describe the deskilling of teaching when he stated, “The proletarianization of the teaching profession has made educators too dependent and powerless” (p. 97). If, as may be the case, adjunct faculty are hired days before the class starts, provided with a course syllabus, and not required or asked to understand the role a course plays in the broader curriculum, how might this affect the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty?

### *Neoliberalism*

More than three decades ago, Bowen and Schuster’s (1986) book, *American Professors: A National Resource Imperiled*, highlighted the neoliberal infiltration and raised concerns about the future of faculty and higher education. As part of their study, Bowen and Schuster commissioned W. Lee Hansen, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin, to explain the widening salary gulf for faculty based on discipline. Hansen (1986) explained “the expansion of demand in certain sectors of the private economy spilled over into public-sector labor markets, including those for academics” (p. 80). The salary gap finding supported the concerns raised by Bowen and Schuster over the bifurcation of faculty (p. 251). Bowen and Schuster present data that show the early days of lower salaries in the liberal arts (also referred to as humanities)

and the effects of market influences commanding higher salaries for career-oriented disciplines in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and business.

Higher education is divided. The bifurcation of faculty is an example of the divisions within higher education. The bifurcation of the liberal arts and career-oriented disciplines, the division between research and teaching, and even Gappa and Leslie's (1993) observation of the tenured "haves" and the part-time adjunct faculty "have-nots" (p. 2) represents the conflicts and disputes within the American higher education system. Webb et al. (2017) observed the power struggles and contested spaces within the divisions of higher education.

The changes in faculty employment are representative of the power struggles, including the transformation in governance, reduction in faculty rights, and increasing challenges to academic freedom (Rustin, 2016, p. 157). Rustin relates the rise in adjuncts to the changes in faculty noting, "there has been a large increase in the proportion of academic staff on part-time and fixed-term contracts, as institutions seek to minimize their costs, exercise tighter control over their workforce, and extract more 'value' from their labour" (p. 157). Extraction of value is a key concept of neoliberalism. Prioritization of fundable research, threats to academic freedom, and an increased reliance on contingent faculty represent the neoliberal infiltration of higher education.

Neoliberalism in higher education is observed in four ways: the increase in corporate culture; the view of student as customer; the commodification of knowledge; and the reliance on contractual contingent adjunct labor. Corporatization has permeated all aspects of higher education from the courses offered to the research conducted

(Giroux, 2002). There is increasing “political pressure to restrain tuition increases” as universities seek to “replace lost public support” (Fethke & Policano, 2012, p. 9) which positions the student as customer and higher education as a purchase like any other commodity. Market value determines both need and relevance of course of study as illustrated by Giroux (2002):

Knowledge with a high exchange value in the market is what counts, while those fields such as liberal arts and humanities that cannot be quantified in such terms will either be underfunded or allowed to become largely irrelevant in the hierarchy of academic knowledge (p. 442).

Market value and exchange represents the commodification of knowledge. “The corporate university’s language of new findings, technology transfer, knowledge economy, grant generation, frontier research, efficiency, and accountability dominates how academic scholarship is now framed both within the institution and outside it” (Berg & Seeber, 2016, p. 63). This has created a divide within academe with the stars who are capable of producing research dollars on one end and the adjunct faculty or academic day laborers responsible for teaching on the other end. Angulo (2018) pushes this further and describes the changes in colleges and universities as creating “an academic sweatshop” (p. 19). The sweatshop relies on hiring part-time, contractual adjunct faculty, over full-time tenure or tenure track to provide scheduling flexibility and reduce costs (Allison, Lynn, & Hoverman, 2014).

Corporatization and the rise of anti-intellectualism threaten both universities and, more broadly, our democracy. Giroux (2002) uses a 1998 speech by James Carlin, a multimillionaire insurance executive, to illustrate the rise of anti-intellectualism and the profit orientation of corporatization. Carlin provided four proposals in his attack on

higher education and the professoriate: (1) colleges and universities should be downsized, (2) abolish tenure, (3) eliminate faculty governance and reduce faculty power, and (4) eliminate programs that produce knowledge that cannot be commodified (Giroux, 2002, p. 443). These arguments appear in higher education media coverage and opinion pieces, such as Pearlstein's (2018) piece in the *Washington Post*, where he details "libertarian provocateur" Bryan Caplan's essay, "The Case Against Education." Shell's (2018) opinion piece in the *New York Times* notes that current student debt is "more than \$1.3 trillion" and more than double the amount owed just a decade earlier. Using data from economists Bartik and Hersbein, Shell (2018) argues that "a college degree is worth less to people who most need a boost: those born poor."

### ***Theoretical Frameworks: Bourdieu's Practice Theory & Freire's Critical Pedagogy***

Adjunct teaching practices happen within higher education organizations with complex and occasionally competing social and cultural structures and practices. As a result, it is necessary to consider the ways in which the structures and practices of higher education shape the adjunct labor conditions. This study used Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) practice theory as the theoretical framework. Practice theory provides an analytical tool to examine the structures and the practices of adjunct faculty teaching in media and communication through a holistic examination that moves from the macro (higher education institutions as systems) through the micro (the lived experiences of individual adjuncts). The examination of social structures includes the history, traditions, institutions, and the established and accepted ways of world experience. Examining practices reveals individuals, as actors, who have the ability to accept, ignore, modify, change, and reproduce social structures. The practice theory framework allows for the

examination of actions in the classroom, self-descriptions of teaching, and the language or labels applied to teaching practice all while considering the underlying cultural and symbolic elements of power and division in a university context.

While Dewey (1938/1963) contended that colleges and universities support a well-functioning and democratic society, this study sought to push past the rhetoric of college education as a public good to examine current structures and practices. This approach considered historical context but focused on today's situation. A critical pedagogy framework allowed for the assessment of work, power, and interests of teaching practices. While Bourdieu's (1977) theoretical framework is generally cynical, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy presents a hopefulness that reflects the researcher's belief in the value and importance of higher education. Critical pedagogy is most commonly applied to the student experience, this project applied Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy framework to the teaching practices of adjunct faculty in media and communication.

### **Why Examine Adjunct Faculty in Media and Communication?**

The commodification of higher education has led to a devaluing of academic and intellectual labor, particularly faculty, which has fostered increasing questions regarding the purpose and value of higher education. Jo Sprague, a long-time faculty member at San Jose State who published extensively on communication, pedagogy, and other topics noted in 1992, education propagates "a vision of culture . . . through the only social institution that rivals mass media in potential influence" (p. 19). In other words, higher education is an institution that shapes and influences society.

Neoliberalism focuses on individual interests over collective good, and it is observed in the economic and political forces that value the disciplines that lead to financial outcomes or jobs (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 133) and in the increased reliance on contractual part-time labor for teaching. These factors may help to make sense of higher education's shift from a public good to a commodity driven by and susceptible to market forces. Schools of media and communication serve as a microcosm of the broader university with both liberal arts and career-oriented academic programs.

Fast forward to 2020 and the events of a global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus (also known as COVID-19), the increasing unrest related to police brutality, and the overall uncertainty surrounding the future of higher education because of the recent furloughs, layoffs, and firings, including the dismissal of tenured faculty as part of financial exigency and cost-cutting measures (see *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles: Bauman, 2020; Berlinerblau, 2020, Burmila, 2020, Kelderman, 2020, Mclean, 2020, Petit, 2020b). While I could not have predicted a global pandemic or the protests of the Black Lives Matter movement, I did see the precarity and division of adjunct faculty as an issue that needed to be understood, and now that same precarity may have broader implications for all faculty.

Bourdieu (1984) saw the importance of understanding divisions when he stated, "Every real inquiry into the divisions of the social world has to analyse the interests associated with membership or non-membership" (p. 478). In this dissertation, I examine the role of adjunct faculty as members and non-members of the academic community. To do this, I approach higher education's role as a knowledge producer through a Bordieuan lens to understand the experiences of media and communication adjunct faculty and how

their labor conditions may reflect broader divisions within the university. Earlier adjunct faculty studies used survey data (Baldwin, Wawrzynski, & Kezar, 2011; Umbach, 2007); however, my interest in pedagogy and learner-centered teaching drew me to classroom observation of adjunct faculty teaching practices in schools of media and communication.

Other scholars seeking to understand adjunct faculty labor have used site visits and interviews. Bowen and Schuster's (1986) and Gappa and Leslie's (1993) studies used site visits and interviews with administrators, tenured/tenure track faculty, and adjuncts to understand faculty work. Using institutional data and interviews, Cross and Goldenberg (2009) focused on hiring practices and provided a summary of implications, including considerations for unionization, governance, and academic freedom. All three of these prior studies focused on the top sixty-five higher education institution members as represented by the Association of American Universities (AAU). This study extends these projects by examining the labor (teaching practices) of adjunct faculty and selecting university sites that are not members of the AAU but are more representative of most students' university experience. While much has been written about the part-time adjunct experience cobbling together full-time work across many campuses (see Childress, 2019), there is little written about the part-time adjunct who works full-time in another capacity and who teaches one or two classes.

In seeking to find a discipline that is representative of the broader university tensions between theoretical and practical, I focused my project in schools of media and communication. Media and communication degrees have a reliance on heavy theoretical courses tackling the complexities of scholars such as Adorno, Bourdieu, Foucault, Marx, and many others. Media and communication degrees also have practical, skill-oriented,

and job-focused courses, as illustrated by a sampling of course titles as pulled from the Coursicle<sup>1</sup> pages for each of my research sites: Magazine Article Writing, Investigative Reporting, Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Digital Media Metrics, Digital Analytics and Reporting, Account Management, Account Planning, Crisis Communication, Client/Agency Relations, News Writing and Reporting, and Photojournalism. This is not to say that skill-oriented courses do not include theory, and I know full well that some may view these examples as reductive, but they are included here to illustrate the tensions between theoretical and practical present in contemporary higher education. The literature of journalism education has also considered the relationship between industry and pedagogy (see Reese, 1999). While Reese (1999) uses the journalism education to draw the parallels between industry and academe, I have chosen to focus my study more broadly on media and communication and thus, journalism education literature is not included in this project. Some may contest my characterization of media and communication degrees as bridging both the theoretical and the applied, but it is precisely this position that makes schools of media and communication a rich site of interrogation for higher education and for understanding the labor conditions of adjunct faculty.

Based on this view, my task in the chapters ahead is straightforward. I must demonstrate the relationship between the role of the neoliberal university, the increased reliance on adjuncts, and the ways in which higher education can remain a relevant and

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<sup>1</sup> According to *TechNews* reporter Soopal (2018), Coursicle is a “a platform that allows college students to easily browse classes and plan their semester schedule accordingly” and “is used by more than 700 colleges” (para. 1).

essential public good. First, a brief history of higher education illustrates how higher education has evolved and shaped the current situation, practices, and structures. Next, I layout my theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory and Freire's (197) critical pedagogy. I have also included some key works on pedagogy and learner-centered teaching to support the empirical analysis of effective teaching as teaching is the labor of media and communication adjunct faculty. To avoid the possibility that my analysis will be interpreted as too limited to apply generally to higher education, I explain the features of media and communication curricula and how these features are uniquely positioned to expose the broader tension in higher education between the approaches of the classical, theoretically based, liberal arts programs and the career-focused, employment ready programs.

While higher education institutions are producers of research, limited research examines the structural changes to teaching labor that have occurred in higher education over the past few decades, particularly around the increased use of adjunct faculty by discipline. As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure stated,

Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free expression.  
(p. 14)

Like Dewey (1938/1963) and Putnam (2015), Furco (2010) contends "the fulfillment of civic purpose is considered to be ingrained in the core work of the academy" (p. 375).

While public good is the espoused view, this study suggests that the neoliberal influences may be threatening this purpose. "While higher education sees itself as fulfilling its civic

and public purposes through the instruction it offers and research it conducts, external entities have criticised the societal value and importance of the academy's work" (Furco, 2010, p. 376). Like Tierney (2006), I believe that universities play an essential role in creating knowledge and that this knowledge creation happens through research and teaching. Further, if the labor of teaching in higher education is increasingly performed by adjunct faculty, then we must examine the teaching practices of adjunct faculty. It is my assertion that a critical assessment of the practices and structures of adjunct teaching in higher education is needed to understand the changing landscape and to generate ideas with the transformative potential required to preserve higher education institutions for future generations.

While adjunct faculty are hired for the primary purpose of teaching, limited research examines the specific teaching practices employed in the classroom. The lack of research in this area may be understood by a quote from Derek Bok, president emeritus of Harvard, who stated in *Change* magazine, "faculties are...likely to resist any determined effort to examine their work and question familiar ways of teaching and learning" (Tagg, 2012, p.6). While Bok's quote addressed faculty generally, I am interested in media and communication adjunct faculty and none of the scholarship to date addresses the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication through Bourdieu's theoretical framework of practices. While this study began as an exploration of teaching practices, Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory framework reveals the nuances and institutional conditions of the neoliberal university. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy exposes the ways in which dialogic principles can overcome domination and oppression. Practice theory and critical pedagogy work together to reveal how university structures

usually operate and how they appear under the extreme stress and disruption caused by COVID-19. To explore these issues, I have posed five research questions to guide my study.

### **Research Questions**

My research questions are:

- RQ1: How do the labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty differ from full-time tenured and tenure track faculty labor conditions?
- RQ2: How do the labor conditions of media and communication faculty shape the ways in which communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning are employed in the classroom?
- RQ3: What do course syllabi reveal about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication?
- RQ4: How do department chairs and administrators in schools of media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions, and does this understanding impact the practices surrounding recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation processes?
- RQ5: How do students in media and communication courses taught by adjuncts understand adjunct labor conditions?

The next section of this introduction provides an overview of the methods and methodology employed to answer these research questions.

## **Methods and Methodology**

To answer the research questions, this study employed a qualitative, multi-method approach, including textual analysis of course syllabi and university documents; eight interviews with administrators, department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, and university leadership; three interviews with union activists; eleven interviews with current or former adjuncts; semester-long participant observation of teaching practices of thirteen courses taught by nine media and communication adjunct faculty; and three student focus groups with nineteen total participants.

The objective of this research was to examine, observe, describe, and analyze the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty in media and communication at three institutions of higher education in the Northeastern United States. Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of habitus, capital, and field served as "research tools to better understand empirical data and think inductively and critically through research as practice" (Webb et al., 2017, p. 141). The use of Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy was supported by the use of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2006) to support my theorizing, analyzing, and reflecting on the research process. Observation and interviews allowed for an examination of the practices and structures of higher education institutions as it relates to the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty. During this study, I observed media and communication adjunct teaching practices and the ways in which they navigate university structures. Interviews provided an opportunity to explore the observations and further understand how media and communication adjuncts experience the neoliberal university. In addition, in-depth interviews with administrators provided an understanding of the benefits, complexities,

and challenges of relying on media and communication adjunct faculty. Finally, this dissertation utilized a self-ethnographic approach when the Spring 2020 COVID-19 pandemic created a key moment or rupture for higher education. The COVID-19 disruption provided a unique opportunity to view wide-scale shifts in institutional practices as all teaching was moved online.

This in-depth study of media and communication adjunct faculty's labor conditions and teaching practices uses Bourdieu's practice theory (1977) to zoom in on the practices/actions and zoom out to the institutions/structures. In contrast, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy provides a hopefulness and counters the cynicism of Bourdieu's views on higher education. The theoretical frameworks and multi-method approaches reveal the sometimes divergent perspectives of those employed as media and communication adjunct faculty and those employing adjunct faculty within the structures of the neoliberal university. This dissertation reveals the complexity and precarity of teaching and learning within the neoliberal university illustrating the ways in which bureaucracy, policies, and market incentives constrain actions and push risk to the individual. It is my hope that this research reveals the ways in which resistance to a purely market economy can transfigure the neoliberal university. The final section of the introduction outlines the structure of the dissertation and provides a summary of each chapter.

### **Overview of Chapters**

The introduction chapter outlined the primary issues, as well as the rationale, research questions, and a summary of the theoretical and methodological approaches for

the study. Following this introduction, this dissertation is organized into seven chapters, a bibliography, and appendices in the following manner.

Chapter 2 contextualizes the current landscape through a brief history of higher education that includes important moments that have shaped the contemporary university informed by higher education's seminal history texts (Dorn, 2017; Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965; Zelizer, 2011). The history is followed by a review of the literature of adjunct faculty, a summary of the economics of higher education, including an explanation of higher education as a public good, and finally a brief explication of neoliberalism as it relates to higher education and specifically to this study's examination of media and communication adjunct labor conditions.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) practice theory, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, and a summary of the pedagogy literature. Chapter 3 explains how Bourdieu's tempo, field, doxa, habitus, agency, and capital concepts are employed in this study. While Freire's critical pedagogy is often applied in student-contexts, his theoretical constructs of domination and oppression are used here to probe adjunct faculty's labor conditions in media and communication. Critical pedagogy and practice theory support the exploration and the critique of the systems, structures, politics, and power relationships within the spaces and contexts inhabited by media and communication adjunct faculty. This chapter concludes with the literature of pedagogy, teaching, and learning, which provides a common language and empirical lens for understanding observed teaching practices and highlighting recommended best practices for contemporary teaching in higher education.

Chapter 4 addresses the study's qualitative multi-method approaches of document and textual analysis, participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. This chapter describes how the researcher used theory as method to apply grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2006) in conjunction with Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy to conduct the study. The chapter also includes the philosophical assumptions; methodologies; criteria and process for site selection and participant recruitment; and the data collection, management, and analysis approaches. Chapter 4 concludes with some of the site-specific challenges and ethical considerations related to the researcher's role in conducting this study, as well as a brief reflexivity statement.

Chapter 5 presents the study's findings of the structures and practices of media and communication adjuncts through the perspectives and experiences of administration, department chairs, course and sequence directors, and union organizers. This chapter also explores some of the opportunities and challenges of unionization, including analysis of unionization efforts and the realities of a single union for adjuncts and tenure/tenure track faculty.

Chapter 6 presents the study's findings of the teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty through Bourdieuan and Freirean lenses, including the ways in which they apply principles of effective teaching, employ theoretical constructs, and demonstrate curricular student learning outcomes. Narratives collected through semester-long participant observation and interviews bring to life the results and analysis of this chapter's findings and illustrate Freire's (1970) concepts of domination,

oppression and conscientização. Thematic analysis of participant experience is contextualized with the scholarship of teaching, learning, and pedagogy.

Chapter 7 presents the study's findings related to the media and communication adjunct experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a rupture to higher education with the move to online teaching for all faculty. In addition to the lived experiences of study participants, this chapter explores the online narratives of public and private groups on social media, specifically Tenure for the Common Good (public group), to contextualize issues of contingency, faculty freedom, and tenure. This chapter brings to life Freire's (1970) conscientização through the new allegiances formed between tenured/tenure track faculty and adjuncts.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, contains the summary, conclusions, and suggestions for future research to improve media and communication adjunct faculty's labor conditions and teaching practices. This chapter contextualizes the study's results using Bordieuan and Freirean lenses to consider the competing purposes of higher education, the expansion of precarity, and academic capitalism (Jessop, 2018). This chapter proposes recommendations for improving media and communication adjunct faculty labor conditions and teaching practices and suggests possibilities for future research. The end matter includes a bibliography and appendices.

## **CHAPTER 2: U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION, FACULTY, AND THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM**

The history of higher education provides context for understanding the role of universities in supporting and maintaining social conditions. The mission of teaching, research, and service provides a way to consider how universities serve to produce and reproduce culture. As institutions, universities foster social change by supporting upward mobility and, at the same time, constrain social change by maintaining social hierarchies through cultural production and reproduction (Dewey, 1938/1963; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2002, 2009, 2010; McLean, 2006). This contradiction can be understood by examining the structures and practices of faculty labor through the lens of neoliberalism. Giroux (2010) contends that the neoliberal influence has shifted higher education from public good to production line for the workforce demands of corporations (p. 715). Over the past 40 years, there have been significant changes to who is teaching on college campuses with more than 70% of teaching now being done by adjunct faculty (AAUP, 2018). If learning is an essential outcome of higher education, and teaching is core to the mission of higher education, then it is necessary to examine the adjunct faculty who are teaching.

This chapter provides a brief history of higher education and a review of the literature on faculty, including academic freedom, tenure, and adjuncts. It is grounded in the assumption that neoliberalism is present in higher education and throughout American society. This chapter briefly describes higher education economics and concludes with a description of the principles of neoliberalism. Using Harvey's (2005) seminal work, I define neoliberalism in higher education as a set of practices that favor

revenue generation, individual rights, and pursuit of globalization as a path to expansion over and above services and responsibilities to the public good.

### **A Brief History of Higher Education**

This study is focused on American higher education. While the history of universities is much longer, American universities have developed and more importantly survived for more than three centuries. The historical context of higher education allows us to interrogate the present state of higher education in the United States and to understand the ways in which higher education has shaped and has been shaped in the American consciousness. This section relies heavily on four texts that represent the seminal works on the history of U.S. higher education: Rudolph's (1962/1990) *The American College & University: A History*, Thelin's (2004) *A History of American Higher Education*, Dorn's (2017) *For the Common Good: A New History of American Higher Education*, and Zelizer's (2011) *Making the University Matter*.

Several of these works were influenced by Laurence Veysey's (1965) canonical text on the history of higher education, *The Emergence of the American University*<sup>2</sup>, in which Veysey highlighted the competing purposes of higher education—practical skills as needed by a workforce, generation of knowledge through research, and the support for liberal culture as demonstrated through the importance of the humanities and classics.

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<sup>2</sup> Veysey's (1965) book provides a historical lens and includes the monographs, correspondence, and archival research from today's top-tier universities. In the book, he relies on the letters and personal papers that describe key changes in higher education, including Gilman's experience at Johns Hopkins University creating the research-centered university and Elliot's experiences at Harvard, particularly those surrounding efficiency and pragmatism in higher education. Veysey's work shows the way that early universities influenced and competed with each other.

Veysey's scholarship provided an understanding of how colleges and universities moved from the earliest purposes of discipline, piety, and unity grounded in an institution's religious roots and laid out a picture of the competing purposes that universities struggle with today.

First, Frederick Rudolph's (1962/1990) classic, *The American College & University: A History*, provides a detailed description of higher education in the United States from an educational, organizational, and societal perspective. Rudolph begins with the founding of Harvard in 1643 and concludes the book with the uncertainty of the 1960s. While Rudolph's classic spends much time on the traditional 4-year institutions, the extracurricular experiences of students, and the importance of college athletics, Rudolph's critical contribution to this study is the way in which he situates the university as an organization (p. 402). Less than 150 years ago, most faculty did not possess a Ph.D. (pp. 395–396), and the Ph.D. requirement did not go unchallenged. In Chapter 19, "Academic Man," Rudolph portrays the rise in research and the corresponding rise of the Ph.D. as the "badge of scholarship" (p. 396). Rudolph questions the Ph.D. degree as an assurance of effective teaching (p. 397) and documents the transition from teaching-centered universities to the more contemporary notion of universities as knowledge producers through research (p. 403).

Next, John R. Thelin's (2004) book, *A History of American Higher Education*, is inspired by his introduction to Rudolph's 1990 reprint and integrates memory analysis to examine higher education history and incorporate the details of community colleges, women's colleges, and historically Black colleges, as well as the four decades between 1960–2000. Thelin's work provides a contemporary examination of social, political, and

economic factors that have influenced the structures of higher education. Between 1945 and 1970, Thelin argued that faculty gained “income, power, prestige, and protections” (p. 310). Thelin’s work documents the transition from a period of economic prosperity and possibility to an eroding academic job market and a shifting perception of faculty and higher education (p. 331). The shift lays the scene for Thelin to call attention to the rise of adjunct faculty or those teaching without tenure, which he contends “heralded an administrative erosion of academic freedom” (p. 332). Thelin’s (2017) later work, *Faculty and the Academic Profession in American Higher Education: Issues and Institutions*, fully addresses the differences between tenured and tenure track and those off the tenure track; this topic is addressed later in this chapter.

Zelizer's (2011) book, *Making the University Matter*, is a collection of scholarly essays on the state of U.S. and global higher education through a communication and cultural studies lens. It uses six themes: teaching and learning, intellectual engagement models, public intellectual work, economies of knowledge, institutionalization and technology, and most broadly, the realities of the contemporary university, to explore the differences between the university as an institution and the university as an idea. Zelizer's book clarifies the importance and relevance of the academic and intellectual work of faculty and the university as an institution. Zelizer's book supports this study’s approach to view faculty and institutions through the Bourdieuan lens by exploring individuals as agents and the structuring role of institutions. Mello and Núñez's essay (as cited in Zelizer, 2011), *Closing the gap between the philosophical and the practical*, introduces the chapter on public intellectuals and illustrates Bourdieu's agency and structures by contrasting the historic public intellectual tradition and the current state of university

labor (pp. 95–96). Mello and Núñez argue that we must move outside the ivory tower to the public for the “demonopolization of knowledge” (p. 96). Like Giroux (2010), Mello and Núñez frame the chapter's four essays using the contradiction of universities as social change producers and universities as maintainers of social hierarchy. While Mello and Núñez argue that faculty should be public intellectuals, the argument “to close the gap between the philosophical and practical” illustrates the tension between the classical liberal arts represented by the philosophical and the vocational represented by the practical (p. 95).

Finally, Charles Dorn’s (2017) recent book, *For the Common Good: A New History of American Higher Education*, uses case studies to examine the role of eleven colleges and universities in shaping the notion of higher education as a public good. Dorn’s examination of higher education probes how these institutions were shaped by social attitudes about civic-mindedness, practicality, commercialism, and affluence (p. 3) and brings the exploration of higher education history into the twenty-first century. Dorn explicitly links higher education’s success in “preparing skilled labor, providing expert knowledge, and conducting scientific research” (p. 227) with the commodification of education. College is no longer seen as a time for excogitating philosophy or history but rather a pathway to a good job and future wealth (and the individual orientation of neoliberalism). Dorn lays the groundwork to explore and understand the influence of the ways in which “colleges and universities have shifted from being influenced by commercial values to becoming corporate entities” (p. 228). To understand how universities moved from being influenced by the commercial to fully commercialized

ventures, the next section outlines the factors and conditions that made possible the commodification of higher education, including current labor conditions.

### ***Higher Education's Path from Moral Compass to Neoliberalism***

In his 2017 book, *The Perfect Mess: The Unlikely Ascendancy of American Higher Education*, David Labaree, a professor and researcher at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education, highlights the differences between the European and American systems. According to Labaree, "What distinguishes American universities from their European counterparts is that they are much less dependent on the state and much more responsive to market pressures from educational consumers" (p. 5). Labaree also highlighted that, unlike the European model, the American higher education system was localized or what Labaree called "a hometown entity" providing relevance as a "cultural and commercial center rather than a sleepy farm town" (p. 25). Labaree's comments illustrate the neoliberal forces that have always been present in American higher education as the earliest colleges had to be innovative in both financing and curriculum (Thelin, 2004, p. 44). The granting of a charter was not a guarantee of state funding (Thelin, 2004, p. 42–44). This next section highlights the ways in which higher education has evolved from moral compass to public good to market commodity focused on the needs of consumers.

"In 1790, . . . the United States had nineteen institutions called colleges or universities," by the 1860s, there were 563, and by 1880, there were 811 colleges and universities (Labaree, 2017, p. 27). The numerous, often small, colleges of this period were typically religiously affiliated as illustrated by Veysey's (1965) statement, "In nineteenth-century America, education and theological orthodoxy almost always went

together” (p. 25). Higher education’s responsibility for socialization illustrates one of the earliest notions of education as a public good and education as commodity.

Socioeconomic class and character were important to the earliest American higher education institutions. In the colonial era, “college rolls listed students not alphabetically but by family rank,” and “academic robes identified socioeconomic position” (Thelin, 2004, p. 23). Colonial colleges were funded by “established wealthy families and frugal colonial governments and [by] representatives of the crown” (Thelin, 2004, p. 26). Colleges were seen as “a solution to shift the socialization function away from families to formal institution[s]” (Thelin, 2004, p. 23). Prior to the Civil War, American colleges were largely driven by the families’ need and desire to ensure the character of students, typically sons, and the nature of that character was largely driven by the religious affiliations of the institution (Labaree, 2017; Rudolph, 1962/1990). “The college of the first half of the nineteenth century was the creature of a relatively simple, agrarian community, a community of settled ways, and of ancient certainties” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 221). As the industrial revolution brought progress, it also brought more leisure time and moved people away from life on the farm. For families that gained wealth through the industrial revolution, a college degree was seen as an indicator of social standing and as way to ensure a future for one’s heirs. Equally important, college was seen as an opportunity to network with children from other established, educated families. Enrollments at colleges and universities grew as families sought a better life for their children, and students experienced college as a coming-of-age experience (Thelin, 2004, p. 254 – 255).

Higher education has long ties to social mobility, and universities have historically been pathways to the middle class. Thelin (2004) observed, “most nineteenth-century colleges were not exclusionist or elite in matters of admission. Entrance requirements were flexible, and tuition charges were low” (p. 69), and colleges were funded by religious philanthropy (p. 15). At Brown University, Francis Wayland led the charge for creating formalized courses of study as necessary “for the benefit of all classes but especially for the rising middle class” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 238), which Labaree (2017) referred to as “social accessibility” or education for all (p. 5). Wayland’s initial attempt to foster “social accessibility” at Brown University failed when the faculty revolted in 1856. The faculty refused to confer “degrees upon the unfortunate” because the purpose of college was “for educating a sterling class of men” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 240) or to maintain “social exclusivity” (Labaree, 2017, p. 5). This view illustrates the duality of colleges as social equalizers and as maintainers of social hierarchy. It also illustrates the contemporary argument about access to higher education, and we see similar words in today’s narratives about who should attend, what preparation is required, and the varying levels of readiness of potential college students. This sentiment illustrates the dialogue and the debate that is present in the class-based ideas surrounding who should go to college and the value/purpose of college.

Following the Civil War, higher education expanded to include women, a practice pioneered by Oberlin College in Ohio (Rudolph, 1962/1990). While coeducation at state universities received public acclaim, college education for women was one of exclusion from most activities and discouragement for certain fields of study (Thelin, 2004, p. 98). At the same time, the Morrill Act of 1862 provided federal support to create land-grant

institutions at the state-level fostering a network of regional colleges with a “popular and practical orientation” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 244). Land grant institutions were designated to each state through the Morrill Act, which provided federal land or allowed proceeds from the sale of federal lands to support a higher education institution. The Morrill Act is widely credited with the creation and funding of “public higher education” (Thelin, 2004, p. 75) and is a precursor to higher education’s current vocational orientation and employment-outcomes focus. At the same time, the academic hierarchy was also expanded in response to growing enrollments and “to the growth of knowledge itself” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 398) through increasing research activities.

The transition from the largely agrarian to the urban and industrial way of life led to “growing awareness that a new age required new training and new preparation” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 248). Again, the past is similar to our present moment as illustrated by recent headlines in both the popular media and higher education publications, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, calling for retraining given changes in technology and continued automation (see Kafka, 2020; Kolowich, 2017).

Between 1865 and 1915, many of the practices that we think of as defining characteristics of American higher education became common, including assignment of letter grades; topics organized around departments; major course requirements and elective or optional courses; the credit hour; and even the appropriate credential for faculty (Rudolph 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004, Veysey, 1965). By 1910, higher education tiers were already beginning to form with the definition of the “standard American university” or S.A.U. (Thelin, 2004, p. 111). The S.A.U. institutions represented maturity and shared “form, structure, mission, and vocabulary” (p. 111). During this period, the

top American higher education institutions were represented by membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU), which emphasized research. The AAU began in 1900 with 14 members: Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Columbia University, University of Chicago, University of California, Clark University, Cornell University, Catholic University, University of Michigan, Stanford University, University of Wisconsin, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University (Thelin, 2004, p. 110). Currently, the AAU (n.d.) remains exclusive with only 65 members.

Universities also began to shift the expectations for faculty from solely teaching to teaching and research. In the early 1900s, the college professor experienced low pay and a heavy teaching load of four to five courses per semester plus additional responsibilities for service, including student advising and hosting campus guest speakers and visitors. Professors of this era did not have specific education requirements. While our understanding of effective teaching and best practices has developed over time, teaching of this era was lecture based and did not involve discussion, and expectations for research or publication were limited (Thelin, 2004, p. 222). “A professor at a small Midwestern college made about \$1,100<sup>3</sup> per year in 1905 . . . A professor’s family relied on cheap cuts from the butcher and a vegetable garden to make ends meet” (Thelin, 2004, p. 158). As universities moved from teaching to knowledge generation,<sup>4</sup> the demand for faculty with Ph.D. s escalated and so began the era of specialization and “splintering of

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<sup>3</sup> Using an inflation calculator, \$1,100 in 1905 is equivalent in purchasing power to \$30,640 in 2017 United States dollars.

<sup>4</sup> In the early 1900s, Johns Hopkins University led the charge in de-emphasizing teaching and prioritizing research and specialization as necessary elements of the modern university (Rudolph, 1962/1990, pp. 403–405).

subject areas” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 399). The early 1900s signaled the earliest transition to the era of what is now commonly termed as “publish or perish” for faculty. The “publish or perish” reality is still present today for nearly all tenured and tenure track faculty.

Following World War I, colleges and universities experienced a building boom supported by increased federal research dollars, student tuition, and, in some cases, state support. Increased enrollments were driven by the idea that college was a pathway to a profession (Labaree, 2017, p. 64). Colleges created “an enjoyable social experience—one that prospective students would eagerly anticipate, enrolled students would revel in, and alumni would remember fondly for years afterward . . . college had become a destination” (Labaree, 2017, pp. 64–65). “The nation was edging toward a commitment to mass higher education” (Thelin, 2004, p. 205), and the early influences of standardization, as exemplified by the credit hour, became present<sup>5</sup>. Higher education was impacted by the historical events of 1921–1955: a stock market crash, the Great Depression, and World War II. It was during this time that the corporate ethos began to infiltrate higher education with discussions of efficiency (Thelin, 2004, p. 242). A counterpoint to this corporate influence came directly from faculty. In 1940, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) with the Association of American Colleges issued the Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. Faculty began drafting the principles in 1925. The Association of American Colleges

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<sup>5</sup> Veysey (1965) documented the ways in which many of these standardizations began at one institution and were adopted by others. Veysey argued that the “competitive style of American academic development has sometimes been credited with having fueled innovation and fluidity” (p. 330). In this way, competition fueled standardization.

ratified the Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure in 1940. The ratified version included the concept of academic freedom, which provided protections for faculty related to speech in the classroom, the selection of research topics, and opinions expressed as a citizen. The Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure also established the guidelines of a maximum probationary period of 7 years for tenure. Tenure is “the terms of professorial office that would safeguard both the principles of academic freedom and the professor at his work” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 415). The formalization of these principles and the guidelines of tenure professionalized the academic labor of faculty.

Completion rates for doctoral programs increased dramatically during the early 1960s, yet one-third of faculty openings remained unfilled (Angulo, 2018, p. 5). Unmet capacity for faculty labor increased pay and benefits for full-time faculty. University-based research with external funding and increasing enrollments further accelerated pay for full-time faculty. Many consider the 1960s to be the golden age of higher education marked by the growth of college campuses, including faculty and facilities, and the expanding investment in research (Dorn, 2017; Thelin, 2004, 2017; Tirelli, 1997)<sup>6</sup>.

### *The Rise of Research*

Two of the most significant changes to higher education in the twentieth century are represented by the demand for university-based research during World War II and the 1944 Serviceman’s Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) (Thelin, 2004). The demands for university research provided a way to generate significant revenue and furthered the

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<sup>6</sup> The history of 1960s higher education venerates university research and the increased access to higher education but fails to address the underlying social issues and inequities as represented by the stratification of institutions and faculty labor.

neoliberal influence. In 1960, higher education received federal research funding or sponsored research projects totaling “\$1.5 billion from the federal government—a hundred-fold increase in twenty years” (Thelin, 2004, p. 278). Research imperatives and the requisite funding transformed both salaries and teaching loads for faculty. These imperatives also furthered the creation of disciplinary departments as research became more specialized. As research imperatives and funding increased, faculty salary and teaching load were determined by the ability to get sponsored research dollars (Thelin, 2004, p. 278). At the same time, the G.I. Bill provided returning veterans with access to money for education and expanded college enrollment, particularly from lower and middle classes. Availability of research dollars and growth in student enrollments ushered permanent changes to expectations for faculty productivity measures and introduced the conditions that led to the expanding reliance on adjunct faculty (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, pp. 22 - 23).

The passage of the 1965 Higher Education Act (HEA) provided grants and loans for higher education and “accelerated the PhD enrollment growth” (Angulo, 2018, p. 7). While the increased enrollment and research funding laid the groundwork, the number of graduating Ph.D. s quickly exceeded the available faculty positions. This increase launched a period of overproduction of Ph.D. s, and that overproduction continues today. Prior to 1960, there was close alignment between graduating Ph.D. s and available faculty positions (Angulo, 2018, p. 5). Overproduction of Ph.D. s and expanding enrollments created the conditions for adjunct labor and a transition to a faculty labor market with many willing to teach part-time or on contracts (Angulo, 2018, p. 8).

The makeup of university employees continued to shift following the 1970s HEA reauthorization, which expanded student grants and loans and made college more accessible to students, particularly those from low-income families and those who were the first generation in their families to attend college. At the same time, universities increased noninstructional staff to administer these new student enrollments. “Noninstructional staff increased by more than 600 percent nationwide between the 1950s (fewer than 250,000) and the late 1980s (more than 1.5 million)” (Angulo, 2018, p. 7). Higher education’s shift from teaching to research coupled with the reduction in government funding caused by the 1970s fiscal crisis led to the rise of the corporate or administrative university. During this time, university leadership was eager to identify alternatives to “their single biggest budget expenditure: full-time, tenured professors” (Angulo, 2018, p. 8). The large pool of new Ph.D. s was willing to take temporary part-time faculty positions, ensuring that “the age of the adjunct was underway” (Angulo, 2018, p. 9).

### **Faculty (and Adjunct Faculty) in Higher Education**

In this section, I introduce the ways in which departmentalization has altered the faculty experience, the demands and expectations for faculty related to research and measures of productivity, and the role of academic freedom and tenure. While I explore the economics of higher education later in this chapter, it is important to note that for colleges and universities the “largest budget item is the cost of faculty” and academic departments have responded by identifying “less costly ways to deliver the curriculum” (Fethke & Policano, 2012, p. 17). While cost-reduction is often cited as a driver for the

use of adjuncts, departmentalization, productivity measures, and preparing students for the workforce are three additional ways to understand the increased reliance on adjuncts.

Mirroring the specialization happening in business, departmentalization took hold in the late nineteenth century and evolved from the “proliferation of knowledge” and growing enrollments, which required multiple faculty to cover a topic (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 399). “The rise of the department was a sign of both the growing size of the institution and the growing emphasis on intellectual specialization” (Labaree, 2017, p. 56). Specialization also fostered the free elective system allowing faculty to teach courses related to specific areas of interest or research. Specialization and departmentalization resulted in a “splintering of subject areas” and shifted faculty alignment to a field of study rather than institutional loyalty, fostering competition, a key element of neoliberalism (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 399). In addition, specialization and departmentalization also fostered academic hierarchy.

As faculty roles professionalized, specialized, and became research-oriented, faculty loyalty moved from the institution to the societies and the professional associations representing the discipline (Rudolph, 1962/1990, pp. 405-407). This specialization is demonstrated using two examples of scholarly societies commonly associated with media and communication faculty, the National Communication Association (NCA (n.d.) founded in 1914 and the International Communication

Association (ICA, n.d.)<sup>7</sup> founded in 1950. To illustrate specialization and the “splintering of subject areas” in media and communication, note that NCA (n.d.) has 49 divisions, seven sections, and six caucuses. According to the website, NCA divisions represent “colleagues who share an interest in an area of substantive inquiry,” while sections reflect “professional settings” and final caucuses represent demographic or socially defined interests. Like NCA, ICA (n.d.) represents the departmentalization and specialization of its faculty members with 24 divisions and 9 interest groups.

### *Types of Faculty Position*

Thelin (2017) defines nine types of faculty positions: full, associate, assistant, research, clinical, lecturers, instructors, adjuncts, and teaching assistants (pp. 107–109). Full, associate, and assistant professor categories represent what we traditionally think of as the tenure track with a full professorship representing the highest level of achievement for faculty. Research and clinical categories are essential to research universities and institutions associated with medical, dental, or other health-related or service-oriented disciplines (Thelin, 2017, p. 108). Lecturers, also referred to as non-tenure track (NTT) faculty, usually have a term contract, ranging from 1 to 5 years along with a full-course load. Lecturers are “not eligible for tenure without special allowance by the dean or provost” (Thelin, 2017, p. 108). Teaching assistants (TAs) are graduate students who support university teaching. TAs are occasionally included in counts of part-time teaching staff, but most often they are counted separately. Thelin (2017) noted, “TAs

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<sup>7</sup> ICA was originally founded as the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC) and illustrates the splintering of professional associations as it was founded to ensure a community of scholarship for basic communication or public speaking rather than rhetoric (ICA, n.d.).

have sometimes been characterized as the academic profession's equivalent of apprentices and/or indentured servants" (p. 109). Thelin (2017) uses the term instructor to describe "a catch-all category for limited-term appointments" (p. 108). Adjuncts are the final category of faculty. For adjunct faculty, limited-term contracts "lead to piecemeal work so that many adjunct faculty cobble together a slate of courses at different institutions" with limited security and a lack of long-term commitments (Thelin, 2017, pp. 108–109).

Research expectations vary based on the type of higher education institution. At research universities, research is central to the labor of tenured and tenure track faculty (full, associate, and assistant professors) and faculty use research to "maintain and build intellectual capital" (Bowen & Schuster, 1986, p. 69). In media and communication, this requires faculty to keep up with the field and with the continually evolving technology. Bowen and Schuster observed, "Keeping up is done partly in connection with preparing for teaching, partly as a byproduct of specific research projects, but mainly through the constant study of the literature and the learning of new skills" (p. 69). Pre-tenure faculty experience the keeping up through the pressure of "publish or perish" as represented by funding and publications. This fosters a "market model of the university" through the "academic star system . . . which stratifies faculty the same way it does institutions, bidding up the pay and perks of the stars in the pursuit of individual genius and academic distinction" (Labaree, 2017, p. 21). This illustrates individualism which is a key component of the neoliberal influence in higher education.

Labaree (2017) uses institutional hierarchy and competition to illuminate institutions' stratification through faculty educated at top-tier institutions and hired at lower-tier institutions. Labaree noted,

A hefty proportion of faculty in third-tier universities are graduates of doctoral programs from first-tier universities,” and while many hope “to move up the ladder and return to a position at a research university . . . the math clearly shows that this is unlikely, a second best option is to increase the liberal content and graduate orientation of the institution they are in (pp. 90–91).

In this way, research is prioritized even at third-tier or teaching-intensive universities.

### *Academic Freedom and Tenure*

Academic freedom and tenure are structured to provide faculty members with the ability to both teach and conduct research on ideas and concepts without fear of retribution or loss of employment. Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) contend that academic freedom is central to faculty satisfaction and is “a major hallmark of faculty work” (p. 227). Academic freedom came to be “during a time when academicians were acutely aware of the disjunction between society and its institutions” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 410). This sentiment resulted in colleges and universities embracing academic freedom as “a climate in which the scientific point of view itself was fundamental” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 412). This climate provided a space for faculty to explore areas of personal or individualized interest through experiments and fostered a culture of “continuous inquiry and continuous verification” on college campuses (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 412). Academic freedom is fully achieved with tenure. Tenure is “the terms of professorial office, that . . . safeguard both the principles of academic freedom and the professor at his work” (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 415). While it varies by institution, tenure is conferred when a faculty member achieves measures of performance

centered around the three pillars of higher education: teaching, research, and service. Measures may include published and grant-funded research, teaching quality, and service, either administrative within the department or college or community-based. Tenure provides a protection for faculty through a university's commitment to continuous employment through retirement except in cases of dismissal for cause or financial exigency. Financial exigency addresses the financial matters of a college or university and is one way that colleges and universities can dismiss tenured faculty. It is important to note that there is not one standard definition or established criteria of financial exigency (Garland, 1983).

### *Adjunct Faculty and Academic Precarity*

Adjunct faculty or contingent faculty serve on contracts that are semester-based or fixed-term and do not have the same rights and privileges of academic freedom as their tenured and tenure track colleagues. New words have been created to describe the adjunct situation and the use of adjunct faculty, including corporatization, adjunctification, and "higher education precariat" (Standing, 2011). According to Jenkins (2014), the term adjunctification has been used since 2000 in articles on the humanities job market and in a 2002 speech by Linda Collins, who was serving as the president of the California Community Colleges' Academic Senate. First used by French sociologists, the precariat concept describes temporary or seasonal, often agricultural, workers (Standing, 2011, p. 15). The connection to an agricultural past helps explain Deresiewicz's (2011) use of the phrase, "academic lettuce-pickers," to describe the work and working conditions of adjunct faculty. While tenured and tenure track faculty have tenure and academic freedom, many adjunct faculty exist within a system of academic precarity. This section

will briefly describe the current reliance on adjunct faculty and Tuckman's (1978) categories of adjunct faculty.

One of the challenges in clearly understanding the role and impact of adjunct faculty in higher education is the variety of ways that we define who is and is not an adjunct. As illustrated by Thelin's (2017) profile of the faculty profession, there are many titles that can be used to describe adjunct faculty: lecturer, instructor, sessional, and even TA. The question of whether graduate students are included in counts and descriptions of adjunct faculty is illustrated by the U.S. Department of Education's *Mobile Digest of Education Statistics* (Snyder, 2018, p. 23). In describing college staff, Snyder (2018) notes that approximately "3.9 million people were employed in colleges and universities in the fall of 2016, including 1.5 million faculty, 0.4 million graduate assistants, and 2.0 million other staff" (p. 23). The 1.5 million faculty is then broken down into 816,000 full-time and 733,000 part-time (Snyder, 2018, p. 23). The 376,000 graduate assistants are counted separately (Snyder, 2018, p. 23).

Tuckman (1978) was one of the earliest scholars to characterize and categorize the types of adjunct faculty. Although his descriptions of the types of adjunct faculty are more than 40 years old, they still resonate with the current adjunct landscape. Tuckman broadly defined two types of adjunct faculty: the flexibility seeker and the work seeker. His full taxonomy consists of seven categories: "semiretired", students, "Hopeful Full-Timers", "Full-Mooners", "Homeworkers", "Part-Mooners", and "Part-Unknowners" (p. 307). Tuckman described the "semiretireds" as "ex-full-time academics who have scaled down their activities to a part-time basis, ex-full-timers outside of academe. . . .and those who have taught part-time during their entire career" (p. 307). Tuckman noted that the

“semiretireds” are “less concerned about the future of their job prospects” (p. 307). The “Full-Mooners” include those who have full-time jobs and moonlight as adjuncts; the “Homeworkers” include those with home responsibilities who use adjunct work for flexibility; “Part-Mooners” are those with other part-time work who moonlight as an adjunct; and “Part-Unknowners” encompass all others (p. 307). Gappa and Leslie’s (1993) study of part-time faculty used Tuckman’s categories and found the typology was still relevant with the caveat that “patterns of work experience and motivation [were] too complex to fit into the narrow categories of Tuckman’s typology” (p. 47).

Gappa and Leslie (1993) extended Tuckman’s typology with three changes: semiretireds to “career enders”; hopeful full-timers to “aspiring academics”; and “freelancers” to capture what Tuckman (1978) described as part-unknowners, part-mooners, and homeworkers. The change from semiretireds to “career enders” was made to better describe those who were “already fully retired and those in transition from well-established careers (mostly outside of higher education)” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 47). The aspiring academics label was used to better describe the hopeful full-timers’ desire “not necessarily to teach full-time but to be fully participating, recognized, and rewarded members of the faculty with a status at least similar to that currently associated with the tenure track or tenured faculty” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 48). Finally, Gappa and Leslie explained that “Freelancers are part-time faculty in higher education by choice; they are not aspiring academics” (p. 49).

Gappa and Leslie’s landmark study of adjunct faculty included site visits to eighteen colleges and universities and interviews with administrators, tenured faculty, and part-time faculty (p. xii). According to Google Scholar, Gappa and Leslie’s study has

been cited over 970 times including by many of the works used in this dissertation.

Gappa and Leslie (1993) study ends with as a call to action to “end the . . . bifurcated system” (p. 3) and they were among the first to note that part-time faculty were teaching a significant portion of the lower-division level undergraduate education courses (p. 12).

In their book, *Rethinking Faculty Work*, Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) present a picture of faculty work in three parts including both full-time and part-time academic labor. Part One is focused on the context of higher education in the early 2000s. Part Two provides a framework of respect built around five elements: collegiality, employment equity, academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility, and professional growth. Curnalia and Mermer’s (2018) article appears to leverage elements of this framework for their article on respect and voice in communication departments. Part Three concludes the book with detailed recommendations on how to apply the framework.

Cross and Goldenberg (2009) validated Gappa and Leslie’s (1993) finding that adjunct faculty were teaching increasing amounts of introductory undergraduate courses and extended their earlier works by outlining the differences in how full-time tenure track and adjunct faculty are hired. Cross and Goldenberg described tenure track hiring “as a long and arduous process . . . [requiring] national searches” with negotiations drawn out over weeks or months (p. 68). In contrast, adjunct faculty searches were often local and described as occurring more quickly, “ad hoc in nature, and may be started and completed during the month or even the week before classes begin” (Cross & Goldenberg, 2009, pp. 68–69). While the time frame for adjunct faculty searches may be similar across disciplines, schools of media and communication rely on adjunct faculty who are also practicing professionals in the field to teach vocationally oriented skills and

technology courses. Schools of media and communication's reliance on practitioners/professionals may reveal differences in the labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty, particularly around expectations and potential for exploitation.

More than 25 years ago, Gappa and Leslie (1993) stated, "Part-time faculty come from enormously varied backgrounds and life situations. They need a far more flexible set of options, rewards, incentives, and recognitions for their work" (p. 63). This section briefly summarizes the changes proposed by Gappa and Leslie (1993), Lyons's (2007) collection of best practices for supporting adjunct faculty, and finally Gehrke and Kezar's (2015) study of the values of 264 academic deans. Gappa and Leslie outlined 43 recommended practices organized by three themes: (1) "use part-time faculty for explicit educational purposes" (p. 283), (2) use and "develop . . . fair employment practices" (p. 283), and (3) "help part-time faculty grow and develop" by investing in professional development (p. 284). Following Gappa and Leslie's charge to develop part-time faculty, Lyons's (2007) book outlined 15 practices including providing templates for surveys, outlines for orientation, and sample syllabi for courses on instructor effectiveness. Gehrke and Kezar (2015) focused on the opinions and values of senior academic leadership to develop their list of five practices and policies that support non-tenure track faculty (NTT), including adjuncts: (1) orientation, (2) materials and resources to teach, (3) mentoring, (4) administrative support, and (5) multiyear contracts. These diverse and varied approaches provided a framework to understand the ways in which adjunct faculty at each site are supported.

## Higher Education Economics

As context for this section, I revisit two concepts that were covered earlier, the Morrill Act and state appropriations. The Morrill Act was largely responsible for creating the state-based public universities. The creation of public universities was fueled by state appropriations, the money provided to the university by state government (Labaree, 2017, pp. 6–8). State appropriations served as a subsidy or investment in the public good of education. The reliance on state appropriations has created what Fethke and Policano (2012) refer to as “high subsidy–low tuition” model for universities (p. 11). State appropriations for universities have been gradually declining as states have budgetary competition for other priorities and unfunded federal mandates, and as taxpayers call for lower state taxes. Illustrating the declining support for public higher education, Labaree (2017) stated, “By 2013, public institutions of higher education received about 21 percent of their funds from state appropriations, with another 16 percent from the federal government” (p. 7). “Between 2007–2008 and 2013–2014, state funding for public colleges and universities, per full-time equivalent student, decreased by an average of 23% across the United States” (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016, p. 401). As a result, universities had to identify revenue sources to replace the reduction in state support. In many cases, this resulted in increasing tuition and shifting more of the cost burden to students.

Reductions in federal, state, and local government support resulted in universities becoming increasingly dependent on tuition revenue and for highly tuition-dependent institutions, reductions can result in closures or mergers (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016, p. 277). Tuition-dependence results in changes to programs offered and the human

resources employed to offer the programs. Toutkoushian and Paulsen (2016) contend, “These revenue and human resource constraints are not independent; finances affect the quantity and quality of human resources that can be employed by an institution” (p. 277). In Toutkoushian and Paulsen’s comment, it is easy to see the economic drivers that drive reliance on adjunct faculty and the shifts to increase popular academic offerings. Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) observed, “Faced with huge public financing reductions, universities are increasingly focused on technical training rather than on creating informed and engaged democratic citizens” (p. 135). Dale and Hyslop-Margison harken back to Dewey (1938/1963) and provide the transition to looking at higher education from a supply and demand perspective<sup>8</sup>.

The 2019 State Higher Education Finance (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2020) report provides current context for state appropriations of public higher education funding and shows that universities are receiving less state support and students are covering more of the costs. “Nationally, public institutions received an average of \$8,196 in education appropriations per FTE” (SHEF, 2020, p. 8). FTE stands for full-time equivalent and is used to model enrollment data by converting “student credit hours to full-time academic year students” (p. 8). In Pennsylvania, the report stated that 93.3% of state funding for higher education comes from state tax appropriations (p. 15). In Pennsylvania, the public higher education appropriation per FTE in constant adjusted dollars was \$6,676 in 2009 compared to \$4,477 in 2019 (p. 37).

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<sup>8</sup> While beyond the scope of this dissertation, there are increasing demographic changes predicted over the next five years. These changes will likely have a significant impact as there will be fewer enrollments of traditional 18-24 year old undergraduates.

This is significantly less than the national average of \$8,196 (p. 25). This may help to understand another trend, which is the increase in the share of costs that students are expected to pay. According to the report, “Over the last 25 years, the U.S. average student share increased 14.7 percentage points from 31.3 percent in 1994 to 46 percent in 2019” (p. 29). This funding change and a loss of state support for higher education results in universities becoming increasingly dependent on tuition revenue.

Robert Toutkoushian and Michael Paulsen’s (2016) book, *Economics of Higher Education*, provides the economic perspective to explain the concepts of supply and demand in a higher education context. This book provides a foundational perspective on higher education economics with relevance for the economist, the academic, and the lay person (p. 13). Especially important to this study is the explication of the academic labor market. “In academic labor markets for faculty, . . . colleges and universities are the buyers (demanders) of faculty labor, while individuals with the necessary skills for faculty work are the sellers (suppliers) of faculty labor” (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016, p. 345). The labor market for full-time tenure track faculty is national, while the adjunct faculty labor market is local or regional (Labaree, 2017; Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016). The next section provides an overview of neoliberalism in higher education, which, when combined with the academic labor market, provides some contextualization for the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty.

Responsibility centered budgeting, also known as responsibility centered management (RCM) is a decentralized budgeting model (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016; Whalen, 1991). Indiana University is credited as the first public institution to adopt a decentralized budget process (Whalen, 1991). Both public and private higher education

institutions are implementing or have implemented versions of RCM (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016). In RCM, the costs of services such as information technology, library, campus safety, and student counseling are aggregated and distributed to each academic unit based on use, typically number of students (Whalen, 1991). RCM moves the distribution and allocation of resources to each academic unit and allows the academic unit to make decisions on how to increase income or reduce costs (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016; Whalen, 1991). Implementations of RCM vary widely based on institutional mission and priorities. In the RCM model, academic units become profit and loss centers with the goal of maximizing profit, which is a core tenet of neoliberalism and may partially explain the increased reliance on adjunct faculty.

The use of RCM budget models, the increased reliance on tuition revenue, and the decline in state support of higher education has resulted in entrepreneurship within higher education. Toutkoushian and Paulsen (2016) noted,

Although the burden for paying for college has been steadily shifting towards students over time, there is still a substantial amount of subsidization occurring in postsecondary education. Nearly four out of every five dollars received by 4-year public institutions, for example, are from sources other than the tuition and fees from students and their families. (p. 249)

Since 2008, many state legislatures have accepted tuition increases, “abandoning the philosophy that higher education is primarily a social responsibility” (Fethke & Policano, 2012, p. 13). “With declining public support, the increased use of more part-time and adjunct faculty, who represent variable costs, can be at least partially explained by the reluctance of public universities to accept the fixed-cost implications of tenure” (Fethke & Policano, 2012, p. 124). Before we move on to the examination of neoliberalism in

higher education, it is important to discuss the concept of higher education as public good.

### ***Higher Education as Public Good***

In their book, *End of Academic Freedom: The Coming Obliteration of the Core Purpose of the University*, Bowen, Schwartz, and Camp (2014) stated, “Ideas and the educational institutions within which they are created, developed, preserved, communicated, and deployed in an effort to improve the quality of human thought and action constitute the very lifeblood of society” (p. 198). If we believe Bowen et al. (2014) and Dewey (1938/1963) that educational institutions constitute an important part of society, then it is critical to examine how higher education has changed as a result of neoliberal influences. This examination allows for the broader understanding of the societal impact of neoliberalism, particularly how higher education may be shifting from public good to private good. If we use the context of adjunct labor conditions, it may be possible to understand the declining support for public higher education and to reveal aspects of broader social class conflicts.

A public good is government-funded, societal support that benefits everyone regardless of ability to pay, providing equal and open access to all. Samuelson (1954) was one of the earliest economists to describe public goods' specific characteristics as non-rivalrous and non-excludable (p. 387). Non-rivalrous refers to the factor of being able to be consumed by multiple people without being depleted, and non-excludable describes that the benefit of a good is not confined to specific individuals (Marginson, 2011, p. 415). An example of non-rivalrous might be an online lecture posted to YouTube, and an example of non-excludable might be public safety on a university

campus. When goods are neither non-excludable nor non-rivalrous, they are considered private goods. Marginson (2011) argues, "the most important public goods produced in higher education are universal knowledge and information" (p. 416). Marginson then outlines how higher education is and is not a public good. This quote illustrates Marginson's thinking about the public good versus private good for teaching:

Teaching and learning contain public good aspects: the knowledge learnt; general education unrewarded in labour markets that contributes to a shared knowledge base; education understood as a citizen entitlement to the common culture and to social opportunity; and the contribution of higher education to social tolerance and international understanding. Teaching and learning also carry private good aspects: scarce credentials, from exclusive higher education institutions, providing entry to income-generating professions (p. 426).

In this example, it is clear how teaching generally and adjunct labor specifically "is nicely poised between public and private purposes" (Marginson, 2011, p. 427). The public good is illustrated by those theoretical elements of the curriculum related to citizenry that will be reviewed in the National Communication Association (NCA) Learning Outcomes in Chapter 3. Illustrating the private, media and communication adjuncts are often hired to teach vocationally oriented technologies and tools which lead to income-generating careers.

Neoliberalism does not deny the need for a public good but instead argues that to maximize the public good, society must increase "the reach and frequency of market transactions . . . and bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). In other words, the public good is made possible through profits generated in the market.

## Neoliberalism in Higher Education

Attacks on academic freedom, increased pressure for productivity as measured by funded research, and the increased reliance on a flexible, contingent, and on-demand workforce of adjunct labor are indicators of the neoliberal influence. Neoliberalism “has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). This section begins with a brief definition of neoliberalism. Finally, this section concludes with the ways in which higher education practices surrounding adjunct labor enable and support notions of neoliberalism and corporatization.

In addressing the question of what neoliberalism is, economists and political scientists have considered several explanations that represent the complexity of understanding and the difficulty of applying neoliberalism as a concept. Venugopal (2015) argues that use of the term, neoliberalism, has two distinct periods (p. 168). Until the 1970s, neoliberalism was used as a signifier of economic ideas grounded in the Chicago school of thought, as exemplified by Friedrich Hayek, an Austrian-British economist and philosopher, who believed the free market was the best way to allocate resources, and government intervention should be minimal (Venugopal, 2015, pp. 167–168). In the 1980s, the term neoliberalism was used “to describe . . . market deregulation, privatization, and welfare state withdrawal” (Venugopal, 2015, p. 168).

Venugopal argues that this shift resulted in the term neoliberalism moving beyond economic policy models to include “political, ideological [and] cultural . . . phenomenon” (p. 168). As Venugopal noted, this expansion has resulted in “terminological inconsistency, weak definitions, and conceptual drift” (p. 171). This variability and

inconsistency can make it difficult to precisely locate neoliberalism as a concept. While Venugopal argued that a shortcoming of Harvey's (2005) seminal work, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, is the lack of "contemporary academic work of what it considers to be neoliberal theory" (p. 181), I believe that Harvey's book delivers a framework and a definition to ground this study and examine neoliberalism in the higher education context.

David Harvey is a British economic geographer who has written extensively on capitalism and contributed to Marxist theories that illustrate how capitalism ensures its own reproduction. He does this most clearly in his book, *Social Justice and the City*, originally published in 1973 and revised in a second edition in 2009. Harvey (2009) stated, "capitalism is forever increasing its productive capacity" (p. 139). Production is at the center of capitalism, and as Toutkoushian and Paulsen (2016) suggested, "Together with land and capital, labor is viewed as one of the three essential factors of production" (p. 344). While land may appear less relevant in the current context, land and buildings represent what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as objectified cultural capital<sup>9</sup>. I would extend Toutkoushian and Paulsen's use of land to resources to better capture knowledge production factors in higher education. This extension would include the land of the campus, the buildings, the classrooms within the buildings, the technology within the classrooms, the library and the related books, journals, and digital resources, as well as the technology of the institution itself, such as educational technology, student

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<sup>9</sup> Land, particularly the idea of a college quad, is essential to the college experience (Thelin, 2017). Colleges often exist in isolation from the surrounding community and the coming-of-age experience relies on the insular but isolated college campus. In this insular world of the college campus, the rites of passage and lifelong affinity to alma mater are cultivated.

information systems, human resource systems, and so forth. The preceding short list of physical and digital resources represents the industriousness of capitalism within the university's fabric and thus reveals the neoliberal university.

Earlier I argued that universities are producers of knowledge and that this knowledge production occurs through research and teaching. In order to consider neoliberalism in the university-context, it is necessary to examine all aspects of this productive capacity and this includes classrooms, technology, and labor of knowledge production. This was accomplished by considering the classrooms and educational technology involved in teaching as part of the broader analysis of the labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty.

Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as both a theory and a state-supported framework that liberates “entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” (p. 2). The concept of neoliberalism is complex and can emphasize a variety of economic, political, and societal elements. In the context of higher education, I have adapted Harvey’s (2005) definition of neoliberalism. For the purpose of this research, I am defining neoliberalism in higher education as a set of practices that favors revenue generation and individual rights, encouraging globalization as a path to expansion over and above services delivered as a public good. My higher education adaptation of Harvey’s (2005) neoliberalism definition focused the examination of labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty to highlight the ways in which the increased reliance on adjunct faculty supports the shift from higher education as public good to higher education as profit center. I have included individual rights as directly related to teaching

practice and also as associated with academic freedom for tenured and tenure track faculty.

The social structures of corporatization and neoliberalism are impacting all faculty, including tenured, tenure track, full-time non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty. The social structures are manifested in the “orienting practices” or how we experience and engage in the world around us (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466). Productivity is an “orienting practice” of neoliberalism and is ever present in higher education. As Bourdieu (1984) notes, “agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world . . . [the] internalized, ‘embodied’ social structures” (p. 468). Berg and Seeber (2016) explore the neoliberal influence of productivity pressures in their work, *The Slow Professor*, commenting, “Corporatization not only has prioritized certain areas of research above others but also has infiltrated the ways in which all of us . . . conduct our research and the way we think about research” (p. 14). Berg and Seeber quoting Deresiewicz noted, “academic labor is becoming like every other part of the American workforce: cowed, harried, docile, [and] disempowered” (p. 3).

Berg and Seeber (2016) extend the workplace productivity example to illustrate how the university’s embodied social structures of productivity constrain individual agency. Referencing the research of Martela, Berg and Seeber (2016) describe how collegiality has shifted to instrumentalize relationships as either “resources or hindrances” (p. 80). Like Berg and Seeber (2016), Foust and Lair (2016) call attention to the pressures faced by faculty in the communication discipline,

Graduates who find jobs as teaching-intensive, semipermanent lecturers find themselves facing a structural inequity because they are perceived as not really

researchers, yet without time to engage in the research that would enhance their professional cachet. Assistant professors face demands to publish in entrepreneurial conformity to their research agenda, often without meaningful mentorship from tenured colleagues stretched thin by the “black hole” of service (p. 115).

While acknowledging that the institutional type complicates these observations, Foust and Lair observed that contingent faculty face all of these issues, as well as the lack of health insurance and job security (p. 115). Bourdieu (1984) noted,

All the agents in a given social formation share a set of basic perceptual schemes, which receive the beginnings of objectification in the pairs of antagonistic adjectives commonly used to classify and qualify persons or objects in . . . varied areas of practice” (p. 468).

Bourdieu continues this description of qualification noting that each of these sets work as antonym pairs and he provides examples such as “high/low” and “brilliant/dull” (p. 468).

If we use Bourdieu’s classification system with an antonym pair, the antagonistic pair illustrated here is resource and hindrance. Unlike Bourdieu’s examples of adjectives, I have chosen to keep the words as nouns, to be consistent Berg and Seeber’s (2016) description of collegial relationships. This example reveals the doxa of productivity where each relationship is to be evaluated using the antonym pair of resource or hindrance. This returns us to the neoliberal influences responsible for valuing individual output over collegiality and viewing interactions as instruments of productivity.

The acceptance of market forces and “market action” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3) has changed the ways in which American society views and values labor and can be seen most clearly through the rise of the gig economy. Harvey (2005) contends that neoliberalism’s encroachment can be seen in government services; healthcare; and education, both K–12 and higher education. For education, the neoliberal influence has altered our conception and demands of education for all to one where education is a

market commodity that is no different than any other purchase. An exemplar of higher education as a market commodity is the recent college admissions scandal where wealthy families paid to have children admitted to prestigious colleges and universities (Gluckman, 2019). In the case of higher education, it has moved from a place that prepared an “engaged citizenry” (Dewey, 1938/1963) to a place focused on preparing workers for the production machine (Giroux, 2010).

The neoliberal influence in higher education is not new. Some of the earliest neoliberal influences began with the land-grant colleges of the mid-19th century (Tirelli, 2014, p. 523). More recently, Slaughter and Rhoades (2000) argue, “public colleges and universities are exemplars of neoliberalism” and are a market commodity driven by market forces, individual rights, and globalization (p. 73). Slaughter and Rhoades (2000) use the term “academic capitalism” to describe the move from higher education as a government-funded public good toward the university as a business venture with the goal of making money.

Jessop (2018) extrapolates the idea through his description of a five-stage model of academic capitalism: (1) commercialization and production of products, (2) Growing capital through unrestricted competition fueled by product profits, (3) disaggregation of labor and production and the commodification of intellectual labor, (4) investment capital or venture capital enters the market focused on areas of potential profit, and (5) full privatization and immersion into the “finance-dominated system” in which education and research success are evaluated based on profitability (pp. 105–106). Commercialization and production are observed with university offices of technology transfer which are responsible for translating research into marketable and sellable products. Accumulated

capital is observed in the billion-dollar endowments of the elite universities and the creation of high-enrollment graduate programs. Commodification of intellectual labor occurs through productivity measures placed on tenured/tenure track faculty and the increased reliance on contractual teaching labor. I believe we have reached stage four of Jessop's model and stage five has started with the proliferation of for-profit universities. Some would argue that corporate models, including adoption of responsibility centered management (RCM) budget approaches, push all universities closer to stage five<sup>10</sup>.

RCM as a budget model supports academic capitalism and encourages academic units to engage in entrepreneurial activities to generate profit. Jessop's explanation of academic capitalism highlights the potential for abuse and predation by higher education institutions, including the exploitation of a labor force of their own production. The increased requirements for funded research as part of tenure decisions, the expanded role of technology transfer in the higher education landscape, and the growing debt service for new facilities represent the commercialization and capitalization stages of Jessop's model. The rise of employment-based training programs, such as skills-based graduate certificates, coding boot camps and technology-driven workforce development organizations that are fueled by venture capital as competitors to higher education illustrate Jessop's financialization stage. According to Jessop (2018), the capitalization and commodification of intellectual labor stage impacts universities' role in the creation and distribution of knowledge by prioritizing research that can be funded by external

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<sup>10</sup> Purdue University's 2019 acquisition of Kaplan University, a large, for-profit, online college, forewarns of Jessop's (2018) stage five. A more recent example is the University of Arizona's merger with Ashford University, an online university owned by a for-profit company listed on the NASDAQ (Carey, August 11, 2020).

organizations or the U.S. federal government. At the same time, higher education continues to produce more Ph.D. s than required by the market, and while Ph.D. s are produced, they provide a ready pool of low-cost instructors, many of whom are required to teach as part of their education. In this way, I use Jessop's model to argue that universities have a relationship to what is produced (Ph.D. s), and through the process of overproduction, higher education institutions benefit with low-cost adjunct labor and that the "fisco-financial crises" caused by COVID-19 "provide[d] reasons . . . to demand public spending cuts" (Jessop, 2018, p. 104).

Neoliberal influences and market forces have allowed universities to benefit directly from their own overproduction of Ph.D. s. Universities turned to adjunct faculty to lower employment costs, increase scheduling flexibility, provide in-demand topics or content, and reduce the requirements necessary to employ tenure track faculty, including salaries, benefits, and office or research space. "In a time of constrained resources and shifting enrollment patterns, many higher education institutions have found the attraction of contingent faculty appointments to be almost irresistible" (Baldwin, Wawrzynski, & Kezar, 2011, p. 1486). To understand this constraint, I return to Fethke and Policano (2012) "high subsidy–low tuition" and the realities presented in the 2019 SHEF report that showed the overall decline in state appropriations. Without an increase to state appropriations, colleges and universities must look to cost-saving measures and adjuncts, as part-time, contractual faculty, provide a ready solution.

Throughout this chapter, I have used a brief higher education history to highlight the ways in which roles and responsibilities of faculty have shifted and the influence of these changes on supporting increased reliance on adjunct labor. I have provided a

definition and framework for neoliberalism in higher education, which helps contextualize the increased reliance on adjunct labor and the shifting notion of higher education as a public good, including an overview of the economics of public higher education. As higher education has a mission of teaching, research, and service, and adjuncts are increasingly responsible for teaching, it is necessary to critically assess the practices and structures of teaching in higher education to fully understand the neoliberal effect on higher education.

### **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter provides the study's theoretical frameworks of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) as ways to explore the media and communication adjunct experience within the systems and structures of higher education institutions. Practice theory provides a theoretical framework to connect the observed teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty within the broader structural context of higher education. Typically, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy is employed with a student-centered focus, this study applies Freire's dialogic and anti-dialogic principles to the domination and oppression, as well as the liberation and cultural action of media and communication adjunct faculty. Critical pedagogy and practice theory support critique and exploration of systems, structures, politics, and power relationships within higher education, including the classroom, the department, the institution, and the discipline. A brief summary of the scholarship of pedagogy, teaching, and learning provides a common language for understanding teaching labor and highlights best practices for contemporary teaching in higher education.

#### **Theoretical Framework #1: Bourdieu's Practices and Structures**

Social research has a long tradition and history with practice theory. Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) social theory work is widely used in anthropology, history, sociology, media technology, and education (see Carlone & Johnson, 2012; Fernback, 2015; Morris, 2017; Gorski, 2013). One of Bourdieu's most widely applied social theories is practice theory which makes explicit the theoretical framework for examining the influences of structures and, at the same time, an individual's agency within those structures. Objective structures limit thought, interactions, actions, and representations of the world around us

(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 21). However, individual agency affects the objective structures and can shape representations (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 22). Practices are the result of continuous shaping and reshaping occurring between structures and individuals (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 16).

Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) social theory work is sophisticated, complex, and regularly criticized. Bourdieu's concepts are informed by Marx but extended beyond solely economic drivers. The sophistication of Bourdieu's work is also seen through his use of unique terms and specificity of meaning, which require careful examination to be used appropriately. In addition to these challenges, there is a significant body of work that critiques Bourdieu (see Archer, 1970; Moore, 2004; Nash, 2003). Archer (1970) argues that use of Bourdieu's work must be limited to his original contexts of French sociology and cannot be applied elsewhere. Despite these challenges, Bourdieu's work is widely used in a variety of contexts, including higher education, as a theoretical framework to examine questions of inequality (Morrison, 2017) and of transformation in times of historical rupture (Gorski, 2013). The marginalized position of media and communication adjunct faculty and the rupture experienced with the COVID-19 situation make Bourdieu's practice theory appropriate for this study.

More than eight decades ago, Dewey (1938/1963) noted societal structures are a form of communication, and our understanding of the world is shaped by this communication. Practice theory allows for the exploration and understanding of individuals and institutions, emphasizing the systems and structures that constitute a lived experience. Carlone and Johnson (2012) contend that practice theory allows the researcher to "connect local practices and meanings to larger socio-historical meanings to

which the local processes conform, resist, and/or transform” (p. 157). Bourdieu’s theoretical framework allows for the consideration of the conscious and unconscious. With practice theory, Bourdieu provided a social theory where the individual and the organizational structures are interwoven in “a continual dialectic in which the individual is both a product and producer of social relations” (Morrison, 2017, p. 54). This is seen most clearly in the relationship between habitus and cultural capital (Reay, 2004, p. 435). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) use the metaphor of a fish in water to describe this dynamic:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields, and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world around itself for granted (p. 127).

In higher education, this social world consists of the organization (professional associations, university, and departments) and the individuals (adjuncts, department chairs, and students).

While I have broken out each term in the sections that follow, the terms used in Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) conceptualization of practice theory interact to reveal meaning which informs our understanding of the social world. In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, the meaning-making process is one where the terms and concepts work together. To express this interplay of terms and concepts, Bourdieu (1984) suggests a formula “[ $(\text{habitus}) \times (\text{capital})$ ] + \text{field} = \text{practice}” (p. 101). The interaction and dependence are particularly noticeable with habitus and capital. Next, I outline the key concepts of practice theory that relate to this study.

### *Tempo*

Bourdieu (1977) uses tempo to describe the seasonality and the normal cycle of a community. The university as an institution has a tempo. The tempo of the university is an essential part of the college experience. Each academic year begins in August or September with the start of the fall semester and each academic year concludes with graduation at the end of the spring semester. There are, of course, summer courses but when we generally think of the academic year, it is focused on the fall and spring semesters. Tempo is included here as it will be important to the understanding of what happened when COVID-19 disrupted the Spring 2020 semester.

### *Field and Doxa*

According to Bourdieu (1977), fields are the spaces or social settings where individuals operate. Fields can be places, spaces, or institutions. Eyal (2013) suggests that fields are “bundles of relations” rather than entities (p. 159). Every individual operates in many fields. Field allows for the description of both the environment and the social functions that impact the labor conditions of adjunct. As an example, adjunct faculty who are “full-mooners” (Tuckman, 1978) are employed full-time outside of the university. The “full-mooner” adjunct operates in the field of the university, the field of the classroom, the field of his/her full-time place of employment, the field of his/her home life, and so forth.

Each field is governed by doxa. The doxa refer to the ways in which the collective evaluates each individual as they enter the field. Doxa are the rules (written and unwritten), norms, hierarchies, values, and behaviors that are constantly interacting within the field and continually impacted by the individual entering the field. A higher

education example of doxa is the experience of adjuncts who have been working at an institution for several years but are not considered viable for full-time positions. Another example from this study is the doxa of separate email lists for tenured/tenure-track faculty versus adjunct faculty.

Reproduction is a way to understand the social processes that replicate and reinforce doxa within the field. Faculty as academic laborers hold a unique position in social reproduction. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) observed,

academics perform the socially important role of practising and embodying distinction . . . they comprise a group who are valued for their role in expressing the higher values of refinement and effortless superiority. . . this status has the significant social function of naturalising the privilege and dominance of certain groups in a community (p. 135).

In this way the distinction of the academic serves to reproduce the capitalist system and forms of domination. Distinction is also used to the structures of reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984). As neoliberal influences increase, reproduction provides a way to understand the landscape within contemporary universities. Marx (1976/[1886]) stated, “every social process of production is at the same time a process of reproduction” (p. 71). Marx used the term social reproduction to represent and refer to the replication of capitalism and the capitalist system. To illustrate the relationship between distinction and reproduction, I return us to an example of field.

Fields are hierarchical and often reproduce the way a society views power, class, and capital, which are all aspects of distinction. Adjunct faculty in the field of higher education are an interesting illustration of the elements of distinction. As academic labor, faculty operate in "an ambiguous role" because they function as a dominant class through their position in academe and a dominated class due to the lack of "access to social and

economic capital [relative to] . . . executives, politicians, lawyers, doctors" (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 135). In other words, the field of higher education provides status, and work in academe, even as an adjunct, has capital. Distinction and the dominant role of faculty helps to explain why people actively seek out adjunct faculty positions despite the low pay and poor working conditions. This example illustrates the relationship between field and capital, which is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

As previously mentioned, distinction hides the structures of domination. The adjunct faculty example provides a way to understand how reproduction nourishes and conceals domination within higher education. Bourdieu (1977) argues that the power of the system of reproduction is the ability of “the perpetuation of domination [to] remain hidden” (p. 188). Bourdieu’s extension of domination is similar to Freire’s (1970) concept of domination and oppression where domination and the structures of domination remain hidden from the dominated. This will be highlighted with an example of an adjunct faculty who successfully obtain a tenure-track faculty role at the institution where they have previously served as an adjunct. Education reproduces the capitalist system by preparing and enculturating students as future workers in the systems of production (Labaree, 2017). Fields do not have ultimate power over the individual who has habitus and agency, which provides the ability to conform, resist, and transform the doxa. This illustrates the processual nature of practice theory as each individual comes with habitus and agency.

### *Habitus and Agency*

Bourdieu (1977) defined habitus as “the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g., language, economy) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely” (p. 85). In other words, habitus is the end result of reproduction, patterns, and conditioning to the structures which provides a shared and unquestioned way of being. Bourdieu (1977) employed the concept of habitus to convey the things that we just know and the sense of collective identity (pp. 72–95). Habitus is representative of both the individual and the collective as Reay (2004) describes, “The dualism of habitus operates within the collective and individualized experience” (p. 440). In this way, habitus can be understood as the ways in which individuals internalize social structures (Burawoy, 2019, p. 101). As Fernback (2015) noted, habitus is useful in understanding those deep-rooted routines and unconscious preferences of how we teach and how we think students learn (pp. 122–123). Doxa helps us examine the influence of social organizations and informs our understanding of practices and conformance. Agency helps us understand individual means for resistance of both thoughts and actions (Bourdieu, 1977).

Gehrke and Kezar’s (2015) study of academic deans’ values and decision making related to non-tenure track faculty (NTT) illustrates both habitus and agency. Gehrke and Kezar (2015) describe personal values and attitudes: personal values are defined as “deeply ingrained and gained through socialization over time, they tend to have a significant influence on people’s behavior” (p. 929) with attitudes including personal values and the influence of contextual information, such as organizational setting (p.

936). While Gehrke and Kezar do not use or refer to Bourdieu (1977), the description of personal values and attitudes for academic deans illustrates one use of Bourdieu's doxa and habitus in this study. This study will be examined more closely in Chapter 5.

### *Capital*

In describing individual interaction with the field, Bourdieu (1986) uses capital to explain an individual's status and power within society. Capital relies on stratification. Stratification is present in the tiers of higher education (for-profit, community college, teaching college, research institution), the types of higher education as evidenced by Carnegie classification: "doctoral universities, master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, baccalaureate/associate's colleges, associate's colleges, and special focus institutions" (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.), and the people working in higher education (tenured/tenure track, including full, associate, and assistant professor; non-tenure track; and the bottom—the adjunct).

Capital includes the resources that each individual brings with them to a field. Bourdieu (1986) describes capital as economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital refers to monetary or financial resources. Social capital refers to and is built by connections and who you know and their referent power. Bourdieu (1984) defined cultural capital as an individual's context-based knowledge, education, and tastes. An example of higher education-related capital is the type of institution where you were educated (i.e., Ivy League, state institution, or community college). The type of institution, such as research-intensive or teaching-intensive, provides an example specific to faculty labor in higher education.

Shared cultural capital results in a collective identity. As Webb, Schirato, & Danaher (2002) observed, “academic work provides distinction and universities have considerable cultural capital” (p. 135). To illustrate shared cultural capital, I use exemplars for the three cultural capital categories: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied capital is represented by skills, accents, dialects, and even tastes. Like habitus, embodied capital reveals status and membership into a class of people. Embodied capital is used to indicate insider/outsider status and it is context specific. For example, an adjunct derives embodied capital through faculty work. In contrast, tenured faculty may view non-tenure track faculty as a different class compared to themselves. Objectified capital is represented by material possessions and belongings that have cultural significance. Other examples of objective capital might include the status of having an office, the location of the office, or the type of furnishings in the office (e.g., the 1950s desk with the broken drawer versus the solid mahogany desk). Institutionalized cultural capital is directly related to the institution and the institutional symbols that represent authority, credentials, and qualifications. In higher education, this is exemplified by hierarchy of faculty positions: adjunct, assistant, associate, and full. The university awarding a degree is also a form of institutionalized cultural capital (for example, the higher value placed on Harvard over a state university or a community college). Other examples of institutionalized cultural capital are the star (or well-funded) researcher at a research-intensive university, or more simply, the university’s placement of higher value on research labor over teaching labor.

Bourdieu (1977) contends that capital resides and accrues individually through labor. Centering capital with the individual and the individual’s labor aligns with many of

the values of neoliberalism. As we are examining the labor (teaching practices) and labor conditions of adjunct faculty, capital provides a way to understand these experiences. This study uses capital as a way to understand the tensions between institution and adjunct, tenured/tenure track faculty and adjunct, and department chair and adjunct, as well as the adjunct's individual agency in how they view their role as a member of the faculty and how that value is perceived within in and outside of academe.

The power of Bourdieu's work is both the specificity and the flexibility. Practice theory acknowledges the specific context of each particular field or social space and supports the examination of faculty actions in the classroom, self-descriptions of teaching, and the language or labels applied to teaching practice all while considering the underlying cultural and symbolic elements of power in a university context. The specificity allows for the examination of each classroom, each higher education institution, and each individual as distinct. The flexibility allows the concepts to be applied to adjunct faculty as individual actors in the context of the specific higher education institutions or fields.

While Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory accounts for agency, I used critical pedagogy to examine the power structures within higher education. This is similar to Burawoy's (2019) argument that, "Bourdieu can only conceive of countering domination by creating universal access to the cultural achievements of bourgeois society . . . Freire sees in this the perfection of domination" (p. 95). In other words, the Bourdieuan lens is focused on how the oppressed class aspires to reach the dominant class and Freire's (1970) approach suggests that there is "good sense that remains within the oppressed despite internalized oppression" (Burawoy, 2019, p. 95).

## **Theoretical Framework #2: Critical Pedagogy**

Paolo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who is recognized in the critical pedagogy movement as “the seminal architect of introducing critical theory into contemporary pedagogical discourse” (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 1). In Freire’s (1970) canonical text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the hegemonic thrust of education is highlighted, and dialogue is used as a way to approach liberation in teaching. I used critical pedagogy as a theoretical orientation to examine the ways in which domination and oppression are enacted in higher education and to identify opportunities for liberation for media and communication adjunct faculty. Freire’s approach to critical pedagogy extended Dewey’s (1938/1963) idea of progressive education that relied on “the fundamental principle of connection with life-experiences” (p. 78). While there are many other critical pedagogy scholars (see Giroux, 1998, 2011; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2004; McLaren 1998; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), I have selected Freire’s (1970) conceptualization of critical pedagogy as a way to examine history, power, relationships, and politics of adjunct teaching practices and labor conditions.

In their book, *Paulo Freire: Teaching for Freedom and Transformation*, Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) described Freire’s ideas to be “in constant need of reinvention and adjustment depending on the context of their application” (p. 3). While critical pedagogy is often student-centered, this study used a critical pedagogy lens to explore the realities of adjunct faculty who are the marginalized teachers of higher education. This section describes how Freire’s critical pedagogy informed my study of media and communication adjunct faculty teaching practices and labor conditions in the neoliberal

context. As Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) noted, “Freire was a vocal critic of neoliberalism particularly because of the suffering it caused at the grassroots level” (p. 7).

Freire (1970) contends that all education serves to either integrate the students into the present system using domination and oppression to ensure conformity or to serve as a “practice of freedom” (p. 80), which “strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (p. 81). Freire (1970) described domination and oppression through the use of anti-dialogical principles including conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion (pp. 123–167). Using dialogic principles of reflection and action, Freire’s (1970) liberatory practices provide the skills and language necessary to critique and challenge the structures and systems of the dominant classes.

Freire (1970) uses the term “conscientização” to describe critical consciousness or “reflective and transformative political action” (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 3). “Critical consciousness . . . occurs when people critically reflect on historical experiences and social reality” (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 63). During interviews with administrators, I asked participants to reflect on the use of adjunct labor and adjunct working conditions which encouraged them to share current practices and the ways in which these practices might change to better support adjunct faculty. Throughout this study but particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many observations of conscientização, most notably the work of groups such as Tenure for the Common Good.

### ***Domination and Oppression***

Freire's (1970) description of banking education provides one illustration of domination and oppression in the context of education and illustrates each of the anti-dialogical principles: conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion (pp. 123-167). In Freire's "banking" model of education, the teacher conveys knowledge to the students. "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). In this model, conquest occurs by the knowledge being owned by the teacher. While not specific to the banking model example, the hierarchies of higher education institutions and even faculty rank can be used to illustrate Freire's concept of divide and rule. Manipulation and cultural invasion can be seen through the widely accepted world view and the depositor imagery. Freire's assertion that the banking model of education supports the dominant social hierarchies and maintains the status quo can be seen in the visualization of depositories and depositor. In this visual, the teacher is the depositor and is responsible for the knowledge provided and how that knowledge is provided. The depositories or students must accept the knowledge and the way it is delivered. The social hierarchy prevents the student from questioning the teacher.

To illustrate the concepts of domination and oppression, I use Swidler's (2017) opinion piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which highlighted the precarity of adjunct faculty, including the consequences of limited academic freedom and the potential impact on justice in society:

When contingent faculty members—who account for 70 percent of college instructors—put the renewal of their teaching contracts at risk if they dare to advise a group of student activists, or to speak about a controversial issue with a

journalist, the role of academics as public intellectuals suffers. (Swidler, 2017, para. 10).

Diminished academic freedom and concerns for contract renewal can lead adjunct faculty to remove controversial readings, to modify or eliminate assignments that are perceived as challenging or threatening student ideas, and to avoid discussion of contentious topics. The following three online responses to Swidler’s 2017 article provide examples of the issues impacting adjunct faculty and the structures that reduce academic freedom:

Forget about quality education and excellent full-time faculty being the norm. . . . Those days are long gone and are never coming back unless the labor pool of adjuncts organizes and gets the support of full-time faculty. (Greek Giant, Nov. 2017)

The adjunct system—and the TT faculty's disinterest in it—is a threat [to] social justice in many ways, not the least of which is the fact that our neediest students are given only the most overburdened and under-resourced teachers. (Alexandra Bradner, Nov. 2017)

One would think TT faculty have a vested interest in seeing more TT positions. Many adjuncts are great teachers, but due to the academy's structure are kept from participating in two important parts holding up the academy . . . service [and] . . . research. Who took on the service commitments at your institution when a TT position was filled by an adjunct? (akeller, Nov. 2017)

Greek Giant’s comment expresses concern for quality and encourages all faculty to organize to restore some historic golden age of full-time faculty and seems to foretell the role of groups, like Tenure for the Common Good. Like Greek Giant, Alexandra Bradner’s comment calls attention to tenure track faculty’s disinterest in the labor conditions of adjunct faculty, specifically referring to the “overburdened and under-resourced” nature of teaching as adjunct faculty. Later, I will show how a global pandemic overburdened all faculty with a mid-semester move to online teaching. Akeller’s comments illustrate the divide and rule and cultural invasion aspects of Freire’s (1970) domination and oppression. When akeller asks who will perform the other labor of

faculty, specifically research and service, she models divide and rule by calling attention to the differences between tenure/tenure track and adjunct faculty. While I have no way of knowing if akeller is a tenured/tenure track faculty, her comments are consistent with weakening, isolating, and dividing (Freire, 1970, p. 141).

Freire's banking model relies on the teacher's locus of power and diminishes the students' power. The comments above suggest a similar locus of power with tenured and tenure-track faculty and diminished power and oppression of adjunct faculty, like the students in Freire's banking model. Adjunct faculty experience oppression through precarity in contractual work, a lack of academic freedom, and general marginalization within the academic community. Only Alexandra Bradner's comment on the apathy of tenured faculty towards adjunct colleagues seems to suggest Freire's (1970) dialogic principles Her comment is consistent with the more recent actions of tenured and tenure-track faculty supporting adjunct faculty through organizations such as Tenure for the Common Good, which will be discussed later in this dissertation.

### ***Reflection and Action***

Freire (1970) describes "problem-posing education" as an alternative to the banking model and as a way to overcome domination and oppression:

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (p. 83)

In other words, people exist in dialogue with the world around them and use the dialogical principles to understand and shape the world they live in. Freire describes these beliefs, practices, and conditions as culture (p. 158). Freire (1970), like Bourdieu (1977),

believes that people can see beyond the structures and practices to understand power relationships.

Informed by Marx, Freire's (1970) describes "culture as a superstructure which can maintain 'remnants' of the past alive in the substructure" (p. 159). In other words, faculty exist in systems and structures designed to obfuscate domination and oppression. Through reflection and consciousness-raising of the structures, it is possible to move to a place where dialogue and action can occur. The process of reflection and action, like most teaching practice, relies upon dialogue; Freire (1970) describes this reflexive practice as dialogue. Freire (1970) contends that dialogue is a process of questioning existing knowledge and using conversation to seek understanding while also generating new knowledge and moving individuals to action (pp. 87–100). The dialogic process provided an approach to interrogate the changes that occurred as a result of COVID-19.

As a solution to the anti-dialogical principles of domination and oppression, Freire (1970) enlists the dialogical principles of cooperation, unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis. These principles mirror the meaning-making processes of critical reflection as way to understand current context through past experiences. Freire's dialogical principles use the examination of reality to make meaning with the goal of subverting the beliefs, practices, and conditions that foster domination and oppression.

Freire's (1970) dialogical principles pair well with the literature on effective teaching practices. In his book, *The Skillful Teacher*, Brookfield (2006) notes "many of our actions are uninformed in that they involve us teaching in certain ways simply

because we have been told we ought to” (p. 24). Like Freire (1970), Brookfield (2006) uses critical reflection as represented through four lenses of “students’ eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, literature, and . . . autobiography” (p. 26) as a way to interrogate teaching practice.

Like Brookfield (2006), Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) contend that critical reflection is necessary; however, they argue that action is required to “change prevailing social attitudes, values, and structures, and humans must act politically to change social reality” (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 63). While Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) were describing discourse and language, their description of Freire is particularly relevant to this study’s examination of adjunct faculty and illustrates why critical pedagogy as envisioned by Freire is included:

practices in education, as Freire understood and taught, cannot be viewed in isolation from the various social forces that lead to individual or group marginalization. In fact, discourse practices and the ideologies they forge are a central means by which social inequality is maintained. The critical education advocated by Freire is a crucial mechanism in the deconstruction of prevailing social discourses, an indispensable tool to eliminate wide-scale social inequality by exposing the deleterious impact of ideology on consciousness and social construction. (p. 129)

Freire’s (1970) approach provided a way to both consider and potentially deconstruct the structures that support domination and maintain oppression within the labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication. Next, I summarize the approach to teaching and learning as it informs and shapes the observation of teaching practice which is the labor of media and communication adjunct faculty.

### **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

To situate the teaching literature, I return briefly to the knowledge work of the university. The work of universities is to create, transmit, and refine knowledge (Tierney, 2006). While much of the creation of knowledge occurs through research, the transmission and refinement of knowledge also occurs through the labor of teaching. Hirst (1971) contends that to understand teaching, we must understand the teaching's intention or goal, which is learning (p. 9). As more than 70 percent of teaching in higher education is done by adjunct or contingent faculty (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2018) and as learning is central to higher education, this study employs the literature of pedagogy, teaching and learning as way to explore the structures of higher education and the labor of adjunct faculty in media and communication. While teaching and learning are interrelated, I refer to teaching rather than teaching and learning throughout this study.

As approaches to teaching and learning are deeply personal, a clear articulation of the researcher's approach to the study of learning and teaching is required and as Dewey (1938/1963) aptly noted, "every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects . . . the quality of subsequent experiences" (p. 35). Further, as Bourdieu (1977) contends that the dominant class is embedded into the habitus of education and thus invisible to most and as Freire (1977) contends that domination is enacted through and by pedagogy, it is necessary to understand how learner-centered teaching is defined and the specific pedagogical literature informing this study. Learner-centered teaching provides a lens to explore the political aspects of teaching, as well as the neoliberal influence as exemplified by

Brookfield's (2006) definition of the political process of the classroom, "one in which someone attempts to persuade, direct, or coerce someone else into devoting scarce resources to a particular activity" (p. 236).

This study's approach to teaching is rooted in the cognitive and social aspects of learning (see Piaget, 1954; Bandura, 1977) and most importantly, the enactment of teaching practice in the classroom. The literature selected here reflects a focus on learner-centered teaching and supports the goal of this study to understand the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication by providing an empirical framework to examine the unique conditions created by the teaching style, course topic, and disciplinary approaches in the curriculum.

Increasingly, the student-centered or learner-centered approach is the favored approach in pedagogy best practices (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; McGuire, 2015; Weimer, 2013). This study aligns with Weimer's (2013) argument that students and faculty can be learning partners (p. 13) and Freire's (1970) idea of dialogue through the equality of learner and teacher. Equality does not mean turning all decisions and choices over to the student rather the learner-centered instructor is aware and open to student feedback and may make adaptations to improve the learning environment based on the needs of the students. The learner-centered teaching section focuses on contemporary scholarship, and I have outlined the reasons for selecting these scholars, as the scholarship of teaching, learning, and pedagogy is significant, and the selected works represent a small piece of the total scholarship.

Five learner-centered teaching works were foundational to this study. First, Ambrose et al.'s (2010) book, *How Learning Works: 7 Research Based Principles for Smart Teaching*, provided seven principles based on the idea that learning is a process that relies on the student's prior experiences and "learning results from what the student does and thinks" (p. 1). Another advantage of Ambrose et al. (2010) is that the book is written to be used by teachers regardless of domain, teaching experience, and cultural background. Second, Brookfield's (2006) book, *The Skillful Teacher*, highlighted the "chaotic unpredictability" (p. xvii) of the classroom and also spoke to the "political activity" (p. xviii) of teaching. The element of resource scarcity, and the resulting competition, in Brookfield's political process definition demonstrate the neoliberal infiltration to the classroom; this is useful to understanding teaching broadly, as well as informing observations of media and communication adjuncts. Third, Weimer's (2013) second edition book, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Practices to Change*, provided a faculty-oriented how-to guide to explore the concept and implementation of student-centered learning. Weimer's book is also useful given her background in teaching communication courses. Fourth, similar to Weimer, Fernback's (2015) book, *Teaching Communication and Media Studies: Pedagogy and Practice*, provided a close look at the opportunities and challenges of teaching in media and communication programs. Fifth, L. Dee Fink's (2013) book, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, supported the examination of the start of the instructional process by understanding learning outcomes. Like Ambrose et al. (2010), Fink framed learning as change and grounded his taxonomy of significant learning in

Bloom's classic taxonomy of educational objectives to articulate the types of learning in contemporary higher education (pp. 33–38).

### *Teacher-Centered Teaching*

In describing traditional education, Dewey (1938) describes the teacher-centered approach where what is taught is thought of as “finished product” with little opportunity for change or challenges by the student (p. 19). The teacher-centered approach (like Shannon and Weaver's [1964] classic model of communication) assumes that knowledge flows from teacher to students. Two visually oriented metaphors, “sage on the stage”<sup>11</sup> (Fernback, 2015) and Freire's (1970) banking model, illustrate the one-way transference of knowledge or expertise from the teacher to the learner. The teacher-centered “sage on the stage” is an authoritative faculty member who lectures as the primary form of knowledge transfer and transmits knowledge to the students as blank slates. Similarly, knowledge transfer in Freire's (1970) banking model is often illustrated with the teacher depositing coins into the accepting and open heads of students like coins into a piggy bank. Each discipline has content that is essential; Fink (2013) refers to this “foundational knowledge” and as “one part of achieving other kinds of learning” (p. 65). There are clearly times where “foundational knowledge” or concepts must be conveyed from the teacher to the learner; the teacher-centered approach minimizes the role of students in their own learning and minimizes the students' existing knowledge.

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<sup>11</sup> Use of “sage on the stage” was popularized by Alison King's (1993) *College Teaching* article, *From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side*, with earlier uses seen in articles on teacher accountability (see Alvino, 1980).

Before I discuss learner-centered teaching, I want to highlight how the doxa of higher education prioritizes the lecture as a preferred mode of teaching. Many of the media and communication adjunct faculty participants lectured regularly as part of class. When we consider the volume of information that is widely available in books and the internet and the ways in which the university is positioned as knowledge producer, it will be important to consider the doxa of teaching practice and what is observed in the classroom. This may provide insights into the value of higher education as a public good.

### *Learner-Centered Teaching*

A learner-centered approach to teaching puts the student at the center of everything from course design, assignments, and readings, to student preparation for future citizenry (Dewey, 1938; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013). Unlike the teacher-centered approach, learner-center teaching assumes that students arrive with existing knowledge and the instructor supports learning by helping students revise, augment, and change existing knowledge. In a learner-centered approach, faculty commit to fostering a supportive learning environment, building bridges between concepts, and nurturing a classroom community (Brookfield, 2007; Dewey, 1938/1963; Fink, 2013; Freire, 1970). A learner-centered approach begins with the fundamental assumption that students may not be motivated or learn in the same way as the faculty (Ambrose et al., 2010). “Skillful teaching” as defined by Brookfield (2006) is focused on three assumptions: (1) “whatever helps students learn,” (2) teachers’ engagement with “a critically reflective stance towards their practice,” and (3) “constant awareness of how students are experiencing their learning and perceiving teachers’ actions” (p. 17).

The empirical approaches of Ambrose et al. (2010) and Weimer (2013) provided exemplars of a learner-centered approach to teaching. Both Ambrose et al. and Weimer include motivation as a key component of learner-centered pedagogy. Ambrose et al. (2010), citing Maehr and Meyer stated, “Motivation refers to the personal investment that an individual has in reaching a desired state or outcome” (p. 68). Similarly, Weimer (2013) noted, “When students can make some choices about how they learn, and when they have some control over their learning processes, their motivation to learn increases” (p. 38). Ambrose et al. and Weimer emphasize the importance of knowledge and content in slightly different ways. Ambrose et al. refers to knowledge in two of the seven principles: “prior knowledge” (pp. 10–38) and “students’ organization of knowledge” (pp. 40–65). Ambrose et al. described prior knowledge and organization of knowledge as context or use-specific frameworks and “not sufficiently flexible to support the demands of all the tasks . . . [students] face” (p. 43). In other words, students may be able to list McCarthy’s (1968) four P’s of marketing but may not be able to describe their application in the real world or as Fernback (2015) noted, “video production students may enter a course with a grasp of basic shooting and editing . . . But in class, they are exposed to the theories of the aesthetics of photography and cinematography” (p. 120).

Motivation, the recognition of students’ existing knowledge, and the students’ role in learning represent the key differences between the teacher-centered and learner-centered approach to teaching. In teacher-centered teaching, motivation is focused on the teacher and how he/she chooses to teach regardless of students’ prior or existing knowledge. In teacher-centered teaching, students’ motivation is extrinsic or what the student needs to do to get a good grade or to avoid a bad grade. Learner-centered

teaching relies on intrinsic motivation, identifying and assessing students' existing knowledge, and finding ways to engage the student in their own learning.

Brookfield (2006) argued that “skillful teaching is a highly variable process that changes depending on any number of contextual factors” (p. 17). Like Brookfield, Weimer (2013) acknowledged that the best teaching “engages students in the hard, messy, work of learning” (p. 15). For Weimer and Ambrose et al. (2010), effective teaching requires that students have opportunities to integrate content into existing knowledge and practice applying it. In other words, faculty must encourage students to do (apply) and think about concepts and ideas (integrate) as part of the course. “Creating a learning environment that is responsive to students requires an awareness that students process their learning in different ways” (Fernback, 2015, p. 119). As students move through the learning process, the learner-centered teacher is there to support learning and the differences in learning for all students.

The UDL framework was created and conceptualized to use with digital technologies for the improvement of teaching and learning for children with disabilities (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). UDL is a three-part model that uses engagement (the why), representation (the what), and action and expression (the how) to foster learning (Meyer et al., 2014). UDL encourages faculty to engage students in diverse ways to deliver and present content and information through multiple modalities or contexts (e.g., podcasts, videos, articles) and, as Weimer (2013) argued, to offer choice in how students demonstrate learning. The UDL multimodal approach aligns with the learner-centered approach by fostering thinking about the knowledge or learning and the different ways it can be demonstrated.

Foundational to UDL and learner-centered teaching is the belief that faculty are responsible for creating the environment that provides all students with the opportunity to participate and to learn (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; Weimer, 2013). Using a framework similar to UDL, Fink (2013) approached course design using three elements: “the learning goals, the feedback and assessment, and the teaching and learning activities” (p. 71), and like Ambrose et al. (2010), Brookfield (2006), and Weimer (2013), Fink acknowledged that there are situational factors that impact student learning. Fink proposed that faculty begin with assessment since it “greatly enhances . . . ability to identify what learning activities are needed” (p. 70). Using Fink’s approach to course design, faculty are encouraged to move beyond a “content-centered approach to learning goals . . . [and] use a learner-centered approach . . . [to] identify what students should get out of the course” (p. 82).

### *Learning Outcomes*

Learning outcomes, goals, and objectives describe the change in students following the completion of a degree, course, or activity. Learning outcomes are the broadest category and articulate the curriculum’s response to the question, “When students complete a program of study in Communication, what should they know, understand, and be able to do?” (National Communication Association [NCA], n.d., para. 1). Learning outcomes provide context that illustrates the ways in which higher education serves each purpose: the classic liberal arts orientation, centered on critical thinking and writing; the preparation for citizenry; and finally, employment-readiness. Learning goals and objectives support the connection that a course has to the broader curriculum. The course design outlines the course content, the learning goals and course objectives, and

the ways in which students will be assessed to determine how they meet the goals and objectives (Ambrose et al., 2010; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; Weimer, 2013). “Clear objectives can foster a sense of partnership and an awareness that you and your students are working toward the same goals” (O’Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008, p. 54).

To understand the learning outcomes of a communication degree and to provide a common framework for learning outcomes, this study relied upon the NCA’s (2016) nine learning outcomes in communication (LOCs). NCA defined these nine LOCs as the essential outcomes for undergraduate communication students. The LOCs<sup>12</sup> are:

LOC #1: Describe the communication discipline and its central questions; LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts; LOC #3: Engage in communication inquiry; LOC #4: Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context; LOC #5: Critically analyze messages; LOC #6: Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals (self-efficacy); LOC #7: Apply ethical communication principles and practices; LOC #9: Utilize communication to embrace difference; and LOC #10: Influence public discourse. (NCA, 2016, pp. 6–7)

Table 1 illustrates the distinct and sometimes competing purposes of higher education of these learning outcomes. In some cases, the same LOC serves multiple purposes.

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<sup>12</sup> Each of the nine LOCs articulates four to seven specific objectives that were used as part of the evaluation of both course syllabi and course content.

*Table 1. NCA LOCs mapped to purposes of higher education*

<b>Liberal Arts Orientation</b>	<b>Preparation for Citizenry</b>	<b>Preparation for Work/Vocation</b>
(1) Describe the communication discipline and its central questions (3) Engage in communication inquiry (5) Critically analyze message (6) Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals (self-efficacy) (8) Utilize communication to embrace difference	(5) Critically analyze message (6) Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals (self-efficacy) (8) Utilize communication to embrace difference (9) Influence public discourse	(2) Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts (4) Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context (7) Apply ethical communication principles and practices (8) Utilize communication to embrace difference (9) Influence public discourse

As part of teaching, faculty in media and communication must consider the outcomes, goals, and objectives for the course.

### *Assessment and Rubrics*

Assessment provides a way to communicate what is important in a course and as Fernback (2015) notes, “Assessment directs learning, and it demonstrates the values and purpose of the overall curriculum” (p. 80). Assessment activities are essential to evaluating what students will know and will be able to do upon completion of the course. Learner-centered faculty regularly revisit the purpose and process of evaluation, including ensuring that assessments are evaluating course goals and objectives (Weimer, 2013, p. 11). While assessment is often used to measure learning during the course, assessment activities at the start of the semester can also be used to understand students’ prior learning and knowledge (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 28). This is not unlike a presenter getting to know the audience before a speech. As Fernback (2015) noted, “The purpose of

all assessments, whether formal or informal, should be explained so students are clear about how assignments, exams, or course activities align with overall goals” (p. 86).

Brookfield (2006) described this as “rationale . . . [the] teacher’s ability to talk out loud the reasons for their classroom decisions, course design and evaluative criteria” (p. 63).

The faculty practice of describing the reasons and logic behind an assignment, activity, or even participation expectations inspires confidence and builds credibility with students (Brookfield, 2006, p. 63).

Rubrics provide another way to communicate expectations for assignments (Ambrose et al., 2010; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013). As Stevens and Levi (2005) stated, “a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment” (p. 3). Rubrics allow faculty to think about each element of an assignment and document a detailed description of what constitutes various levels of quality or performance (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 217). Rubrics provide elements of standardization and transparency. When there are multiple instructors teaching a course with a shared curriculum, rubrics can support consistency and standardization for the student experience.

In learning goals and course objectives, faculty define what students are expected to learn, and in assessment, students are judged on that learning. As Fernback (2015) stated, “effective teaching calls for assessments that mirror course goals, grounded in one’s pedagogical philosophy, and in one’s authentic academic identity” (p. 81). It is important to recognize that in assessment there is judgement. As Brookfield (2006) noted, “To teach is to judge” (p. 176), and in this judgement or assessment of learning, “the power relationship inherent in teaching becomes public and undeniable” (p. 173).

Brookfield citing Freire made three points related to evaluation and more broadly to teaching: (1) “teaching . . . is always value-laden”; (2) “liberating educators move towards collegial, collaborative modes of practice”; and (3) “authoritarian and authoritative teaching” yield different results. In other words, faculty values inform teaching practice, and faculty are responsible for creating a classroom climate that focuses on collaboration, expertise, and fostering student growth.

### ***Beliefs—Students and Teachers***

A teaching philosophy provides a brief explanation (1–2 pages) of the approach to teaching. It often includes epistemological and ontological orientations and explains a faculty’s views on the relationship to and with students. While not all faculty have a teaching philosophy, some tenured and tenure track faculty use a teaching philosophy to articulate and reflect upon teaching practice. Fernback (2015) noted that a teaching philosophy “connects to the overall goals an instructor wants to achieve with students” (p. 23). In other words, how faculty think about teaching and learning has a direct impact in the approach to course goals and what happens in the classroom. A teaching philosophy is one way to understand faculty beliefs about teaching and learning.

For faculty, beliefs are reflected in the choices made throughout the course design process, including what topics are covered, how topics are covered, what role students play in shaping the classroom experience, and even ideas about the purpose and role of higher education (Ambrose et al., 2010; Chesler & Young, 2007; Fernback, 2015). Kane et al. (2002) argued, “an understanding of university teaching is incomplete without a consideration of teachers’ beliefs about teaching” (p. 182). The idea of reflection in teaching originated with Dewey’s (1933) book, *How We Think: A Restatement of the*

*Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. Dewey (1933) describes reflection as an iterative process of looking back and looking forward with future outcomes reliant on what has come before (p. 4). This idea is similar to habitus; although Bourdieu (1977) contends that habitus is both conscious and unconscious. Freire (1970) used conscientização to encourage the awakening of what Brookfield (2017) called “critical reflection” (p. 79.) Brookfield stated “critical reflection illuminates and challenges subtly hidden forms of manipulation. The case for reflection lies instead in the pursuit of pedagogic, political, and emotional clarity” (p. 79). Faculty cannot remove personal experience from teaching practice. Just as past experiences shape an understanding of the world, these personal experiences, particularly those related to education and learning, shape performance in the classroom.

At the same time, students bring a diversity of experiences, backgrounds, identities, and preferences to the classroom. Brookfield (2006) suggested two ways to consider teaching practice from the student perspective: credibility and authenticity (p. 56). “Credible teachers are seen as teachers who are worth sticking around because students might learn something valuable from them” (p. 56). Brookfield defined four indicators of credibility: expertise, experience, rationale, and conviction (pp. 58–66). Expertise is represented by knowledge about the content and experience is represented by involvement in the discipline. As I described under the assessment section, rationale is the ability of faculty to explain their choices. The last characteristic of credibility is conviction, which represents that faculty value what they teach. As Brookfield (2006) stated,

conviction is recognized by students when teachers make it plain that they feel the subject matter, content, or skills being taught are so crucial that they want to explore every way they can to make sure students have learned . . . properly (p. 64).

Authentic teachers are perceived as “being open and honest in . . . [their] . . . attempts to help students learn” (p. 56). Brookfield also defined four indicators of authenticity: congruence, full disclosure, responsiveness, and personhood (pp. 67–73). In congruence, students are looking for consistency between words and actions (p. 67). With full-disclosure, students are looking for “what you stand for” (p. 70), and the course syllabus is one way to demonstrate full disclosure by including teachers’ expectations in detail. Responsiveness refers to “demonstrating clearly to students that you teach to help them learn in the way that is likely to be most helpful to them” (pp. 70-71). Responsiveness reveals the neoliberal influence in higher education through a focus on the individual and higher education as commodity that leads to employment. In focus groups, students commented on the importance of employment outcomes. Similarly, many of the media and communication adjunct faculty discussed beliefs that revealed a neoliberal bias to the field of professional practice which they bring to teaching and the classroom. Finally, personhood refers back to Brookfield’s earlier idea that we bring our values, beliefs, and identities into the classroom. As previously mentioned, Freire’s (1970) *conscientização* and Brookfield’s (2017) critical competence provide tools to examine the ways in which the habitus of teachers appears in the classroom. This reflection process can reveal conscious and unconscious beliefs that shape teaching practice.

Before concluding this section, I return to my earlier discussion on the purposes of higher education and the tension between the classic liberal arts represented by philosophical or higher reasoning and the vocational or career-oriented represented by

practical reasoning. These two ideas and their tensions represent the doxa of the contemporary university. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) argue that higher education relies on and promotes higher reasoning over practical reasoning,

Practical reason, as a dimension of habitus, is the capacity people have to make sense of, and negotiate, the situations they are confronted with in the social world: driving a car, choosing which dress to wear, calculating moves in a football game that will maximise the chance of scoring a goal. The academy, on the other hand, has tended to be regarded historically as a site for the promotion of a higher form of reason; the capacity to make rational judgements, which equips people to practise law, conduct scientific experiments, solve mathematical problems, theorise about historical conditions and so forth.” (p. 139)

Webb et al.’s (2002) statement indicates that higher reasoning happens within academe.

While Webb et al. do not describe a tension, I believe that this division between the practical and the academy’s “higher form of reason” informs the divide that is represented in the tension between the liberal arts (higher reason) and the professional (practical). Exploring these aspects of habitus and beliefs about teaching, as well as the broader purpose of higher education, will be important to understanding the ways in which media and communication adjunct faculty support the role of knowledge production within academe.

Higher education as a public good is under increasing pressure from neoliberal forces. Throughout this chapter, I have identified the neoliberal influence in higher education. I conclude this chapter with thoughts on the intersection of pedagogy and neoliberalism. Contemporary teaching practice increasingly relies on educational technologies which include learning management systems, such as Blackboard, Canvas, Desire2Learn, Moodle, and so forth, polling or clicker systems, such as Poll Everywhere, TurningPoint, Slido, and Mentimeter; and web-conferencing, such as GoToMeeting,

Microsoft Teams, Webex, and Zoom. Also, many textbook publishers provide fee-based digital learning platforms with e-books, homework platforms, quiz and exam question banks, and even PowerPoint slides. These examples are not meant to be a comprehensive list but an illustration of the vast landscape of educational technology commodities marketed and sold within higher education. Educational technology tools exist in a financially driven market and all have costs, contracts, and regular updates. Many of these educational technology tools are representative of the attempt to commodify, package, and scale higher education through automation and reduction of the intellectual labor of teaching. To understand the neoliberal influence within higher education, I contend that we must interrogate teaching practices performed by the commodified labor of media and communication adjunct faculty and reliant on the commodified tools of educational technology.

### **Summary**

The theoretical frameworks of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) provide the tools to explore and critique the systems, structures, politics, and power relationships related to media and communication adjunct faculty. Practice theory provides a way to examine power structures and how daily cultural practices are shaped (Carlone & Johnson, 2012, p. 170). Critical pedagogy allows for the close interrogation of aspects of domination and oppression, and the more liberatory aspects of reflection and action to understand the ways in which practical and higher reasoning are present in the contemporary university. Practice theory and critical pedagogy allowed me to examine the micro and macro of the university as an institution

and the agency of individual media and communication adjunct faculty within the institutional structures.

The labor of teaching is highly individualized and deeply personal (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Weimer, 2013). As a result, the ways in which faculty enact learner-centered pedagogy will vary based on the course, the topic, and even the faculty's beliefs about learning. Given the diversity of approaches and in order to interrogate the teaching labor of adjunct faculty in media and communication, the five key works detailed in this chapter provide an empirical, flexible and rigorous approach to examining diverse teaching practices (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; Weimer, 2013). These works combine to support the examination of teaching from the planning and course development process to the classroom experience, as well as the reflection on teaching practice. The principles and characteristics of teaching practice represented by these works provide a high-bar of achievement in pedagogy and a research-based framework to examine the diverse teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty that is both flexible and consistent. Active learning pedagogy is used to demarcate the habitus and doxa of effective teaching.

## CHAPTER 4: METHOD

This chapter explains the qualitative, multi-method approach used to explore perspectives on one aspect of higher education: the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication. This study was approved by Temple University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) under Exempt or Expedited Review. As qualitative research informed by ethnographic practice, the study is not meant to be generalizable, but rather an in-depth examination of teaching practices and labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty. Accordingly, "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) with quality and depth were emphasized over quantity. Participants were added over the course of the study until saturation was reached and themes were regularly repeated (Brennen, 2013). Multiple methods allowed for deeper understanding and supported triangulation and data verification to increase validity and strengthen the conclusions.

### Overview of Methods and Methodology

In my theory chapter, I discuss *why* I apply Bourdieu (1977) and Freire (1970) to the labor conditions and teaching practice of media and communication adjunct faculty. In this chapter, I describe *how* Bourdieu (1977) and Freire (1970) are employed as a way to see and to answer my research questions. Throughout this project, I engaged in a variety of methods that allowed me to zoom in and zoom out to understand both the individual actions and the institutional structures. Application of Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory served both theoretical and methodological support. Bourdieu helped me examine institutional processes and structural relations that are embedded in every action. Bourdieu's framework allowed me to *read* each scenario encountered within my

fieldwork and interviews. In this way, I observed how the field speaks through each of my study participants and reveals the doxa. While teaching practice provided entry to the classroom, the literacies of Bourdieu's (1977) habitus and agency served to "ensure that the research focus is always broader than the specific focus under study" (Reay, 2004, p. 439). Reay contends "habitus cannot be directly observed in empirical research and has to be apprehended interpretively" (p. 439). In this way, Bourdieu provided both a theoretical and methodological framework for enlarging and narrowing focus or what I have previously referred to as zooming in and zooming out (Reay, 2004, p. 439).

Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy approach serves as a bridge between practices and labor conditions. Freire's framework provided a way to both consider, critique and potentially deconstruct the structures that support domination and maintain oppression. Also, Freire provides a hopefulness that Bourdieu lacks. This choice, including my need to have hopefulness for higher education as part of this project, will be reflected more throughout this chapter.

Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy frameworks supported each of my qualitative methods. The qualitative methods used include textual analysis of documents and syllabi to provide organizational context for each site; participant observation of adjunct faculty; interviews with adjunct faculty, department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, university administrators, and union organizers; and finally, student focus groups to support an understanding of the student experience of adjunct faculty teaching. The use of interviews and focus groups provided an opportunity to confirm or further explain observations (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005). Jottings, memos, and reflexive practices were used throughout the observations and

interviews to conceptualize, integrate, and reconceptualize interpretations and analyses (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

In discussions of ethnographic and participant observation approaches, a controversial issue is the researcher's role. While traditional anthropologists, such as Malinowski (1922) and Van Maanen (1998) argue for the positivist perspective that the researcher must be an objective outsider, contemporary anthropologists Nightingale (2008), Tedlock (1991), and Wolcott (1990) take a more interpretative approach and orient ethnographic approaches as socially constructed, meaning-making processes. When research is focused on a familiar culture and is oriented to outlining potential actions and changes, the approach is described as insider action research (Alvesson, 2003; Coughlan, 2007; Zeni, 1998). Zeni's (1998) "A Guide to Ethical Issues and Action Research" provided a guide to review and reflect upon the unique elements of studying the practice of teaching, specifically ethical issues and alternative actions through thirty-seven questions organized into six parts (p. 10). These questions were initially answered as part of the research proposal process but provided a useful framework to examine my research choices and the ethical implications of each decision that I summarize in the reflexivity section of this chapter.

The COVID-19 pandemic began during fieldwork. In March 2020, all research sites closed campuses and instruction moved online. At this point, the study began using a self-ethnographic approach to examine communication regarding COVID-19 and the shift to remote instruction at Temple University. In the self-ethnographic approach, the researcher uses a cultural setting where she is an active participant to collect empirical data through experiences, knowledge, and information (Alvesson, 2003, pp. 174–175).

This self-ethnographic approach continued alongside the fieldwork underway for Spring 2020 but was conducted entirely remotely from the researcher's home after March 13, 2020.

This chapter begins by revisiting the research questions. This is followed by the context for the study which includes the settings, participants, and procedures for anonymity and confidentiality. The Theory as Method section summarizes how grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2006) worked in tandem with Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy. The Theory as Method section is followed by an outline of the research design and provides details on each of the methods employed, including document research, textual analysis of course syllabi, observation of teaching practice, interviews, and focus groups. This chapter concludes with a section on ethical considerations and insider action research (Zeni, 1998).

### **Research Questions Revisited**

The methods discussed in this chapter address the study's research questions (RQ), which are:

- RQ1: How do the labor conditions of adjunct faculty differ from full-time tenured and tenure track faculty labor conditions in schools of media and communication?
- RQ2: How do the labor conditions of media and communication faculty shape the ways in which communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning are employed in the classroom?
- RQ3: What do course syllabi reveal about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication?

- RQ4: How do department chairs and administrators in schools of media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions, and does this understanding impact the practices surrounding recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation processes?
- RQ5: How do students in media and communication courses taught by adjuncts understand adjunct labor conditions?

Within each of the methods in this chapter, I refer back to these research questions to provide context for the approaches, purposes, and procedures applied for each method.

### **Context and Setting for Research**

This study occurred at a time when the value of higher education as a public good was increasingly questioned (Putnam, 2015), when universities were becoming increasingly commodified as demonstrated by the increasing number of adjunct faculty responsible for teaching, and when nearly all higher education in the United States was disrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

To situate this research within the diversity of higher education institutions in the United States, I made a methodological choice to include three institutions of higher education. I also made a deliberate methodological choice to include administrators and students as participants. Adjunct faculty were selected to ensure that the study included a variety of communication subjects, lower-level and upper-level courses, and those courses commonly included in communication curricula and those commonly taught by adjunct faculty, such as advertising, marketing, media planning, news writing, and public speaking/basic communication. Finally, as a study informed by ethnographic practice, the

researcher's role is implicated in how the research was conducted. Later in this chapter, I discuss my participant observer role in detail and address how I simultaneously acted as a participant insider and as a theoretical and interpretative outsider for the study.

Adjunct faculty teach on semester-based contracts at institutions of higher education, and this study focused on adjunct faculty in media and communication. To understand the teaching practices and labor conditions, research was conducted at three higher education institutions located on the East Coast of the United States. Prior to conducting research, it was confirmed that all three institutions rely on the use of adjunct faculty. These institutions were selected for the practical reason of accessibility and because each relies on adjunct faculty to teach media and communication courses. As a higher education professional, I have had relationships with each institution that allowed me to request access through the appropriate individuals, and the public-facing websites of each institution provided information about potential adjunct faculty participants.

Each of the higher education sites is located within traveling distance of the researcher's residence and a convenient sample to use for analysis—three institutions provide insight into patterns across higher education. All three institutions have a college or department of communications. These factors render these sites an effective cross-section of higher education institutions to examine the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty. Throughout this study, I have identified each of the sites as follows: Urban University, Bucolic University, and Religious University. These pseudonyms provide some environmental context for each site. A brief description of each site is provided.

### *Time Frame and Settings*

This study took place from April 2019–May 2020. A global pandemic caused by the novel COVID-19 virus disrupted the spring 2020 semester of colleges and universities across the United States including the research sites involved. In mid-January, colleges issued warnings about international travel because of the virus, and some began to restrict travel to China. According to Ellis's (April 8, 2020) *Chronicle of Higher Education* story, in the 11 days between March 6–March 17, more than 100 institutions made the decision to move instruction online. By mid-March 2020, college campuses had emptied as dorms closed and students were sent home. Quarantine and stay-at-home orders were issued across much of the country. COVID-19 continued, and as the spring semester came to an end, there was not an end to COVID's impact as commencement and graduation ceremonies were canceled.

Urban University is a public, research intensive, doctoral granting institution located in a large city. Urban University enrolls more than 40,000 students across all programs and has more than 2,500 undergraduate students in its College of Media and Communication, which has multiple departments and offers a variety of majors, minors, and certificates. According to Urban University's most recent Fact Book, over 70% of all faculty are non-tenure track (NTT) or adjuncts. Urban University lists the name of each faculty member, including adjuncts, on both the course schedule and the College of Media and Communication websites.

Bucolic University is a public, research intensive, doctoral granting institution located in a college town with just over 40,000 residents, which doubles in size to more than 80,000 residents during the academic year. Bucolic University enrolls more than

40,000 students across all programs and has more than 2,500 undergraduate students in the College of Communications, which offers a variety of majors, minors, and certificates in media and communication. In addition, Bucolic University also offers communication majors through the College of Liberal Arts, the regional campuses and the fully online division. There was significant difficulty in determining the exact percentage of NTT or adjunct faculty using Bucolic University's most recent Fact Book. While part-time numbers are included in the overall staff numbers, the faculty section of the Fact Book includes only full-time faculty. It is important to note that the Fact Book's Faculty Distribution by Rank chart shows more than 45% of faculty outside the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor. The number of adjunct faculty willing to participate in the study supports inclusion of Bucolic University in this study.

Religious University is a private, religiously affiliated institution located in a large city. According to the most recent Fact Book, Religious University enrolls just over 3,000 students across all undergraduate programs and maintains a faculty-student ratio of 12 to 1. Religious University has a Communication Department within the College of Arts and Sciences, which offers several majors and minors in media and communication. A section of the Religious University Communication Department website is dedicated to student learning outcomes and refers to the National Communication Association's (NCA) framework for learning outcomes in communication. Unlike Urban University or Bucolic University, Religious University only lists the names of full-time faculty on the Communication Department website and does not list the names of faculty on the publicly available course listing. Personal correspondence with the Communication Department Chair indicated that the department relies on adjuncts for basic

communication/public speaking courses and “We have one teaching PR [public relations] this semester, but we usually don’t have any more than that” (personal correspondence, October 2018). Religious University is included as an example of a private institution, and it relies on media and communication adjuncts for specific, limited purposes.

***Participants—Adjunct Faculty, Administrators, and Union Activists***

Following the site selection, the publicly available course schedules for each institution were reviewed to identify potential courses and adjunct faculty. Only one institution’s course schedule indicated the faculty members’ rank. To identify adjunct faculty at the other sites, additional research was conducted using the website and conversations with the department chairs to identify adjunct faculty participants. Potential participants received an email that included a brief summary of the research project and a request for interview. For adjunct faculty, the email also included a request for permission to observe teaching over the course of a semester. In several cases, adjunct faculty requested a brief phone call to discuss my research before granting permission. Consent forms were completed for all participants. Participant interviews conducted after March 17 collected oral consent as part of the interview process.

Participant observations of 13 courses taught by 9 adjunct faculty were conducted between May 2019 and May 2020. An additional four interviews were conducted with adjunct faculty. An anonymized list of adjunct faculty participants and characteristics is included in Appendix C: Participants – Adjunct Faculty. I have limited the information presented in Table 3 to include pseudonym, gender, teaching experience, and general course topic but removed any uniquely identifiable information that could reveal the identity of the institution or the individual.

To understand the labor conditions, the study included interviews of department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, and university administrators. A full list of interview participants for labor conditions is included in Appendix C: Participants – Department Chairs, Course or Sequence Directors, and Administrators.

In addition, one interview was conducted with Joe Berry. Joe Berry is long-time activist for adjuncts and author of the 2005 book, *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower*. Mr. Berry is a member of the international advisory committee for the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL). COCAL “is a network of North American activists working to improve higher education through the collective achievement of job reliability, livable wages, academic freedom, and time and resources for academic research and professional development for contingent academic laborers” (COCAL, 2014, para. 1). Two interviews were also conducted with adjunct activists at Santa Monica College to provide insight into strategies that can be used to improve the labor conditions of adjunct faculty in higher education. Santa Monica College (SMC) is a public, community college in Santa Monica, California. Founded as a junior college in 1929, SMC enrolls over 30,000 students in more than 90 fields of study (SMC, n.d. c). SMC is not included with the three higher education sites because only two interviews were conducted.

### ***Anonymity and Confidentiality***

This study required careful attention to anonymity and confidentiality to protect the adjunct faculty participants from potential loss of future contracts or damage to the relationship with the department chair. Pseudonyms are used for each site location and for all participants in the study. To fully protect all participants from the risk of deductive disclosure, certain details about the institutions, departments, and participants were

modified or altered to protect their identities. As Zeni (1998) suggested, pseudonyms were used in transcripts and memos (p. 15). This is consistent with the Belmont Report's concept of "beneficence"—do no harm to study participants (United States, 1978).

### **Theory as Method**

With practice theory and critical pedagogy, grounded theory provided a framework to navigate the various data and perspectives encountered and allowed for the exploration of processes, patterns, and connections between practices, structures, and relationships. Grounded theory was used as a general and an interpretive method. Strauss and Corbin (1994) define grounded theory as "a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (p. 273). Building on the work of Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz's (2006) approach to grounded theory acknowledged the role of the researcher as "part of the world we study and the data we collect" (p. 10). This constructivist approach acknowledged the ways in which I as a researcher used past and present experiences to develop and interpret the research content and context in what Strauss and Corbin (1994) described as the realities of theory in an historical moment (pp. 279–278). At the same time, Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) and Freire's (1970) approaches provide theoretical constructs and methodological approaches to work together in an interactive relationship to inform this qualitative inquiry process. In this way, the theory and method supported my examination of the collective and the individual.

Practice theory and critical pedagogy work together to reveal structures and practices and understand how the social world reproduces and transforms those structures and practices. Bourdieu accounts for the "dualisms of agency–structure, objective–

subjective, and the micro–macro" (Reay, 2004, p. 433). The flexibility and adaptability of Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of doxa, habitus, and capital and Freire's (1970) dialogic/anti-dialogic principles provided a framework for all aspects of this study but especially participant observations and interviews. Doxa supported the interrogation of university syllabi and documents and practices in the context of observations and interviews. Habitus captured social actions and was used in an iterative and evolving process to understand how individuals perceive, think, and act in the higher education context and how those views shape and are shaped by the world and their role within it. As Reay (2004) noted, habitus allows for the interrogation of both society and the "complex, differentiated notions at the level of the individual" (p. 433). Freire's (1970) work brings reflexivity and active consciousness required of a pragmatic, solutions-oriented research project with attention to the structures of domination and oppression.

Practice theory, critical pedagogy, and grounded theory worked together and served "as a way to learn about the worlds . . . and [as] a method for developing the theories to understand them" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). My study was organized in four phases: data collection, analysis, preliminary interpretation, and finalization. Data collection occurred throughout the project and aligned with the ethnographic approaches of jottings, field notes, and analytical memos. Documents, jottings, field notes, analytical memos, texts, interview recordings, and interview transcripts represent the data collected for my study. During analysis, data were coded through an iterative coding process.

As part of coding and analysis, my methodological and theoretical frameworks provided an interpretative approach that included the voices and perspectives of the people studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274). Just as I zoomed in and zoomed out

between actions and structures, grounded theory's process-oriented, iterative, and flexible approach allowed me to move between the emic and etic roles of ethnographic practice. In the emic role, I engaged in meaning-making with the participant's own words and actions to describe a lived experience (Geertz, 1973). In the etic role, I relied on existing theoretical constructs or conventions such as "economic organization, social organization, social control, technology and cultural ecology, [and] political organization" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 51). This back-and-forth between emic and etic encouraged theoretical sensitivity and supported the application of Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) practice theory, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching and learning (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; Weimer, 2013).

As data was collected, an iterative coding process began using NVivo software. Open coding was initially employed to identify significant actions, statements, phrases, and concepts that occurred in the classroom observation and interviews. Key themes were identified and organized by similarities to create broader categories. A secondary analysis used the categories to build relationships with references to the literature and characterization of codes as perspectives of the participants (emic) or perspective of the researcher (etic).

Following analysis, preliminary interpretation was informed by existing theoretical frameworks to begin explaining what I saw and experienced in the field. The participant observations allowed me to process information and integrate theoretical constructs while the semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe and validate my understanding of specific incidents. This integration allowed me to look for patterns and

supported theoretical sensitivity as to what is included and excluded as part of the research. The early insights and the completion of open coding occurred when properties of each code were finalized and examples using the participants' words or actions were identified to illustrate each code. This process provided early insights and moved the study to the preliminary interpretation phase.

In the preliminary interpretation phase, a concept map was created to illustrate relationships between concepts and ideas. The concept map was used to create an initial outline that provided the structure for the early drafts. Preliminary interpretation was an iterative process that involved revisiting jottings, analytical memos, and re-reading transcripts. Through this process, patterns evolved and were tested using multiple data sources. Theoretical constructs, such as learner-centered teaching practices, Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of tempo, doxa, capital, and habitus, and Freire's (1970) conscientização, were integrated to support or refute themes, codes, and interpretations.

Finalization relied on theoretical integration to carefully explain and illustrate media and communication adjunct faculty's lived experience as understood by adjunct faculty themselves, department chairs, administrators, and students. Finalization relied heavily on theoretical frameworks of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1970), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and pedagogy (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013; Weimer, 2013). It is important to recognize that Bourdieu's concepts are intended to be used reflexively with careful attention to assumptions and presuppositions of both the objects studied and the positionality of the researcher (Swartz as cited in Gorski, 2013, p. 20). In this way, positionality intersects with the ethical considerations of this project which relied on

Zeni's (1998) insider action research framework to guide this project's ethical considerations.

While I have summarized practice theory, critical pedagogy and grounded theory separately, in method and in practice these approaches were interwoven and worked together to support all aspects of this project from data collection to analysis and interpretation through to the presentation of my findings. Similarly, my research design is broken out to fully represent each method employed in the study. In practice, these methods often overlapped and worked in concert with one another. In this way, my theoretical and methodological frameworks of practice theory, critical pedagogy, and grounded theory interweave to answer my research questions through a holistic examination of the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty in media and communication.

### **Research Design**

This qualitative, multi-method project was designed using the principally ethnographic approach of participant observation. Ethnography and ethnographic approaches rely on both the process and the product of qualitative inquiry (Geertz, 1973; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010; Horvat & Heron, 2013; Wolcott, 1990). Using an ethnographic lens, this study focused on the exploration and description of the social phenomena of adjunct faculty in media and communication from an interpretative rather than a positivist orientation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 198).

### *Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations*

As with any qualitative study, there are assumptions that have been made. The following assumptions were made about this research. First, this study is representative of the adjunct faculty who participated, and this sample may not fully represent all of the complexity of media and communication adjunct labor, particularly those adjunct faculty who do not love teaching and those who were not comfortable with classroom observation. Second, the sample of media and communication adjuncts studied were representative of adjunct faculty in media and communication at my sites. It is assumed that the responses expressed by all participants accurately reflect their experiences and opinions. Finally, it is assumed that all behaviors observed were typical of any given day outside of the days observed and that participants in this study answered the interview questions openly and honestly.

To identify and document the limitations and delimitations, this study relied on the definitions provided by Mauch and Birch (1989): “A limitation is a factor that may or will affect the study in an important way, but is not under control of the researcher; a delimitation differs, principally, in that it is controlled by the researcher” (p. 71). Limitations of the study include the selection of media and communication adjunct faculty may not reflect the general population of media and communication adjunct faculty, and my presence as a participant observer may have impacted teaching practice of adjuncts in the study.

There are three significant delimitations or researcher decisions that limited the scope of this study’s inquiry. First, my sites were purposefully sampled based on the type of higher education institution and the reliance on adjunct faculty in media and

communication. Second, my observations generally occurred within one semester and with two exceptions, each adjunct faculty member was observed during a single semester. My interview protocols were developed and implemented by me as the researcher. Other delimitations are outlined in the context of each method or methodological approach.

### ***Document Research***

To understand organizational context, I examined each university's website, the Fact Book, the faculty handbook, the university's policies and procedures, the course catalog or bulletin outlining the curriculum and majors offered, news stories related to unionization or contract negotiations, and union contracts, if available. Any information released to the public such as press releases, news stories, opinion pieces, letters addressing responses to the COVID-19 situation or the public results of faculty contract negotiations were included in document research. This research provided historical context for each of the universities and a present-day perspective on their approach to media and communication education. The policy and procedure content provided information related to specific hiring practices at each institution.

### ***Textual Analysis of Syllabi***

Textual analysis of course syllabi was used to answer the question on what course syllabi reveal about teaching practices and to identify any differences in course syllabi based on faculty rank. Prior to the start of field work, an initial review was conducted of 75 publicly available media and communication course syllabi. Following initial review, a textual analysis of the course syllabi was completed. An additional 13 course syllabi were added from interview and observation participants. The textual analysis of syllabi relied on Parkes and Harris's (2002) list of purposes and associated elements and an

adaptation of Palmer, Bach, and Streifer's (2014) learning-centered syllabus rubric. Each syllabus was coded according to Parkes and Harris's (2002) list of elements and purposes. A separate coding effort was used to identify how adjunct faculty's beliefs, depth of knowledge, and content mastery were reflected in course syllabi (Matejka & Kurke, 1994; O'Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008; Parkes & Harris, 2002).

### ***Observation of Teaching Practices***

Participant observation was used to understand the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty, specifically how communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning were used in the classroom. This approach allowed me to “to study social situations or organizations from an insider’s perspective” (Rubin et al., p. 231). To gain site access, I requested permission from each department chair at the sites where I conducted the study. Potential participants were identified using the publicly available course schedule and were sent an email with a description of my study and a request for permission to observe their teaching or to participate in an interview. Consent, using IRB-approved consent forms, was collected from all participants either by email or at the first observation. Between May 2019–May 2020, I conducted participant observation of 13 courses taught by 9 adjunct faculty. All observed courses were three credits. A typical three-credit course meets for approximately 45 hours over the course of the semester. Each course was observed for at least 15 hours, and several courses were observed for 35 hours. A total of 337 hours of participant observation occurred during this study. Interviews with participants were conducted after the midpoint of the observation or at the end of the semester.

Participant observation, as a version of ethnographic fieldwork, is layered with unique challenges as represented by Erickson (2016), who noted the difficulties of extended close contact with a community that reveals challenges and suffering of the community. In this study, fieldwork required extended close contact with media and communication adjunct faculty, often revealing the challenges they experienced in the classroom and navigating the bureaucracy of each research site. These challenges were enhanced during the Spring 2020 semester and the shift to online instruction that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. My role as a researcher required me to acknowledge the challenges but also required that I accept the limited nature of observation and writing as a researcher, as there is an incompleteness to what is witnessed and captured. As a researcher, I am first a witness, and I am limited in my ability to communicate all that has been seen, heard, or experienced (Erickson, 2016, p. 103).

Throughout my participant observation, detailed field notes were maintained. Field notes began as handwritten notes or jottings during classroom observation and during the semi-structured interviews. Handwritten notes were then processed as typed field notes using a standard template. Throughout the study, analytical memos were developed to structure and focus the line of inquiry. Analytical memos provided a way to apply theoretical constructs, explore ideas, identify patterns, and investigate any cases that represented outliers, as well as reflect on my positionality and role in the research.

### *Interviews*

“An interview is a focused, purposeful conversation between two or more people” (Brennen, 2013, p. 27). This study used semi-structured interview protocols that were

approved by the researcher's institutional IRB prior to data collection. While many interviews occurred at the research site, interviews conducted in Spring 2020 occurred via Zoom videoconferencing tool. I conducted eight interviews with administrators, department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, and university leadership; three interviews with union activists; and eleven interviews with current or former adjuncts. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 85 minutes.

When conducted in person, interviews were recorded digitally using a cell phone application, Otter.ai, which transcribes conversations in near real time. Following each interview, I relistened to the interview to review and edit the transcript for any errors or missing audio. Otter.ai also categorizes commonly used words, which assisted in finding themes across interview participants. Following the move to remote instruction and the closure of college campuses in March 2020, interviews were conducted via Zoom. Zoom is a "video conferencing tool with real-time messaging, content sharing, recording, and auto-transcription capabilities" (Zoom Meetings & Chat, n.d.). Following the transition to online Zoom interviews, consent was collected verbally prior to the start of the interview. Similar to the Otter.ai process, recordings were reviewed, and the transcripts edited for errors or missing audio.

Intensive interviews with adjunct faculty allowed for the exploration of teaching practice by questioning observed classroom practices to uncover the "why" (Rubin et al., 2005). Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for additional questions and probes to interrogate my observations and to allow participants to share personal narratives that illustrate teaching practice, labor conditions, or other information related to the adjunct experience (see Appendix A: Adjunct Post-Observation Interview Questions). A total of

eleven interviews were conducted with adjunct faculty, including seven of the adjunct faculty involved in participant observation. Four additional interviews were conducted with adjunct faculty who did not participate in the fieldwork portion of the study.

Adjunct faculty interviews provided a way to clarify and refine my understanding of the syllabi texts, to understand the decision-making and development process for constructing course syllabi and course content, to probe teaching beliefs and practices, and to delve deeply into practices observed in the classroom (Brennen, 2013, p. 28). This multifaceted examination of adjunct teaching practice relied on Bourdieu's (1977) idea of habitus to explore how the adjunct's individual beliefs about teaching and guiding principles bound thoughts and actions in the college classroom.

Interviews also provided an opportunity for adjunct faculty to reflect on their teaching practices. Reflexivity is essential for examination of teaching practices and beliefs, as well as an important part of learning (see Brookfield, 2006, 2017; Dewey, 1938/1963; Fernback, 2015). The semi-structured interview questions were informed by Brookfield's (2006) four lenses and included questions used to (1) explore the adjunct's narrative as teacher and as learner; (2) understand how student evaluation, feedback, and critique impacted teaching practice; (3) determine how adjunct faculty experience assessment and feedback; and (4) identify the ways in which adjunct faculty incorporate theoretical literature and research into teaching practice.

Variability was achieved with a mix of institutions, courses, and teaching experience. For adjunct faculty, there were slightly more women (n=8) than men (n=5). One issue with this study and the interviews was a lack of diversity in the participants;

there were no nonwhite participants. Adjunct faculty interviewed averaged 7 years of higher education teaching experience. While some were early in their teaching experience (less than 2 years), many of the adjuncts had more than 10 years of teaching experience (often at the same institution), and one adjunct had been teaching for more than 20 years at the same institution. One adjunct faculty member taught exclusively online. Two adjuncts expressed a desire for full-time faculty positions, and the remainder worked in other full-time employment or had recently retired. All adjunct faculty had at least a bachelor's degree, and academic degrees obtained ranged from a bachelor's to Ph.D. .

Eleven interviews were also conducted with department chairs (n = 3), sequence heads/course directors (n= 3), university administrators (n = 2), and union activists (n=3) to understand how each of these participants understand adjunct labor conditions and to explore the practices surrounding recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation of adjunct faculty. The semi-structured interview process for administrators, department chairs, and course/sequence directors asked questions related to the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of adjunct faculty (see Appendix B: Department Chair Interview Questions). The questions in Appendix B were adapted slightly for interviews with administrators and union activists. All participants had prior experience with teaching, including as adjunct faculty, and were asked about their teaching practices.

### *Focus Groups—Students*

Through their courses, students experience the labor of adjunct faculty. To answer the research question on students' understanding of adjunct labor conditions, students enrolled in the participant observation courses were invited to participate in focus groups. Focus groups were "extremely useful for identifying the language, definitions, and

concepts that research participants find meaningful as they navigate through their daily life experiences” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 166). Focus groups were also useful in uncovering student assumptions and beliefs about faculty and faculty work. The student focus groups revealed the ways in which students understand differences between faculty ranks and the limits of this understanding.

Recruitment of student focus group participants was conducted through email or an in-class announcement, as well as class-distributed flyers with a QR code that could be scanned to access a registration site to select a session. Because all students enrolled in courses taught by observation participants have experienced adjunct faculty teaching, a convenience sample of students enrolled in at least one of the courses observed was used. Three focus groups of 6–7 participants were conducted in Spring 2020, and a total of 19 students participated. Focus groups were relatively homogeneous as all participants were current students enrolled in at least one undergraduate course at the participating sites. Recruitment and participation of focus groups were impacted by the COVID-19 disruption; focus groups planned for April and May were canceled because of low student participation.

### **Ethical Considerations and Insider Action Research**

All research begins with a question that the researcher is interested in answering and the hope of finding an answer that generates or extends knowledge. This is the intellectual labor of research and scholarship. In producing knowledge, it is essential to examine the ways in which my own experience, background, beliefs, and worldviews shaped both the questions asked and the methods employed to answer the questions. In this way, I am considering my habitus and applying the idea of reflection and critical

consciousness (Brookfield, 2017; Freire, 1970). This section is intended to highlight the ways in which I am implicated in my examination of the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty in higher education.

This reflexivity statement examines my positionality and briefly outlines the ethical situations encountered as part of my study's fieldwork. Positionality is the researcher's critical examination of self and the ways in which the self informs, constrains, or otherwise, impacts the research (Abu-Lughod, 2000; Brennen, 2013; Horvat & Heron, 2013). Horvat and Heron (2013) contend that to address positionality in research, you must address questions of identity, what data is, what the research site is, approaches to data collection and analysis, as well as role management issues in the field (p. 81). My consideration of the ethical situations of this study was guided by Zeni's (1998) framework that provides guidelines surrounding ethics in action research. Zeni, a faculty member at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, developed the framework to support doctoral students interested in teaching-related dissertation projects in their own workplaces.

Zeni's (1998) framework provided a series of questions that allow for the examination of ethical and identity issues, particularly for insider and action research. In this study, I situate my researcher role through the lens of a higher education insider. "Action research is rooted in each participant's experience of the situation, rather than being removed from it" (Coghlan, 2007, p. 295). For this study, my role as an "insider" operates on four levels: (1) most broadly as a higher education professional with experience at four institutions of higher education, (2) currently through my professional affiliation as an administrator responsible for hiring contract-based instructors (similar to

adjuncts) for non-credit and continuing education programs in the Provost's portfolio at Temple University, (3) my secondary appointment as an active adjunct in the College of Science and Technology at Temple University, and (4) finally, my former experience for multiple semesters as a media and communication adjunct who taught a public speaking course at Temple University's Klein College of Media and Communication.

There are advantages and challenges to "insider" status. A key advantage to my "insider" status was the ability to use my higher education knowledge and experience to probe the structures and practices surrounding adjuncts. As a higher education professional, I could leverage what Sera-Shriar (2014) described as the ability of "skilled practitioners . . . to describe, analyze and represent the natural world according to the guiding principles of the . . . field's methodologies" (p. 35). Field notes and analytical memos provided reflexive moments to interrogate my personal experience and what I was seeing in the field. When reflecting on the data, I used Zeni's (1998) guiding questions to explore "power relations" with individuals and groups, "shared understandings" with participants, and "personal bonds [and] professional commitments" (p. 13). The memo process allowed for ideas to emerge but also provided a balancing function. As Charmaz (2006) noted, it allowed me to "tolerate ambiguity but keep moving in the process" (p. 105).

Reflection required consideration of representation to include an examination of power and politics of my field work and writing processes. The interpretative and analytical work of writing involved choices, and I faced questions on representation issues, such as how to address "the juxtaposition of parallel truths that contradict each other" (Erickson, 2016, p. 102). As I moved from the field to coding to analysis to

interpretation and writing, I had to consider how participants were represented and pay attention to the role of voice and the ethics of transcription (see Ochs, 1979). First, as a researcher I recognize that my presentation of the adjunct community is always partial and incomplete. In other words, I acknowledge that this study is a representation of specific aspects of the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty in media and communication. I, as a researcher, have shaped the research and the researched community has shaped me. Acknowledging and reflecting on representation issues throughout my study allowed me to locate myself with precision and consistency, both in the process of my fieldwork and in product of that work represented by this document, my dissertation (Abu-Lughod, 2000, p. 261).

Given the precarity for adjuncts and even for the administrators who were NTT faculty, there was risk in participating in the study. One of the first ethical dilemmas that I faced was how to protect the anonymity of participants. As part of both participant observation and interviews, careful attention was paid to the pseudonym process at the beginning during informed consent and at the conclusion of the interview. This study required the use of pseudonyms for the sites and the participants.

My identity shaped and informed my research, including my personal beliefs in the transformative power of higher education, my dual roles as a higher education “insider”/administrator and as an “insider”/doctoral student, and my current/former roles as an adjunct.

I believe that higher education can change people’s lives, and higher education changed my life. I grew up in a working-class community in western Pennsylvania as one

of two daughters of a single mother and an alcoholic father who abandoned us when I was six years old. I was a shy kid who loved reading and learning, including reading old copies of the encyclopedia when we were unable to get to the public library. We were the working poor, and my family received free lunch and welfare, also known as government assistance. I knew we were poor, but it is only retrospectively that I realize how poor. I was the first person in my family to go to college and completed my only college application days before the deadline since it was uncertain how we could afford the immediate (college application fee), and the longer term (college tuition). The university I attended was the local branch of a state-affiliated university in the town where I grew up. During college, I lived at home and worked two to three jobs. My success in college is a credit to my mother, who instilled an imperative to finish what you start. In my job as a work-study student, the staff of the university's continuing education office helped me navigate the complexities of college and made me aware of the doxa of higher education. Unlike many of the undergraduate students whom I encountered during my employment at Carnegie Mellon University and Johns Hopkins University, I see myself in many of the undergraduate students that I have encountered at Temple University.

My professional role also played a role in my identity and must be acknowledged as part of my research. As Associate Vice Provost of University College, I am responsible for the oversight and management of non-credit and continuing education programs. Non-credit programs do not offer academic credit and do not lead to an undergraduate or graduate degree. Non-credit programs are also self-supporting and revenue-generating. These programs represent a specific element of the neoliberal university where students are customers. In my professional role, I think about the doxa

of educational quality and the doxa of contingency as much of our non-credit teaching labor is contractual. Students in these programs are taking courses for personal enrichment and professional development. In my leadership role, I am responsible for the hiring and oversight of non-credit instructors teaching in programs offered by the Office of Non-Credit and Continuing Education (ONCE), the Real Estate Institute (REI), the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), Off-Campus Programs and Training (OCPT), and Summer and Special Programs. In my role, I have built relationships with individuals at a variety of levels at many higher education institutions in the region and across the country.

To minimize conflicts of interest and power dynamics, I reviewed sites' course schedules carefully to ensure that potential conflicts of interest were avoided. Any instructors teaching (including previous, current, and anticipated) in one of the non-credit programs where I have influence and/or authority for hiring, compensation, and evaluation were excluded as participants in this research. A checks and balances approach was employed where I submitted a list of potential participants to a member of my staff to review and confirm the non-credit instructor status.

In the context of this project, my primary identity is as a doctoral student and researcher. The findings of this research may inform my future practices as a higher education administrator; this project was approached as separate and distinct from my work experience. I have navigated and managed dual roles throughout my doctoral education. First, all university-related data was requested using either publicly available data or through the university-defined processes to request data. To further separate my roles as administrator and doctoral student researcher, I had a separate email account

created that I used exclusively for my research. The email account is an example of “insider” knowledge and my relationships with staff in Information Technology Services (ITS) which allowed me to know the process for requesting a separate email account. It also reveals the social capital (Bourdieu, 1970) that I have as university employee who previously worked in IT. I used only my personal mobile phone for calls with participants to further distinguish my university-related responsibilities from the study. I was explicit and clear on the purpose of all interactions. I did not hide my work and role at the university, and when asked, I responded with honesty and provided transparency about the scope of my work and responsibilities at Temple University.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) use the term “ethics in practice” to describe the myriad of ethical issues that arise during the research project (p. 264). “Ethically important moments” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 265) arise as part of the day-to-day interactions with people involved in the research project and require the researcher to consider how to respond in the moment, what to do with the information revealed, and even a basic choice about whether to stop the audio recorder during an interview. There were moments during interviews when the participant asked to close the door, to stop the recording, or to strike a comment from the transcript. Each of these requests was respected and honored. Ethics in practice required awareness and sensitivity to the power dynamics and my roles as both an “insider” and as a researcher while also maintaining my humanity and avoiding exploitation of any participant. The primary model employed to stay true to this approach was Zeni’s (1998) use of the idea of the “golden rule.” In applying Zeni’s golden rule, I focused on a process of open, honest, and transparent communication to overcome the divide between the researcher and the researched (p. 18).

The multi-method approach allowed for triangulation as a way to increase validity and reliability for this study. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) noted, triangulation uses multiple methods to support the same conclusion (p. 51). During the analysis and preliminary interpretation, this project compared and contrasted data collected through various methods such as texts, observation, and interviews. Geertz (1973) contended that coherence could not be the test of validity for cultural work. As a researcher, I was open to the evidence and counterevidence encountered during data collection, analysis, and interpretation, particularly data that could result in a different or alternative interpretation. This approach allowed me to identify any differences between the participants' descriptions of actions and performance and apply the Bourdieuan (1977) lens when considering the complex interactions between structures and agency. Alternative perspectives opened the possibility of alternative interpretations. Through the research process, I revisited and reviewed my data and writing using Hesse-Biber and Leavy's (2010) three approaches to validity: (1) validity as craftsmanship (internal)—the link between what is observed and what is happening, (2) communicative validity (construct)—how well one's knowledge fits with existing theories and what others know, and (3) pragmatic validity—how this research impacts the group studied and other groups to foster change or action (pp. 48–51).

## CHAPTER 5: STRUCTURES AND ADMINISTRATION

Adjunct labor conditions happen within the context of higher education institutions. As organizations, the academic work of higher education is “the creation, transmission, and refinement of knowledge” (Tierney, 2006, p. 82), and each institution is a field with doxa that is reflected in the “communication, rituals, ceremonies, socialization, and history” (p. 81). To understand the organizational structures of administration and to interrogate the ways in which the structures produce and reproduce the capitalist system (Bourdieu, 1977; Marx (1976/[1886])), this chapter moves from the media and communication discipline as represented by two professional associations to the department and curriculum as represented by the department chair and course directors/sequence heads. This chapter concludes with an examination of the university support for teaching and the heterodoxy of unions.

The examination of higher education practices and structures illustrates the tension between the need for and reliance on adjuncts and the disregard for adjuncts as members of the faculty and university community. To begin, I zoom out to look at the practices and structures of higher education through the analysis of two communication professional associations and their attention to adjunct faculty as represented by their public facing websites. Next, I zoom in to the institutions and use documents and interviews to describe the experiences of administrators, including department chairs, course directors, and sequence heads who are responsible for recruiting, hiring, managing, and evaluating adjunct faculty. Interviews with administrative staff in units responsible for supporting faculty across the university also supported an understanding of media and communication adjunct faculty labor conditions. I conclude the chapter by

zooming in further to examine individuals in the field of unions through highlights of interviews with Santa Monica College adjunct organizers. This zoomed in view illustrates perceptions and actions related to supporting adjunct faculty and provides the heterodoxy of two adjunct faculty who have secured full-time tenure track positions at the institution where they were adjunct faculty. This chapter addresses RQ 1, which asks, “How do the labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty differ from full-time tenured and tenure track faculty labor conditions?” and RQ 4, which queries, “How do department chairs and administrators in schools of media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions, and does this understanding impact the practices surrounding recruiting, hiring, orientating, and evaluating of adjunct faculty?”

### **Professional Associations**

The history of higher education literature describes how faculty affiliations have shifted to a primary affiliation with a discipline and a secondary affiliation with the university or college where they are employed (Rudolph, 1962/1990). This shift in affiliation from institution to discipline provides context for the fields of tenured/tenure track faculty and provides insight into the doxa for each field. This is not to say that faculty are not committed to the university or college; rather it is to show the ways in which the disciplinary structures shape the labor conditions of faculty. Disciplines have become increasingly specialized over time (Rudolph, 1962/1990, pp. 394–416), and as Thelin (2004) observed, by the early 1910s, “each discipline had spawned its own national organization” (p. 131). This specialization is clearly illustrated in the international and national professional associations associated with the media and communication discipline. The discipline provides the doxa or what Bourdieu (1977)

describes as “the social structures and mental structures which . . . [are] the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order” (p.164). Bourdieu is describing the rules and principles that guide what is acceptable or unacceptable within a community. In professional associations, the doxa around adjunct faculty can be observed by examining the public-facing websites of the associations.

Professional associations are an important structure within higher education and provide another way to interrogate the labor conditions of adjunct faculty by understanding alignment of tenured and tenure track faculty to research production. While professional associations may seem important only to research intensive universities, most faculty earn their Ph.D. s from research intensive institutions and they bring the doxa of research to the institutions where they obtain employment, including at teaching-intensive universities. While the requirements for research may be less at teaching-intensive universities, the doxa of research becomes part of the habitus of faculty as scholar.

Labaree (2017) citing Kerr contends that “the research university has elevated the ideal of the individual scholar” (p. 21). To illustrate the doxa of the individual scholar, I use Rudolph’s (1962/1990) description of an association’s annual meeting, “The [professional association] annual meeting . . . brought together groups of specialists who spoke in a language all their own, shared discoveries, and went back to their campuses with a renewed sense of belonging” (p. 407). Rudolph’s account of an unnamed professional association annual meeting demonstrates the role in enculturating faculty to the practices of the field and their belonging to the discipline over institutional belonging (pp. 405–407). The professional associations exist as fields (Bourdieu, 1977) and the

doxa reveals the Ph.D. as the expected credential, research as an essential responsibility of faculty, and the marginalization of adjunct faculty as it is assumed that faculty are full-time faculty.

While there are numerous associations that media and communication faculty participate in and contribute to, I use the two largest and most prominent: the International Communication Association (ICA) and the National Communication Association (NCA). The ICA and NCA websites serve as exemplars illustrating differences in how scholars in media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions. While both associations allow for membership by anyone who can pay, my analysis focused on how they characterize and address membership by and inclusion of adjunct faculty. On the ICA website, adjunct faculty are noticeably absent. ICA provides no reference to working conditions or the realities of adjunct labor except for a membership category in the bylaws, where they do not use the word adjunct.

Conversely, NCA's website includes a variety of representations of adjuncts and adjunct labor conditions, such as the 2012 NCA C-Briefs; an annual summary of academic job listings; a January 2018 report, "Contingent Faculty Workforce in Communication," and a March 2018 article on the "Casualization of Academic Labor in the Communication Currents," which the NCA (n.d.) describes as "essays, which translate new communication scholarship for lay audiences" (para. 1). Adjunct faculty and their labor conditions are included on the NCA website. This reveals a difference in the NCA's doxa that acknowledges the existence and role of adjunct faculty in media and communication programs. The NCA website, as illustrated by the examples above, acknowledges and makes visible the existence of adjunct faculty through a number of

reports and articles with an emphasis on the ways in which adjunct faculty impact teaching in the communication discipline.

NCA's commitment to promoting and sharing scholarship with non-scholars is another illustration of doxa and reveals an important aspect of NCA's approach to research and scholarship, specifically that it can and should be shared with non-scholars. Unlike ICA, NCA has an orientation that supports the practitioner-scholar, in addition to the traditional researcher-scholar. This is seen through the use and inclusion of "lay audience" language. While it is not explicitly stated, non-scholars could be interpreted as adjuncts, as well as the secondary education teachers and practitioners who participate in NCA.

To compare and contrast, the doxas of ICA and NCA, I return to analysis of the ICA website. Unlike NCA, the realities of adjunct labor conditions are largely ignored by the ICA website. However, ICA does allow adjunct faculty to become members. This membership category is established through a provision in the bylaws called the "Employment Exception" (ICA, 2019). This exception ignores the realities of the current labor market and does not make any reference to the word contingent or adjunct: "PhDs who are no longer students and do not have a permanent position" (ICA, 2019). The bylaws' language even makes reference to "putting together a living wage by teaching part-time in several universities during the same academic year" (ICA, 2019). This reveals another difference between the professional associations with ICA appearing to assume that all members have a Ph.D. The Individual Membership page does list the terms adjunct, temporary, and part-time next to the Employment Exception membership category. A search of the ICA website found that the only other references to adjuncts are

included in job postings. The singular exception is one blog post from October 2018 under Division and Interest Group News for the Activism, Communication and Social Justice group. The only reference and use of the term adjunct were in the short biography of a student and early career representative candidate for the ICA elections, Silvia X. Montaña-Niño, who referred to being an adjunct as part of her work history: “I started combining reporting and editing with a job as an adjunct lecturer in a very important school of journalism in Colombia” (ICA, 2018). Notice that while Montaña-Niño references adjunct work, she also notes that it was at a “very important school of journalism” and in this comment, we see the diminished social capital of adjunct faculty, but the institutionalized cultural capital of a well-known journalism school. As a field, ICA, has revealed the doxa or prevailing logic that the Ph.D. is the expected credential for members and adjunct faculty are valued differently.

Professional associations are, to use Bourdieu’s (1977) words, “instruments of knowledge of the social world” and are “political instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world” (p. 164). In other words, the acknowledgement of adjuncts in the context of professional associations reveals the ways in which media and communication faculty potentially understand the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty. Faculty rely on professional associations as a connection and community for the discipline, and the professional associations provide the doxa that are then used by faculty to “reproduce the structures in a transformed form” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164) at the institution level.

The associations’ doxa and structures inform and shape the understanding of the need for and reliance on media and communication adjuncts, which then reveals the labor

conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty as illustrated in the next section. This next section uses interview data with department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors to illuminate how media and communication departments are reliant on adjunct faculty to deliver curricula that meets the needs of students, keeps pace with continually evolving technology and applications, and satisfies the demands of employers.

### **Department Chairs, Sequence Heads, and Course Directors**

To understand the labor conditions of adjunct faculty, I interviewed department chairs, course directors, sequence heads, and others who support faculty in university-wide roles or offices. Between May 2019 and May 2020, interviews were conducted with four department chairs, three course directors and sequence heads, and three other administrators for functions such as teaching and learning director, former faculty senate chair, and union organizer. In the study, all participants in these roles had been working in higher education for 10 or more years. Administrators from Religious University were scheduled to be interviewed in April 2020, but the interviews were cancelled due to COVID-19. I exchanged several emails and chatted briefly by phone, but I was unable to conduct the formal interview as I did with the other universities. The participants and institutions are identified by pseudonyms: Alan (Bucolic University), Patrick (Urban University), Tanya (Urban University), Christopher (Urban University), Craig (Urban University), Katelyn (Urban University), Mitchell (Urban University), and Lucia (Urban University). The participants at Santa Monica College are not identified by pseudonyms: Joelle and Diane. A short description of each participant follows.

Alan (Bucolic University) is a tenured faculty member, a former department chair, and former chair of the faculty senate. Alan has served on a variety of national

associations and committees including one addressing issues surrounding academic freedom and tenure. Alan's activism and advocacy from his dominant position as tenured faculty represents conscientização (Freire, 1970) for his non-tenure track colleagues. Alan has a Ph.D. and has been working in higher education for more than 30 years. Prior to joining Bucolic University, Alan worked for over 10 years at another institution of higher education.

Patrick (Urban University) serves as department chair for a program with one major and one minor. The program is one of two in the state accredited by the national accrediting body. Prior to joining academe, Patrick worked as a professional in the field. He has a Ph.D. and a master's degree from a highly selective research-intensive institution. Prior to Urban University, Patrick served as a department chair and was a member of the faculty at a small liberal arts institution.

Tanya (Urban University) serves as department chair for a department with two majors (one major has four areas of concentration) and four minors. The department is experiencing growing enrollments. In Tanya's department, there are less than 10 tenured or tenure track faculty, less than 20 full-time non-tenure track faculty (NTT) and approximately 50–60 adjuncts depending on the semester. Tanya is responsible for recruiting, hiring, and overall management of the adjuncts each semester. She established the department's sequence head roles to help support consistency across the curriculum and to ensure uniformity for courses by concentration. Tanya expressed a deep commitment to teaching and ensuring high-quality learning experiences. She worked for more than 15 years in industry and she brings the industry doxa to her role as department chair. She regularly shares her connections with industry to improve the student

experience. She has a master's degree in a media-related field from an Ivy League institution and she is non-tenure track (NTT).

Christopher (Urban University) serves as assistant department chair and works closely with Tanya. Like Tanya, Christopher worked in industry before joining academe and was deeply involved in the professional association for his specialization.

Christopher is heavily involved in experiential education through clubs and student-run organizations that provide communications support to area businesses and nonprofits.

Christopher studied communications for both his bachelor's and master's degrees. Like Tanya, he is NTT faculty.

Craig (Urban University) is a sequence head who works closely with Tanya and is responsible for a course sequence in a popular major with growing enrollments. Craig has professional experience, owns a business, and is an alumnus of Urban University. He worked as an adjunct at Urban University for nearly 5 years before going full-time. Craig is a full-time NTT faculty member. He is committed to teaching and regularly teaches overload in both fall and spring semesters. He also teaches in the summer.

Katelyn (Urban University) is also a sequence head who works closely with Tanya and is responsible for a course sequence in a popular major with growing enrollments. Like Craig, Katelyn has professional experience and is an alumna of Urban University. She worked as an adjunct before going full-time as an NTT faculty member.

Mitchell (Urban University) is a course director for a required course for communication majors and noncommunication majors. Mitchell is responsible for managing all adjunct faculty, including graduate students, who teach the course. Mitchell

develops and maintains all of the course content, including the required textbook, the course assignments, and the learning management system shell, which is copied by all instructors. Mitchell has a Ph.D. from a highly selective research-intensive university. Like the sequence heads, Mitchell is a full-time NTT faculty member.

Lucia (Urban University) leads the university-wide center for teaching and learning and has been with Urban University for nearly 20 years. After earning her Ph.D., Lucia worked as an adjunct faculty member at two other institutions of higher education. Prior to her current role, she was an associate professor and worked in other administrative roles at Urban University.

Joelle (Santa Monica College) is now a full-time, tenure track professor at Santa Monica College. In addition to other higher education institutions, Joelle worked for 5 years as an adjunct at Santa Monica College before being hired as full-time tenure track faculty. While working as an adjunct, Joelle was a “hopeful full-timer” (Tuckman, 1978). Joelle illustrates heterodoxy as an individual who was able to move from adjunct faculty member to full-time tenure track faculty. Joelle had an interest in and actively sought ways to be involved in governance as an adjunct. During the interview, she noted that having a partner who worked full-time provided flexibility and allowed her to focus adjunct work at the one school where she hoped to gain full-time work. As part of this focus, Joelle performed service through unpaid committee work, which she described: “I had the luxury of not having to work at five schools . . . I did a lot of free work” (personal communication, April 24, 2020). As an adjunct, she served on the Academic Senate Adjunct Committee as a co-chair and as a representative for the Faculty Association, which is the Santa Monica College faculty union. Earlier this year, Santa Monica College

received the 2020 Delphi Award based on the efforts led by Joelle and others. The Delphi Award is issued by the University of Southern California Pullias Center for Higher Education and serves to “encourage campuses . . . to rethink contingent, non-tenure track and adjunct faculty models, practices, programs and policies” by supporting efforts to scale these initiatives through a cash award (Pullias Center for Higher Education, n.d., Background and Award Goals section).

Like Joelle, Diane (Santa Monica College) also represents heterodoxy as she will transition from adjunct to a full-time, tenure track professor at Santa Monica College in fall 2020. Similar to Joelle, Diane worked as an adjunct at several institutions prior to joining the full-time ranks and participated in governance. As an adjunct, Diane worked closely with Joelle to make changes at Santa Monica College to improve the experience for adjunct faculty, and she shared in the recognition for these efforts with the 2020 Delphi award. Similar to Joelle, Diane also made the transition from adjunct faculty member to full-time tenure track, but unlike Joelle, Diane could not articulate the differences during the interview as she was scheduled to start her full-time role in Fall 2020.

Joelle and Diane are included here as they illustrate the agency of individuals to push back on the structures and practices, and they can speak to the specific ways that adjunct labor conditions differ from tenured and tenure track faculty. As Joelle and Diane made the transition from adjunct to tenure track faculty, they experienced a disjuncture. Reay (2004) noted that “disjunctures between habitus and field occur. . . when individuals with a well-developed habitus find themselves in different fields or different parts of the same social field” (p. 438). Both Joelle and Diane have the habitus of adjunct

faculty. Joelle describes the disjuncture of moving from adjunct to full-time tenure track using a conversation with a tenure-track colleague to reveal the new doxa of her tenure-track faculty position. The doxa and habitus of the adjunct faculty field obscured Joelle's understanding of her own exploitation. This is consistent with Freire's (1970) observation that dominators obfuscate the structures of domination from the dominated. Joelle explained her new awareness and her shift in understanding of her adjunct experience:

My friend and colleague, who was hired [full-time] the year before . . . said to me, "you're about to get really angry," and I was like, "Why? I'm like super happy. I've got my dream job. I'm on top of the world." She said, "because you're about to find out exactly how exploited you are [as an adjunct]." (personal communication, April 24, 2020)

Joelle's quote illustrates Bourdieu's (1977) concept of orthodoxy or the generally accepted patterns, beliefs, and practices that are held by a group. Joelle's understanding of her exploitation illustrates the ways in which distinction worked to obscure the structures of domination from the dominated. As an adjunct, Joelle was excited about her full-time tenure track position. While Joelle was aware of some aspects of her exploitation as an adjunct faculty member, it was only on entering the field of the full-time tenure track faculty did she fully understand the scope of her exploitation. As a member of the faculty union, Joelle understood some exploitation of adjunct faculty but her new role also further fostered what Freire (1970) calls *conscientização*. The quote also demonstrates the idea of domination, which is central to the orthodoxy in that the dominated class (adjuncts) does not recognize the forms of domination. The orthodoxy represented here is two-fold. First, adjuncts do not realize the ways in which they are exploited. Second, the ways in which adjunct faculty are treated as less than tenured or tenure track is widely accepted as the norm within higher education.

### *Stratification*

In higher education, stratification is achieved through the structures of hierarchy and rank. Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that hierarchy and rank are structures used as “institutionalized instruments for the maintenance of symbolic order” (p. 165). In other words, hierarchy and rank foster reproduction of existing social structures and are used to serve those in power. Returning to three of Thelin’s (2017) nine categories of faculty, the titles of full, associate, and assistant professor represent what we traditionally think of as tenured or tenure track faculty with a full professor title representing the pinnacle of achievement in the faculty profession.

The status of adjunct faculty as less than tenured/tenure track faculty illustrates stratification within higher education. Alan, a tenured faculty member, a former department chair, and former chair of the faculty senate at Bucolic University, described the stratification of faculty:

A three-tier system has grown up over the last 30 or 40 years. We've got one tier of faculty with tenure, the way we thought all faculty should be eligible for. A second tier that is not eligible for tenure, and then a third tier that's not even really full-time that's just hired piecemeal, a course here or a course there, which would be okay in some cases where you're talking about, people coming from business or industry or entertainment just teaching a course on the side in their area of expertise (personal communication, April 14, 2020).

Stratification is essential to domination.

To further highlight the concept of stratification and the subtleties of language, I have used an example from Temple University’s Adjunct Faculty Handbook which was provided to me as an adjunct faculty member in the College of Science and Technology. The Adjunct Faculty Handbook (2020) reflect the importance of titles within two sections: 1.2 Adjunct Faculty Titles and Qualifications (p. 7) and 1.5 Representing

Temple as an Adjunct Faculty Member (p. 9). This information is the same as the information in the Temple University Adjunct Faculty policy, policy number 02.72.11, which states, “Persons appointed as adjunct faculty members shall be appointed to one of the following titles: Adjunct Instructor, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Adjunct Associate Professor, or Adjunct Professor” (p. 3). The policy also stated, “When used in documents or correspondence, these titles are to be written in full” (p. 3). In other words, as an adjunct faculty member, all communication referencing this role should contain the word, adjunct. This represents the university’s interest in distinguishing full-time and part-time contractual faculty, but also raises the question of why this same information is not used for university-level reporting. While there may be many reasons for this policy and specific use of language, this example reveals the distinction created by stratification and the doxa of teaching labor at a research-intensive university. Later in this chapter, I will cover the specific ways that the adjunct status is revealed through departmental practices at my research sites and through the description of Joelle’s and Diane’s experiences transitioning from adjunct to tenure track faculty.

At Bucolic University, Alan spoke to the changes made by the Faculty Senate for full-time non-tenure track (NTT) faculty regarding titles. His description of this work reveals two things, stratification and the difficulty of similar actions for part-time adjunct faculty:

To come up with a review and promotion system, the only tricky thing . . . was creating the third tier that didn't exist before because there wasn't anybody in that tier to review them. So, we had to violate the principle of what we were trying to create: the non-tenure track faculty would review the non-tenure track faculty and the tenured faculty would review the tenure track faculty. . . . Now that we’ve completed the work of classification, titles, and a formal promotion process for full-time non-tenure track, we will move to the adjuncts. We put it on the table

with the provost and the president. The first thing we would need to do is simply find out in some regularized way who these people are, what their working conditions are, it's not standard we have . . . campuses. . . all over the place. And we have the feeling with good reason that it's the conditions are most dire on the campuses. (personal communication, April 14, 2020)

Outside of the department chair or hiring manager, there are few on campus who know the adjuncts (Lyon, 2007). This raises the question of how do you find the people that make up 70% of your teaching faculty but yet appear to be hidden? I refer to this as the adjunct faculty that are hidden in plain sight.

The structuring power of titles and the ways in which stratification, hierarchy, and rank appear in higher education is further illustrated by Tanya's response to a question about how the department determines if an adjunct faculty member is needed. When asking the interview question, I initially used the Bucolic University's title for non-tenure track faculty which is instructional faculty rather than non-tenure track faculty. As I struggled to remember the correct titles for NTT faculty at Urban University, Tanya's response reveals how titles are used to reinforce hierarchy and rank within academe:

They're called non-tenure track [NTT]. I appreciate you saying that because one thing that we have all commented on is that it'd be really nice for NTTs to be referred to as teaching faculty or instructional faculty because we, including me, are all very valuable, excellent contributors. And there's no reason to define us by our not-ness . . . we'd like to be referred to by our accomplishments and not by our lacking of accomplishment. And many people, in fact, don't even want to go down the tenure line process . . . most of our NTTs, in fact . . . are really happy to be NTTs. (Tanya, February 3, 2020)

Tanya's response provides insight to the hierarchy at a research-intensive institution with tenured faculty at the top, followed by tenure track faculty, followed by full-time NTT faculty, and then part-time adjunct faculty at the bottom. While there are differences in responsibilities between the different faculty roles, Tanya's comment reveals the doxa of a research-intensive university and the stratification of faculty.

Some readers may challenge my view by insisting that tenured and tenure track faculty are more valuable to higher education institutions because research is more important than teaching. “Although post-secondary institutions purport to value all three components, in practice they tend to emphasize some components over others” (Furco, 2010, p. 380). To illustrate, I briefly return to the labor of faculty. Bowen and Schuster (1986) described faculty labor as “four overlapping tasks: instruction, research, public service, and institutional governance and operation” (p. 15). Bowen and Schuster defined public service as “activities designed specifically to serve the public . . . such as consultation and technical services to meet an infinite variety of needs and problems” (p. 20) and institutional service as “faculties’ . . . prominent role in the policies, decisions, and ongoing activities falling within the wide-ranging realm of . . . governance and operation” (p. 21). I return us to the more traditional view of service as including both the external public service and the internal service, including institutional governance. If we view the university mission as a three-legged stool, all three legs must be equal for the stool to be usable, so it is necessary to examine how structures support all three elements. One way to understand these structures is through Curnalia and Mermer’s (2018) concept of respect and voice.

### *Respect and Voice*

Curnalia and Mermer’s (2018) article in *Review of Communication* appeared in a special edition on academic labor and it provides a way to situate respect and voice for all faculty. Curnalia and Mermer (2018) cite Budd’s definition of voice as, “the ability to have meaningful input into decisions” (p. 132). Curnalia and Mermer build on Budd’s definition noting, “Voice is both an action performed by members of an organization and

a perception held by members” (p. 132). Meaningful input is central to what is typically described as faculty governance (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, p. 159). While Curnalia and Mermer outline the benefits of voice for tenured faculty to include talent retention, increased productivity, and deeper commitment to the institution (p. 134), Gappa and Leslie (1993) described “frustration among part-timers who feel deprived of voice” (p. 196). Curnalia and Mermer’s view on voice and respect reflects higher education’s stratification of labor and the doxa of tenure as the ideal. Despite the realities of adjunct faculty outnumbering tenured/tenure track faculty, Curnalia and Mermer’s work ignores the realities and doxa of contingency and does not provide space for adjunct voices in the work of departments, particularly teaching.

Reinforcing the doxa of tenure as the ideal, Curnalia and Mermer’s (2018) central argument is centered on “recommitting to tenure” as means to restore “shared governance” (p. 132). Citing the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) data point that 70% of faculty are off the tenure track, Curnalia and Mermer (2018) describe the increasing numbers of adjunct faculty in higher education and then continue to use the idea of “voice” to argue for “renewed dedication to tenure protection” (p. 132). Curnalia and Mermer make no distinction between full-time and part-time non-tenure track faculty and they make no mention of what “voice” adjunct faculty can or should have. I’m of two minds about Curnalia and Mermer’s claim that voice and shared governance in a department must be centered on those with tenure. On the one hand, I agree the voice of full-time tenured and tenure track faculty is essential to governance and to navigating the next iteration of change in higher education. On the other hand, I question Curnalia and Mermer’s argument for tenured-only voice as it could be viewed as

consistent with Freire's (1970) concept of domination and oppression by reinforcing the dominant position of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Curnalia and Mermer's article reinforces the dominant position of tenured/tenure track within the faculty hierarchy and reinforces the earlier stratification examples related to titles. This is not new as Gappa and Leslie (1993) observed this same disenfranchisement of adjunct faculty more than twenty-five years ago and when asked about governance, department chair participants in this study expressed uncertainty on how and if adjuncts should be integrated into the department.

In an opinion piece in *The Chronicle Review* and as counter to Curnalia and Mermer's (2018) article, Jacques Berlinerblau (2020), a tenured professor of Jewish civilization at Georgetown University, used his COVID-19 remote teaching experience to draw attention to the casualization of academic labor and to express concerns over decisions made during the pandemic. I contend that Curnalia and Mermer's (2018) article illustrates what Jacques Berlinerblau (2020) describes as "the apathy of tenured professors to the plight of their non-tenured colleagues" (p. 5). Berlinerblau proceeds to describe this as "failure of common decency and professional solidarity" (p. 5). Throughout the article, Berlinerblau expresses both the fear and the lack of trust between faculty and administration that is best illustrated by his critique of "presidents, provosts, deans, vice deans and mid-level administrators who slowly restructured the budgetary, and hence moral priorities of colleges" (p. 6). This sentence illustrates the neoliberal influence and the ways in which neoliberal influences push higher education further from a public good. In making this comment, Berlinerblau urges us to examine every decision made during the pandemic and look closely at the motives underlying each decision. It is

critical to highlight as Berlinerblau did in the article that no one had ever experienced a wholesale move to online and remote instruction. I explore the COVID-19 rupture in Chapter 7 as it occurred during my fieldwork.

As a counter to the apathy described by Berlinerblau, I return to my interviews with the department chairs, sequence heads, and course director interviews. The participants revealed a great level of respect for and reliance on adjunct faculty. There were several examples that illustrated respect and voice which support Freire's (1970) dialogic principles. Tanya exemplified the concept of respect when she described the number of adjuncts, the level of trust she has in the adjuncts and the adjuncts' commitment to teaching, and how she would hire the adjuncts as full-time faculty if that were a possibility:

The number of adjuncts is I'm not going to use the word out of control because we have it under control, but it is excessive. And if I could wave my magic wand, I would hire our eight best adjuncts to become full-time faculty members immediately. And I know who they are. And they've worked with us for years, and I have total trust in them. Of course, I can't wave my magic wand. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Tanya's comment reveals heterodoxy to the doxa of tenured/tenure-track as the top rank for faculty. It also reflects the narrative of the adjunct as short-term resources. Tanya notes that adjuncts in her department have taught for many years. A data point that is validated by the years of service of media and communication adjunct faculty participants in this study.

Similar to Tanya, Patrick described the importance of adjunct faculty and described what adjunct faculty bring to the classroom with the description of the tension between the

theory, scholarship, and professional practice and the importance of both adjuncts and full-time faculty:

Adjuncts are extremely important for our department and I think for any department and for which, you know, the daily experience, professional experience can augment the understanding and experience of full-time faculty members who, for example . . . might have not been in the newsroom for the last 10 years. . . . In a department like [ours] . . . you want those tensions, those creative tensions, right? And ideally, everyone shows everyone else a great degree of respect, and they all appreciate that all these different elements have improved the department. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Patrick's response is more measured than Tanya's and reflects a closer alignment to the doxa of tenured/tenure track faculty's leading position within the faculty hierarchy.

The comments of Tanya and Patrick highlight how media and communication adjunct faculty are used in each of their respective departments. These perspectives illuminate the ways that respect, voice, agency and credibility intersect and are revealed in the pedagogy practices of media and communication adjunct faculty. These comments further reveal elements of the media and communication adjunct faculty labor conditions. The perception of adjunct faculty as knowledgeable and credible in making decisions about pedagogy is illustrated by Christopher's response to my question on the process for book approvals. Christopher encourages adjunct faculty voice and agency in selecting, changing, or modifying the textbooks or readings for a course:

I tell them, you know, you don't have to use the book I'm using, you know, go . . . find another one you think might be better. . . . But generally, you know, I just want to know what texts they're reading, and I'll see that on the draft syllabus. And then I may say, "Okay, why this one, especially if I'm not familiar with it, why this one?" And I'll go look at it. (personal communication, April 15, 2020)

Stratification, respect, and voice work together to reveal the structures and practices that sometimes work in concert and other times appear to be diametrically

opposed, like Bourdieu's dualisms and Freire's dialogic/anti-dialogic principles. The professional associations and the tensions of hierarchy and rank illustrate the stratification of higher education which supports Freire's (1970) idea of divide and conquer which is a key to domination and oppression. Bourdieu (1977) would argue that the field and the field's doxa are reproduced through these structures, which then informs and shapes the practices of recruiting, hiring, preparing and orienting media and communication adjunct faculty. The experiences of department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors in these processes reveal the media and communication adjunct faculty labor conditions. The next section begins with an overview of the roles of department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors based on participant interviews. This section uses the interviews of department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors to highlight differences between media and communication adjunct faculty and generally held narratives of adjunct faculty. While I introduce some differences of media and communication adjunct faculty here, the interviews and classroom observation findings of media and communication adjunct faculty participants are primarily provided in Chapter 6.

### ***The Work of the Department Chair, Sequence Head, and Course Director***

Within the university, "faculty think of their intellectual home as the department insofar as most of the decisions that impact their daily lives occur within its boundaries" (Tierney, 2006, p. 85). Illustrating higher education's concept of shared governance, Tierney noted the department "chair generally comes from the faculty, who have some say in the chair's appointment" (p. 85). According to the Urban University Faculty Handbook, the department chair provides an educational leadership function, plays a role

in recruitment and development of personnel, oversees the creation and improvements to curricula, and interprets university policies and procedures. The Faculty Handbook at Bucolic University is currently under revision, but a recent job posting for a department chair included similar responsibilities to Urban University, as well as the following responsibilities: creating and managing class schedules, serving as a mediator between faculty and students for curricular concerns, supporting the accreditation processes, and maintaining data related to faculty workload and evaluations of part-time faculty.

These functions and tasks were validated by Patrick, a tenured faculty member and department chair at Urban University, with his response to my question on the role and responsibilities of a department chair:

So, as a department chair, I teach one course a semester and the hope is that I also do some research. But most of my time is spent on the administrative role of running a department, helping shepherd professors through promotion and tenure, reviewing good teaching practices, hiring adjuncts, working with students, and following the policies of the Dean, and the university, and in some cases pushing back against those policies at Dean's level meetings. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Patrick's response also reveals a key element of university structures, doxa, and habitus, as it relates to the role of shared governance. The university structures provide an expectation or doxa that tenured faculty can provide feedback and push back on policies through shared governance responsibilities. Patrick's embodiment of habitus comes through both his mention of policies and his ability to resist those policies. As a tenured faculty member, Patrick has the social capital to push back on policies.

Tanya, a department chair who is full-time non-tenure track (NTT) faculty, described the role and responsibilities of the department chair as education quality and managing the administrative, hiring, and oversight for full-time tenured, tenure track,

NTT, and approximately 50 adjunct faculty each semester. Similarly, Christopher, assistant department chair, noted,

I oversee the . . . major, which runs the gamut from curriculum development to faculty supervision and hiring to handling student complaints to looking at pedagogy to representing our major at school-wide events such as recruitment. What else? Oh yeah, I teach. There's that, both on the undergrad and the grad level. (personal communication, April 15, 2020)

Christopher also noted that to support adjunct faculty he created a site which he referred to as "the depository". "The depository is one of the ways they can access articles . . . videos and all that kind of stuff" (personal communication, April 15, 2020).

The depository<sup>13</sup> serves a tool to support adjunct faculty in teaching practice. Each of the department chair participants recognized the need to support good teaching practices which included providing sample syllabi, creating a website with resources, such as journal articles, news articles, and video files, and being available to discuss teaching practice questions or student issues. This supports the doxa of educational quality. With adjunct faculty teaching increasing amounts of curricula, the department chair participants recognized that educational quality requires resources to support adjunct faculty and, when possible, avoiding hiring adjuncts close to the start of the semester, which doesn't allow adequate time for preparation. Preparation time is critically important when adjunct faculty with professional experience are hired to teach as they often have full-time jobs.

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<sup>13</sup> While I don't believe it was intentional, the idea of the depository seems to reflect Freire's (1970) banking model concept with the knowledge being deposited from the teacher to the student or in this case the department chair to the adjunct.

Hiring practices, university bureaucracy and the structure of contingency reveals a tension between the doxa of the fields that inform labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty. I used Bourdieu's (1977) concept of hysteresis to illustrate this tension and the conflicting doxa. Hysteresis is used to describe the ways in which a system's history and the habitus of individuals within the system is constrained by the history. The doxa of academic or educational quality is that time and preparation are required to create effective and meaningful learning experiences. The doxa of contingency informed by neoliberalism is that hiring occurs to fill a specific need and media and communication adjunct labor is a flexible and cost-effective way to meet the labor needs of the university. The doxa of the media and communication department suggests that media and communication adjunct faculty are hired to fulfill a specific curricular need.

These three distinct doxas (educational quality, contingency, and media and communication departmental needs) reveal the challenges of navigating the university's bureaucracy and the dangers of relying on flexible, on-demand labor which can result in last minute issues where an additional adjunct is required or conversely where the adjunct is unable to teach prior to the start of the semester. The hysteresis is revealed in the long-term relationships with adjunct faculty and in the realities of hiring adjunct faculty immediately prior to the start of the semester.

The doxa and hysteresis of media and communication adjunct labor reveals the ways in which adjunct faculty hiring is complicated. Tanya's comments below reveal a doxa of academic quality but also reveal aspects of media and communication adjunct labor conditions that are linked to both university and departmental practices. Using her

own term of “academic malpractice,” Tanya described a student-centered focus on education quality:

Adjuncts in other departments tell me that they just get handed a syllabus. And that’s it. And I think that’s really academic malpractice. That’s a phrase that I use sometimes, and I think that . . . My number one priority is for students to have an excellent education above all else. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

While this comment may seem to reveal adjunct faculty labor conditions of last-minute hiring and minimal support beyond a course syllabus, it shows the complicated practices of a contingent workforce. Last-minute hiring could be driven either by an increase in enrollments or when an adjunct or full-time faculty member is unable or unwilling to teach as planned. Last minute hiring represents the interchangeability of faculty labor, particularly adjunct faculty labor. While the entrepreneurial and individualistic thrusts of neoliberalism suggest that if a better opportunity comes along then adjunct faculty may be bound to take it. Interchangeability of labor resources, entrepreneurship, and individualistic orientation are all ways to understand how last-minute hiring represents the neoliberal university.

In response to managing a large number of adjunct faculty, Tanya’s department, created the sequence head role to help manage consistency and quality across several courses that make up a specialization area or concentration. Specializations and concentrations from the three research sites include advertising, art direction, brand strategy, content creation, copywriting, corporate communication, digital media, leadership, media planning, professional communication, public relations, organizational communication, and visual communication. Tanya described the sequence head role and

how it supports consistency across the curriculum and provides access to a full-time resource for the adjunct faculty:

We have six . . . faculty members who [each] oversee eight to ten adjuncts . . . Sequence heads are the front-line support for adjuncts teaching specific courses and responsible for answering questions, supporting the learning management system, referring adjuncts to the Teaching and Learning Center, and observing each adjunct at least one time per year. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

In addition to answering questions, resolving issues, and sharing resources, sequence heads observe adjunct faculty and provide feedback on many of the key tenets of active learning or student-centered teaching, including capturing attention, professionalism in communication with students, quality of visual aids, use of technology, and overall ability to teach. These tenets came directly from the evaluation form used by the sequence heads to evaluate adjunct faculty. Craig, one of six sequence heads in the department, works closely with Tanya, described his work:

As a sequence head, I oversee between nine and thirteen adjuncts per semester. It just depends on the semester and the number of other sequence heads and . . . faculty who are assisting. For example, I had a few extra this semester, who would not fall under my normal course load and that's because I hired them. One was my TA [teaching assistant] from a previous semester. And so, I already had a relationship with them. Essentially what I do is throughout the semester, I am sort of their go-to person between myself and Tanya, our department chair, to resolve any issues on a smaller level before those issues are elevated to a higher level. In addition, I forward messages. I send out information prior to the start of each semester. I've created Google Drive folders and other online file sharing, you know, services where people can go and share syllabi and information and best practices. I also observe the faculty. Typically, I'm required to do it once per year, but I go once per semester. (personal communication, March 24, 2020)

Similar to Christopher's example of the depository, Craig's comments illustrate a doxa of information sharing with media and communication adjunct faculty in the department.

Craig's comments and his commitment to observe adjuncts more frequently than required

shows the doxa of educational quality in this department and an espoused commitment to effective teaching.

The course director for basic communication or public speaking is typically an appointed faculty member who is responsible for the overall course design, course development, and student assessment, in addition to preparing media and communication adjunct faculty and graduate students who teach the basic communication or public speaking course. The basic communication course teaches students presentation skills in a variety of contexts.

As course director, Mitchell is responsible for developing the course materials, assignments, and assessments to ensure consistency across all instructors for the basic communication course (also known as public speaking at some institutions). According to Mitchell, the overall course design was largely in place when he arrived, “When I took over as course director, eighty percent of what we do now was already there” (personal communication, October 27, 2020). The basic communication course design reveals the habitus of faculty or the way in which faculty bring the experience of their education to bear on the current institution. Mitchell noted,

I went to a big-10 school and that’s the same model they used . . . they trained us [graduate students] all at the same time to teach the course . . . Urban is a bit different since we have a smaller graduate program and we have more adjuncts teaching basic communication [public speaking] (personal communication, October 27, 2020).

While this study is focused on adjunct faculty and not on graduate students, this comment reveals the ways in which a contingent labor force or regularly changing labor force, such as media and communication adjunct faculty or graduate students, can inform curricular decisions. If we return to momentarily to neoliberalism as represented by academic

capitalism, the curriculum of the basic communication course also illustrates Jessop's (2018) stage three "quasi-commodification. . . including separation of intellectual labor from the means of intellectual production" (p. 105). The intellectual labor of the course design is separated from the labor of teaching.

This design-approach illustrates an example where the course reduces the media and communication adjunct faculty (or graduate students) to technicians or what Giroux described as "deskilling of teaching" (p. 97). In describing his role as course director and similar to Tanya's commitment to the doxa of educational quality, Mitchell explained the standardization of the basic communication course and the expectations for consistency and use of the provided materials:

I am responsible for training all of the adjunct faculty [for basic communication]. I'm responsible for all the course materials and/or approving any additional course materials . . . and that would include the textbook, assignments, syllabi, schedules, rubrics, . . . running and maintaining the [learning management system] course site. Because this course is within a very small margin taught pretty much exactly the same across all 13 sections, there's a template . . . which all the adjuncts [and graduate students] import into their . . . [learning management system] site. (personal communication, February 28, 2020)

Mitchell discussed the ways in which the basic communication course is standardized and how he relies on adjuncts to understand the tempo of the semester and the course assignments:

[Adjuncts must] be comfortable with the fact that they may have experienced other things. But when they come in to . . . teach [basic communication], they're gonna do like 90% of the stuff I want them to do . . . and some people aren't comfortable with that. But they need to understand like, this is the course and they're not going to vary much from what I have [set up]. And I understand that people don't like that, but that's kind of what you're buying into. (personal communication, February 28, 2020)

Mitchell has expectations that adjunct faculty will follow the prescribed plan for teaching basic communication. He has prepared a course that is intended to be taught the same way with limited variation between sections or instructors.

This highly standardized approach may appear overly restrictive and seem to reveal a deskilling of teaching labor, but it also reveals the realities of a continually changing workforce of graduate students and adjunct faculty or the doxa of contingency. As follow-up to our first interview, I asked Mitchell about any differences for the Fall 2020 semester as a result of the COVID-19 disruption in Spring 2020. After describing the universal Canvas site that reflects online course instruction, Mitchell shared,

We want as much personal connection as possible, between the instructor and students. . . . I've consistently resisted using universal lectures. . . . I think there's . . . something useful about providing . . . a resource which describe things quite well . . . and we have shared those. We did have one instructor who did a how-to set up your Zoom area and I have shared that with other instructors . . . Thomas did a good job so I'm not going to do the work of recreating what he has done (personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Consistent with Brookfield's (2006) ideas of credibility and authenticity, Mitchell's comment illustrates effective pedagogy by avoiding "universal lectures" and instead, building connections in a way that each individual instructor identifies as best for their classroom. This comment appears to refute his earlier comments on standardization, but it does reflect a counter to Giroux's deskilling argument. This is consistent with the idea of independence that came up in observations and interviews with media and communication adjunct faculty which will be covered in more detail in Chapter 6: Theme 3: Little Oversight.

The roles of sequence head and course director provided a structured way to ensure consistency and distribute support of adjunct faculty across several full-time

faculty. It provides an opportunity for these faculty to build relationships with the adjunct faculty and gives them experience in curricular matters. While these roles reveal the doxa of educational quality, they also reveal the doxa of contingent teaching labor which requires far more structured materials and support since the labor responsible for teaching is regularly changing. The department chairs, sequence heads and course directors commented on the long relationships with adjuncts. These comments are supported by the average of 7 years of service for adjunct faculty participants in this study. The complexity and conflicting doxas of quality and contingency can be further examined in the recruiting and hiring practices.

### *Recruiting and Hiring*

Adjunct faculty recruitment is an important aspect of the media and communication department chair role. The doxa of contingency results in on-going recruitment and hiring practices as there is a perpetual need to recruit and hire adjunct faculty as individuals leave the area, change jobs, or when life or department circumstances change. Tanya, department chair at Urban University, described the perpetual recruitment process:

I'm recruiting all the time . . . We have ads out there in the industry. . . Almost all, not all, but almost all of our adjuncts are practitioners. We have a few adjuncts with Ph.D. s. But the majority of them are practitioners with BAs or MAs, or MSs, or MBAs. And so, in the industry, we have feelers out all the time. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Christopher, assistant department chair at Urban University, corroborated and expanded upon the recruitment process:

They are drawn from the professional practitioners. A lot of them are personal professional contacts I have. Some do kind of come in, so-called through the transom, or I will get an email from somebody. So, as I'm sure you can appreciate

not everybody who wants to teach is a good teacher. . . .Also, depending on the topic, the subject matter of the class as an example, we have a class . . . on analytics, and none of the full-time faculty really have a depth of background of that. . . . We use strictly adjuncts for that which frankly makes me nervous. (personal communication, April 15, 2020)

Like Tanya and Christopher, Patrick, department chair, validated the importance of professional connections and added that referrals from the Dean are another source for potential adjunct faculty as evidenced by this comment:

[The Dean] who has amazing . . . connections . . . will come up to me. Just last night I was in a Zoom meeting with people who are covering poverty . . . and one journalist . . . sent me a private Zoom message, saying, “What’s your email, I’d love to talk to you about science journalism, and whether there are availabilities to teach science journalism?” (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Patrick’s comment affirms the continuous recruitment practice, but also reveals the institutionalized cultural capital of teaching at a university. Even as an adjunct faculty member, the institutionalized cultural capital provides benefits that many wish to access.<sup>14</sup>

The basic communication is structured to accommodate a continually changing workforce. When asked about the process for hiring media and communication adjunct faculty teaching the basic communication course, Mitchell stated “experienced adjuncts are brought back first” (personal communication, February 28, 2020). Similarly, Tanya’s response to the question on hiring practices also illustrates the idea that current adjuncts are brought back when possible; “In most cases, we rehire the same adjuncts over and over. But there’s lots of turnover among adjuncts because they have full-time jobs. This

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<sup>14</sup> In my professional role at the university, I am regularly approached and asked about teaching opportunities at the university. This includes questions such as, How can I get an adjunct job at the university? or Who do I talk to about teaching gig?

is not their full-time job” (personal communication, February 3, 2020). Tanya’s comment is a preview of a key difference between media and communication adjuncts and adjuncts in other disciplines: media and communication adjuncts often have full-time jobs outside of academe. This is an example of the heterodoxy of the narrative of the freeway flyer or an adjunct working at multiple institutions. This is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

The department chair participants in this study identified three drivers that determine when they need to hire media and communication adjunct faculty: specialized professional expertise, knowledge of software used by industry, and flexibility due to increasing/decreasing enrollments or unexpected changes to faculty labor. The first two are related specialized knowledge required for the curricula. This includes specialized experience relevant to the course topic and experience with new and evolving technology used by the industry. The final driver is flexibility, which is illustrated by two quotes describing the scenario of changing enrollments and the scenario in which a full-time faculty member is unable to teach. Craig, sequence head, noted how adjunct faculty have experience and skills related to tracks or specializations within the academic program:

So, our adjuncts that we hire typically fall into the tracks that they work in and have expertise in. And so, you’re not necessarily hiring a generalist that can teach seven different courses; you’re hiring skilled professionals and, you know, [they teach] one or two courses. Maybe they can teach more . . . but I feel like we do a really good job of pairing those courses with the skills of the adjunct and that’s really beneficial to our students because a lot of them [adjunct faculty] own agencies or are executives. They [the adjuncts] also hire our students, which I think is really smart as well. (personal communication, March 24, 2020)

Patrick reinforced the skills of practitioners, as well as the importance of diversity, and that part-time faculty are part of his approach to diversity in the department:

I do think that that even from the very beginning, I understood that one of the strengths of a good department . . . is having, you know, practitioners and academics and full-timers and part-timers, and, um, you know, certainly ethnic diversity and you know, like the diversity in almost every possible sense that you can find. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Craig's emphasis on specialization and Patrick's emphasis on practitioners is brought together with Tanya's description of how adjuncts bring value to a field that is evolving and changing, specifically by bringing in the latest technology to classroom. "Adjuncts bring that day-to-day, up-to-date knowledge that full-time faculty cannot bring because we're reading about it, but we're not working in the field" (Tanya, personal communication, February 3, 2020). Similar to the earlier example on industry adaptations and changes, the orthodoxy of the neoliberal university values adjunct faculty for the professional connections which lead to internships or jobs at graduation.

The orthodoxy of the neoliberal university relies on adjunct labor to respond and adapt to changes in the industry, such as new technologies or approaches, and in enrollments as illustrated by Tanya's comment justifying the use of adjuncts:

I understand the need for contingent faculty. Because our enrollments fluctuate, and departments need that flexibility . . . Even if we had another 10 full-time faculty members or whatever the number would be, there's fluctuation in enrollments and you need that flexibility, and you don't want to have to lay off people if enrollments go down. (Tanya, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

There are also the occasional emergencies that require expedited recruitment and hiring of adjunct faculty as illustrated by Tanya's description of her experiencing hiring four adjuncts in the days immediately before the winter break to teach for the Spring semester.

I had a [full-time] faculty member who told me she was going on medical leave a few days before Christmas . . . our current adjuncts were all fully employed. I had to hire four new adjuncts in the few days before Christmas, because I had to give them time to prepare (personal communication, February 3, 2020).

Last minute hires due represent the doxa of contingency and have a direct impact on the doxa of educational quality.

### *Preparing, Orienting, and Evaluating*

Before reviewing the findings of this study, I return us briefly to research on preparing and orienting adjunct faculty. Gehrke and Kezar (2015) used data from the Values, Practices, and Faculty Hiring Decisions of Academic Leaders Survey to analyze and recommend five practices and policies that Deans can use to support NTT faculty (p. 934). Gehrke and Kezar noted, “When it comes to supporting NTTF, deans’ values matter” (p. 952). Gehrke and Kezar’s study included all faculty off the tenure track, both full-time and part-time. While this study did not interview deans, my interview participants identified four of the five themes identified by Gehrke and Kezar as necessary to support adjunct faculty including: orientation; materials and resources to teach; mentoring, and administrative support. These are consistent with the doxa of educational quality. The fifth theme, multi-year contracts<sup>15</sup>, did not come up at my research sites. While not identified at my field work sites, the fifth theme (multiyear contracts) were present at Santa Monica College and was one element that the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education 2020 Delphi Award recognized the Santa Monica College team for securing for adjunct faculty. The following sections use interview data to illustrate the ways in which Gehrke and Kezar’s four themes (orientation, materials

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<sup>15</sup> Multi-year contracts and a promotion process were available for full-time non-tenure track faculty at Bucolic University and Urban University.

and resources to teach, mentoring, and administrative support) were present at my fieldwork sites.

Orientation provides one of the earliest interactions with the department and with the university. Orientation provides adjunct faculty with an understanding of “the institution, its culture, and its practices” and “provides a sense of belonging to the institution” (Lyons, 2007, p. 6). Orientations enculturate adjunct faculty and introduce the doxa of the institution and the department. While all of my research sites offered some form of orientation for adjuncts, Gehrke and Kezar (2015) found that when orientation was not offered, it was due to a “lack of priority from senior leadership” (p. 950). The idea of familiarizing adjuncts with the university was articulated by Mitchell when he described his role in orienting instructors for the basic communication course:

Most adjuncts . . . are hired because they already have experience teaching [at] other institutions. So, they come pre-[pause] . . . like pre-formatted, they come with experience already in the classroom. And so, part of my job is enculturation or making sure they understand rules, regulations, syllabus, etcetera. (personal communication, February 28, 2020)

There are two specific examples showing how the participants in this study embraced the value and importance of orientation, as well as providing examples of stratification with media and communication adjunct faculty as separate from other faculty in the department. Patrick, department chair, described his approach to the start and end of each semester:

Every semester, even before the pandemic . . . . I start with a lunch for adjuncts. Talk a little bit about curricular changes, ask them if they have any questions. And it’s a good way to check in once a semester. I’ll oftentimes at the end of the semester, thank them for doing what they’re doing and remind them to have students fill out their [evaluation forms] and to give time for that. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Patrick's lunch reveals habitus of the department chair that may not be effective in supporting media and communication adjunct faculty. Media and communication adjunct faculty in this study were largely employed full-time outside or within the university. While lunch is a kind gesture, it may be difficult for many of the working professionals to participate. In contrast, Mitchell described the transition from an earlier approach of an all-day orientation session to a shortened half-day session that is supported throughout the semester with an email of weekly notes:

Ours is more of a like a crash course. I have no problem using that [pause] . . . analogy. I mean, we used to do [orientation] like across an entire day. . . it was really long, laborious, like more detailed overview orientation session, which really drug on, that became sort of a time issue for both hiring adjuncts who had to take an entire day out [and] even for grad students. So, I have . . . whittled that down to essentially three or four hours like a crash course review of it. And that's really . . . it. After that, . . . I do [a] weekly notes. . . format. It's not quite like a lesson plan. . . it's a little kinda like a hybrid of like an overview. (personal communication, February 28, 2020)

This illustrates university doxa by revealing the pressures of productivity and the ways in which collegiality and relationship-building are minimized due to time pressures. A bit later in the interview, Mitchell revisited his comments about orientation and on-going meetings with adjuncts during the semester. Mitchell went on to explain his logic for reducing the time commitment for semester-based meetings with adjuncts:

So back in the day we used to schedule meetings with adjunct instructors like we would have a couple meetings each semester. There hasn't really been any difference in . . . the course evaluations or issues with or without them. So, my feeling was why are we doing these things . . . with the adjunct instructors when the output is not any different for them? (personal communication, February 28, 2020)

Patrick's comment on the separate lunch for adjuncts and Mitchell's comment on the shortened orientation illustrate Bourdieu's (1977) idea of objective structures and the ways in which the "institutional and political factors . . . set the conditions for our work"

(Berg & Seeber, 2016, p. 78). As time pressures increase within the university and the adjunct is instrumentalized, rituals of collegiality that require time and bring people together in community may be seen as unnecessary and a distraction from the entrepreneurial work of the university.

Several of the interviewees described the process to evaluate adjunct faculty. Both Katelyn and Craig, sequence heads, described a classroom observation process, including the use of a standardized form to provide feedback. Katelyn suggested that the best way to support adjunct faculty is to get in the room and provide feedback as illustrated by her response to a question on balancing the theoretical and the practical:

When it comes to ensuring that balance, you kind of have to get in there and experience what the students are experiencing, talk to the students, read the feedback forms, and try to address the problems and give the adjuncts the tools that they need (personal communication, April 20, 2020).

After receiving feedback from several students on an adjunct's teaching style, Katelyn observed the adjunct's course and recommended "a simple fix . . . of a clicker" to allow her to move around the classroom. This example illustrates the importance of observation and how a simple change can improve the adjunct's teaching experience and the student's learning experience. This example also illustrates Freire's concept of oppression where the adjunct faculty member was not empowered to make the change but relied on the power of the dominant class to address the issue.

While each of the department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors spent significant time discussing education quality during the interviews, a notable absence was the lack of discussion on outcomes, goals, and objectives. Student learning goals are key to effective teaching as they provide the framework for what students will learn, do, and

hopefully remember for years after the course (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013). This is consistent with Sprague's assertion that all teachers cannot clearly state or explain those goals (p. 19). This also suggests that learning goals, such as those central to democracy and critical thinking, may be secondary to career-oriented and work-related outcomes of internships and jobs after graduation. This may represent the neoliberal influence or may simply be a result of the way questions were asked during the interviews.

### **University Support for Teaching and Learning**

Universities provide a wide range of services to support the teaching and learning functions of the university. This includes support for technology such as the learning management system, classroom response tools or clickers, and web-conferencing tools. Two of my sites had dedicated offices for teaching and learning support, offering workshops on pedagogy, technology tools, classroom management, and other topics. When educational technologies and tools are used to mechanize teaching labor, they are instruments of neoliberalism. Similarly, when pedagogy is used to mechanize curricula, pedagogy can become an instrument of neoliberalism.

Department chairs were aware of these services and encouraged both full-time and part-time faculty to take advantage of the offerings. Patrick's response to a question on professional development for adjunct faculty illustrated this awareness and support:

So, the Center [for teaching and learning] at Urban provides . . . the same services for both full-time and part-time faculty. They have some good seminars, tutorials, and services. And so, I'm . . . reminding them every semester [that] everybody can do that. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

When asked about the support differences for adjuncts and full-time faculty, Craig, a sequence head, noted that the opportunities are there, but the realities of the adjunct labor conditions make it difficult to participate:

Yes. [long pause and verbal fillers] so . . . I think that the opportunities are there for adjuncts just as much as they are for full-timers. It's the ability to take advantage of those. So obviously, a lot of the courses, lectures, talks, workshops are held at times that are inconvenient to adjuncts. (personal communication, March 24, 2020)

Patrick's comment illustrates the doxa of educational quality and Craig's comment illustrates the doxa of contingency.

Lucia, who leads the Teaching and Learning Center at Urban University, confirmed that programming is open to faculty of all ranks:

Adjunct faculty have the exact same needs that full-time faculty have as far as what are the best teaching methods to reach . . . students. Right? We don't actually differentiate in our programming between faculty ranks; anyone is welcome who teaches, that could be a TA [teaching assistant], that could be an adjunct. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

While the above quote demonstrates the open door and implies access for all faculty, Lucia proceeded to describe barriers to participation for adjunct faculty in certain types of programs, particularly those that offered a stipend:

Anybody can come to any of the programming we have except for the programs that have a stipend attached to them. At which point, we have to check to make sure that they're actually allowed to participate [and] receive stipends . . . They are usually allowed to for something like a faculty learning community and not for something else. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

This illustrates differences in the labor conditions between full-time faculty and adjunct faculty in media and communication. Adjunct faculty are hired for the primary purpose of teaching and the doxa of educational quality indicates that the university cares about the quality of the teaching delivered, but adjunct faculty are not eligible by default for

stipends for labor that supports improving teaching. Tenured and tenure track faculty have responsibility for teaching, research, and service, and automatically receive the stipend for participating in certain programs that are focused on improving teaching. Access to stipends highlights the ways in which doxa can impact capital, in this case economic capital, for adjunct faculty. While these programs often require a large time commitment, they do support the primary function of teaching for which adjunct faculty were hired.

Media and communication perceive conflicting messages about participation in the academic community, which Lucia described when asked about adjunct faculty participation in teaching center workshops:

I think part of it is a belief on the adjuncts part even though we advertise that [adjuncts] are welcome to everything . . . [adjuncts] are not because they get the very clear signal from people at the university that they are second-class citizens and therefore, they are not sort of eligible for these kinds of things, despite the fact that we advertise that they are. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

Gappa and Leslie (1993) described this stratification of faculty as bifurcation represented by the tenured “haves” and the part-time adjunct faculty “have-nots” (p. 2). Like Gappa and Leslie, Lucia’s quote illustrates adjunct faculty as “second class” and excluded from participation by the perceived but not actual structures in the university that prohibit attendance at teaching workshops.

Unlike many of the administrators in this study, Lucia had previously worked as an adjunct faculty member, which appeared to inform her understanding of how adjunct faculty were able to take advantage of the Center’s offerings and provided her with conscientização (Freire, 1970). In other words, her lived experience raised her consciousness of the experiences of adjunct faculty. Lucia’s perspective conveyed the

unique complexities of navigating multiple systems, multiple emails, different policies, and even different expectations on how to respond to a situation:

An adjunct faculty member may be working at three different institutions. And each of those institutions has a different set of standards and policies and procedures. So, they could be at a university where let's say they have a student that's at risk. And they're sort of expected to figure it out. And they don't even know who to ask. Whereas they might be at another university that's basically like we have a chain of command for that kind of thing. So, they can actually misstep pretty easily going from one institution to another institution. I've actually seen this happen simply because like knowing what the culture is, and the rules and regulations and policies and everything, from one institution to another, it takes a while to figure out and they don't always know. And so, they have to figure that out. (personal communication, February 4, 2020)

University administrator's understanding of the doxa of contingency leads to an understanding of adjunct faculty labor conditions which impact teaching practice. These examples also illustrate Bourdieu's (1977) concept of capital. Adjunct faculty do not operate with the same social capital as tenured, tenure track, and full-time NTT faculty. As we saw with the earlier example of stipends, adjunct faculty are denied economic capital since they are not eligible for stipends. Bourdieu's concept of capital will be explored further in the next chapter.

### **Unions**

Unions are included here for the "heresy" work or what Bourdieu (1977) calls "heterodoxy," which pushes against the dominant structures by showing the "existence of competing possibles [sic]" (p. 169). Another way to view the functions of unions is to return to Curnalia and Mermer's (2018) idea of voice, unions provide voice for adjunct faculty through the doxa of representation. Joe Berry, a union organizer and contingent faculty member illustrated the importance of organizing in his 2005 book, *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower*, with his statement, "Conditions of contingent faculty in general have

declined radically as our numbers have grown” (p. 12). In advocating for better conditions for adjunct faculty, Berry stated, “organizing is all about getting people together to feel more hope than fear and fatalism about the prospect of change in their lives” (p. 17). This quote illustrates the importance of unity in organizing and illustrates the importance of the collective, as represented by unions, in enacting heterodoxy. As Freire (1970) noted, “dominators are compelled by necessity to divide the oppressed . . . .in dialogical theory the leaders must dedicate themselves to an untiring effort for unity” (p. 172).

Before examining unions, I return to the work of faculty to illustrate similarities and differences. It is important to note the differences in workloads as it is related to research, service, and teaching. Nearly all faculty, including part-time adjunct faculty, have responsibilities for teaching. Bowen and Schuster (1986) stated “the main function of faculties is instruction” (p. 15). In this way, the doxa of the university is that all faculty teach. It is important to note that despite teaching being central to the role of faculty, not all faculty enjoy teaching. With some exceptions, all faculty except adjuncts have responsibilities for service. Full-time tenured, tenure track, and occasionally full-time NTT faculty have responsibilities for research. While there are a variety of ranks that are full-time, tenured, teaching-only positions, I focused on the typical workloads encountered in my fieldwork. This is important when considering union representation.

While I was unable to speak with union organizers at Urban University or Bucolic University, the interviews with organizers at Santa Monica College provided a useful way to examine the possibilities of unions. At Santa Monica College (SMC), the Faculty Association is “the union and advocacy group for all SMC faculty” (Santa Monica

Faculty Association, n.d. b). Similar to Urban University and Religious University, the SMC Faculty Association represents all faculty: part-time and full-time, tenured and non-tenured. Faculty at Bucolic University are not represented by a union.

At Santa Monica College, the Faculty Association's advocacy work led to positive changes and support for improved working conditions for non-tenure track faculty, both full-time and part-time. The Faculty Association advocacy work resulted in the creation of an adjunct standing committee for academic senate and led to the establishment of "associate faculty status," which provided a level of job security for part-time faculty who've taught for five consecutive semesters (Santa Monica College Faculty Association, n.d. a). Other efforts included a dedicated link for part-time resources on the SMC Faculty Association website and a departmental webpage that includes consolidated information on campus resources, such as putting materials on reserve in the library, where to get supplies, instructions for parking on campus, and even where and how to schedule meeting space for office hours. These efforts illustrate the variety of low to no cost ways that adjunct faculty can be integrated into a department and provide exemplars of actions supporting voice and respect for adjunct faculty can be fostered in the department and more broadly, within in the university community.

The realities of negotiations and the power of the unions to support adjunct faculty is important, but even with negotiated contracts, changing circumstances can make it difficult for institutions and organizers to realize prior commitments. Joelle's comment about the SMC faculty union agreement for the period August 20, 2019, through August 22, 2022 provides evidence of this difficulty and the financial realities,

Now, we're getting into it [the multi-term contracts and the faculty associate status]. They're [administration] not being quite so keen . . . . So, our faculty association is working on it. . . I felt very proud about that at SMC, we were handling that in such a humane way. But obviously. . . there's not unlimited funding (personal communication, April 24, 2020)

The fiscal realities and even Joelle's closing remark represent structures that limit change. Bourdieu's (1977) term "hysteresis" refers to a systemic dependence on history that occurs as a result of the doxa and the habitus. Hysteresis, in this context, refers to the structures and practices of administration, of unions, and most broadly, of higher education that constrain the ways in which transformative change occurs. In other words, the habitus of higher education that prioritizes the labor of tenured and tenure track faculty and devalues the labor of adjunct faculty results from the existing structures and practices that favor the dominant class. This broader context is foundational to examining the teaching practices and labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty.

The labor of media and communication adjunct faculty is teaching. Brookfield (2006) argued that effective teaching is "whatever helps students learn" (p. 17). Each of the department chairs, sequence heads, course directors, as well as the teaching and learning director, mentioned the importance of effective teaching and the specific actions taken to ensure educational quality. Tanya's department relies heavily on adjunct faculty, and at the end of our interview, she asked to if I wanted to hear her beliefs what makes a great teacher, she said:

Over my five and a half years here, I've read hundreds, if not thousands of [student evaluations]. And there are three things that make a great teacher: One is to be a content expert; of course, two is to be a really likable, charismatic personality who cares about the students; and three is to be completely organized. And people might assume that being a content expert is . . . the greatest priority. But my experience has shown that it's number two, it's being personable and likeable and caring about the students. Because if you're a smart person, you can

learn the content . . . Within reason, I mean, I'm sure not going to teach physics, but within communication, I could learn the content to teach many courses and do it well. Yep. And some people, most people, can learn organizational skills, but you can't learn good interpersonal skills. It's like either you've got it, or you don't. . . . And that's the key to being a great teacher. I mean, all three are key to being great. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Tanya's ideas are consistent with Brookfield's (2006) requirements for effective teaching. Tanya's use of the words "content expert" is similar to expertise and experience in instructor credibility as defined by Brookfield (2006). Many media and communication adjunct faculty are hired for specific industry knowledge or experience with software or new technology. Tanya's description of people skills is consistent with Brookfield's (2006) conception of personhood or just being human. Finally, the importance of organization in teaching has been well articulated by Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010), Fink (2013), and Weimer (2013). Several of these themes also came up in the focus groups with students, which will be covered in the next chapter.

To close this chapter, I return to Tanya's views on content to illuminate how the doxa of educational quality and the doxa of contingency influence each other. First, it is notable that despite higher education's role in knowledge production, learning outcomes are absent from Tanya's definition of good teaching. Second, the work of the department chair is one of continuous recruitment and hiring combined with Tanya's comment "you can learn the content" which reveals the doxa of contingency and perhaps that content is second to the relational aspects of teaching. If great university teaching is being a content expert combined with likeability, charisma, empathy for students, and organization, then how do faculty employ these skills to support the broader purposes of universities related to democracy and higher education as a public good?

### Summary of Key Findings

Adjunct labor conditions happen within higher education institutions and the discipline of media and communication. The professional associations, ICA and NCA, represent how media and communication adjunct faculty are viewed within the discipline and reveal what is valued. ICA's website largely ignored media and communication adjunct faculty and demonstrated that research is valued. On the other hand, NCA's website acknowledges and actively presents information on media and communication adjunct faculty through various reports and appears to value both teaching and research. The NCA website recognizes the practitioner, practitioner-scholar, academic researcher, and the teacher, including media and communication adjunct faculty, as contributors to students' learning experience. These tensions mirror the marginalized role of adjunct faculty in departments while at the same time being relied on to deliver critical components of the media and communication curricula.

The following findings do not apply to every media and communication department or every administrator. Still, they illustrate the small and large ways to influence the adjunct faculty labor conditions, and these conditions represent barriers to effective teaching. Stratification and hierarchy serve as tools of domination and oppression (Freire, 1970) and work against the ability to incorporate adjunct faculty into media and communication departments' academic communities. Administrators that value, respect, and find opportunities for "voice" (Curnalia & Mermer, 2018) appear to have long-standing relationships with media and communication adjunct faculty.

The reliance on adjunct faculty creates conflicting doxas related to academic quality and contingency, reflecting the neoliberal influence in the university. Adjunct

faculty in media and communication have jobs and bring unique skills and knowledge to the curricula. The professionals hired as media and communication adjuncts support academic quality in two ways. First, the adjuncts "bring . . . up-to-date knowledge" for the industry from direct work experience (Tanya, personal communication, February 3, 2020). Second, as professionals and business owners, they provide connections to the industry through jobs and internships. The importance of employment and careers reveals the neoliberal university. The doxa of contingency operates in conflict with educational quality. The approaches to managing or perhaps reconciling the conflict between quality and flexibility come from investing time, resources, and support for adjunct faculty into the department culture. Supporting media and communication adjunct faculty can happen in significant ways such as the creation of a sequence head or course director or small ways such as a website of all resources and frequently asked questions, creating shared content resources such as the "depository" that contain articles and videos relevant to a course, or a meeting for adjuncts at the start of each semester on new elements of the overall curriculum. However, the nature of contingency and reliance on contingent labor for teaching reproduces practices that can diminish academic quality due to last-minute hires and hiring those that lack teaching experience.

Teaching is a central purpose of the university, and in media and communication, adjunct faculty are responsible for teaching increasing amounts of the curricula. Yet, other than the department chairs who hired them, the sequence heads and course directors who support them, and the students in the classrooms, few on-campus know who the adjunct faculty are, and they remain on the margins and hidden in plain sight.

To illustrate teaching practice, I now turn my attention to the specific ways that adjunct faculty experience the university and the ways in which adjunct faculty practice teaching in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 6: TEACHING PRACTICES OF ADJUNCTS

This chapter presents the study's findings of adjunct faculty's teaching practices and labor conditions in media and communication, including how adjunct faculty apply effective teaching principles, employ theoretical constructs, and demonstrate curricular student learning outcomes. Thematic analysis of participant experience is contextualized with the scholarship of pedagogy, teaching, and learning. Participant observation and interviews provided the data to answer RQ 2: How do the labor conditions of media and communication faculty shape how communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning are employed in the classroom? Textual analysis was used to answer RQ 3: What do course syllabi reveal about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication? Student focus groups provided the data to answer RQ 5: How do students in media and communication courses taught by adjuncts understand adjunct labor conditions?

This chapter begins with a description of the adjunct faculty participants. Following the introduction of participants, the chapter describes four themes that occurred throughout fieldwork and interviews: (1) precarity as an organizing principle, (2) adjuncts have jobs, (3) little oversight, and (4) love of teaching. This chapter provides examples of media and communication adjunct faculty's habitus and illuminates the ways in which the doxa of teaching and learning best practices is enacted in the field of the university classroom. This chapter also includes the findings from the analysis of the course syllabi and the student focus groups.

### Adjunct Faculty Participants

From April 2019 through May 2020, I conducted fieldwork that included participant observations of thirteen courses taught by nine adjunct faculty. Interviews were conducted with an additional four adjunct faculty. Using Tuckman's (1978) categorization of part-time faculty, adjuncts in this study could be categorized as follows: two "semi-retired" or retired, one graduate student, one "hopeful full-timer," and eight "full-mooners." "Full-mooners" are employed in a full-time capacity working at least 35 hours per week in another primary job. Childress's (2019) book, *The Adjunct Underclass*, extends the idea of full-mooners with a subcategory of those who teach but work as a university employee in another capacity (pp. 126–127). Childress (2019) observed that colleges' reliance on university staff employed in another capacity is relatively easy because they are readily available and already on the payroll (p. 39). In this study, five of the adjuncts were employed full-time in some other capacity at the university where they taught. The primary employment within and outside of the university represents an important feature of the study participants and is an example of heterodoxy to the typical portrayals of adjunct faculty as being employed part-time and cobbling together full-time employment through work at multiple institutions.

Part-time adjunct faculty outnumber both tenured/tenure track and full-time non-tenure track (NTT) faculty at two of my sites. As the previous chapter noted, the department chairs recognize the importance of adjunct faculty in teaching and delivering content expertise that no full-time faculty member possesses. Illustrating a difference between tenured/tenure track faculty and adjunct faculty labor conditions as raised by RQ 1, website presence highlights a difference in labor conditions as it reveals membership in

the department community to the public. At one site, adjunct faculty have profiles on the same website as their tenured, tenure track, and full-time NTT faculty colleagues. At the other sites, adjunct faculty are noticeably absent from the website. The presence and absence of adjunct faculty from public facing websites is representative of the ways in which the department and university thinks about adjunct labor. Presence of media and communication adjunct faculty with the tenured/tenure track faculty suggest that adjunct faculty are integrated into the fabric of the academic community and potentially reveals how they are viewed within the department. When present on the website, it suggests that adjunct faculty have some social capital within the department and also illustrates Curnalia and Mermer's (2018) concept of respect. While out of the scope for this dissertation project, it may also reveal limitations of human resource and information technology systems in tracking the statuses of employees engaged in multiple capacities or those with semester-based contracts at the institution.

Adjunct faculty teach many students and play an essential role in teaching the foundational courses for the curriculum. By most accounts, adjunct faculty teach with limited support or little recognition of their contributions. The teaching labor of adjunct faculty enables tenured and tenure track faculty to complete essential responsibilities that include conducting research, pursuing grants, and publishing. These differences illustrate another key difference between adjunct faculty and tenured/tenure track faculty posed in RQ 1—adjunct faculty participants are only responsible for teaching and do not typically have responsibilities for research or service as part of their contract. While Joelle, former adjunct faculty member and union organizer at Santa Monica College, ultimately earned

a full-time position, she provides an example of adjunct faculty performing uncompensated service labor in hopes of obtaining a full-time position.

Adjunct faculty participants taught a variety of courses across the communication discipline, and they had a wide range of teaching experience. Several had prior affiliations with the institution where they taught, and others had no prior affiliation with the institution. One adjunct had just begun teaching, and spring 2020 was her second semester. At the other end of the spectrum, one adjunct had been teaching for more than twenty years and had a close relationship with the institution as an alumnus. The adjunct faculty who participated in the participant observation are identified by pseudonyms: Chelsea, David, Iana, Jodi, Maxine, Miguel, Nikita, Thomas, and Wanda. A short description of each adjunct follows.

Chelsea (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches Basic Communication and another course that was not a media and communication course. In conversation, Chelsea tends to reveal a lot of personal information including details about her work and her personal life, such as her marital status, children, and hobbies. She owns a public relations firm. Chelsea has Bachelor of Arts in English. All of this was revealed either during class meetings, our brief discussions following class, or during the interview. When asked about how she began teaching, she described her first semester and expressed her concerns about her lack of a master's degree:

I was asked to fill in for [course]. And they threw me in the deep end, I want to say. . . . I was trained to use the [learning management system]. . . . I don't have a master's, so I was sort of shocked that they picked me. . . . I was glad and I [long pause] the only other teaching experience I have is that I am an [exercise] instructor. And so that's the only other experience I have teaching. Yeah, I've given lectures. During my career as a journalist and in my career in public

relations, I've done speaking engagements. [deep breath] So it's not like I'm not used to being in front of people, so I have that background. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

Chelsea's description of her first semester reveals the expected credentials for faculty and the complexity of the practices surrounding relying on contractual or contingent faculty. Chelsea's hiring serves as an exemplar of the doxa of contingency. Universities typically require at least a master's degree to teach undergraduate courses, but contingent faculty are hired for specific skills and qualifications, specifically academic credentials can vary (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, pp. 95-96) In her first semester of teaching, Chelsea was hired at the last minute, and this raises unanswered questions on how contingency manifests in academe. Chelsea did not discuss the specific reasons that she was hired at the last minute and in reality, she may not be aware of the reasons for her late hire. While she did not refer to it as pedagogy, teaching approaches and activities to improve learning were a regular topic of conversation, and Chelsea expressed the desire to teach full-time on multiple occasions. Chelsea's habitus reveals a lack of understanding of the doxa (and credential) required for full-time teaching at most universities.

David (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches Introduction to Advertising and Introduction to Marketing. I had not met him prior to observing his Introduction to Marketing course in fall 2019. In spring 2020, I observed David's Introduction to Marketing and Introduction to Advertising courses. David recently retired from his own marketing agency and began teaching at Urban University in spring 2019. He has a Master of Science in communication, and other than guest lectures, he had no affiliation with Urban University prior to teaching. David is aware of faculty resources, referenced the administrative support available through the office, and noted the value of

the programming available through the teaching and learning center. When asked about how he started teaching, David pondered and slowly articulated his path to college teaching through a guest lecture engagement:

I always tell the kids 30 years in the business, even though it's actually 40, because I don't want to make them think I'm way too old. But having . . . worked in advertising, my whole career, and really every different department and then run an ad agency. I got to the point, you know, my kids [were grown] and I just wanted to shift . . . I'd sort of mentored some of the younger people that are in our agency, and I've interviewed a lot of young people. I literally started going on this sort of roadshow of guest lecturing, which I really liked. And then that led to the opportunity [to teach at Urban University]. So, I think it's always kind of maybe been in my blood to, you know, get involved [in teaching]; sometimes I even think to myself, "yeah, I wish I'd done this like 15 years ago." It's been even more than I thought it would be, it's great. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

David's love of teaching came through in the classes I observed. He was warm, friendly, and embodied care for the students. He regularly took extra moments at the start or end of class to chat with students. During the observation of his courses, many students sought David's guidance and support on preparing for job and internship interviews.

Iana (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches Marketing and an upper-level media and communication course in advertising. I had not met her prior to observing her courses in spring 2020. Iana is an enthusiastic teacher and has been teaching for nearly 8 years at Urban University. Iana is a widely recognized professional in the advertising and marketing field with her own consulting company and employment at a highly respected agency in the region. Similar to Chelsea, Iana does not have a master's degree, but unlike Chelsea, Iana did not express any concerns about the lack of a master's degree. Iana's love of teaching comes through in her description of how she started teaching at Urban University:

My degree is in education . . . from way back when. [pause] um, then . . . I got into advertising and I've been in the advertising community for twenty-some years. I was looking for something to broaden my horizons, and I had a friend who taught Intro to Advertising at Urban University. She asked me to come be a guest speaker, and I fell madly in love with it. That was when Benjamin (pseudonym) was the chair. Benjamin offered me an adjunct position. It will be eight years this fall. (personal communication, April 20, 2020)

Iana's commitment to students and her love of teaching was evident in every class meeting. Like David, she used current examples or products to help students relate advertising concepts to their personal experiences by finding examples from TikTok, Instagram, and other popular social media.

Jodi (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor for a first-year communication course. In spring 2020, Jodi co-taught the course with another adjunct, but only the sessions taught by Jodi were observed. Jodi is a full-time administrator at Urban University. Jodi has a bachelor's and a master's degree in noncommunication fields from Urban University. Jodi has a deep relationship to Urban University and is committed to seeing students succeed. Jodi's view of student success is largely shaped by career and employment outcomes and is representative of the ways in which the habitus of the individual is informed by the larger neoliberal influences in the world around us. Jodi was unable to participate in an interview for this study because of scheduling conflicts.

Maxine (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches a general education communication course that is taken by communication and noncommunication majors. Spring 2020 was her second semester teaching as an adjunct. Maxine's course is scheduled in the evenings from 5:30 p.m.–8 p.m. to accommodate her work as a full-time staff member at Urban University. Maxine has a Bachelor of Arts in a communication-related discipline and a master's in a noncommunication-related discipline but one that

supports the focus of her course. When asked about how she started teaching, she responded:

This is my first year teaching, adjuncting at Urban. I haven't taught before. [pause] I've done [pause] I've done different types of teaching and mostly, kind of adult education in my prior work, but this opportunity kind of came up. And you know, I'm really thankful for the other faculty member that teaches this same course. (personal communication, April 20, 2020)

Maxine is deeply connected to the course topic and conveys that passion to her students.

As an illustration of the habitus of active learning, prior to each class, Maxine spent time rearranging the tables and chairs to organize them in a circle that she believed fostered closer connection and more discussion among the students in her classroom.

Miguel (pseudonym), a graduate student at Urban University, teaches Basic Communication as part of his graduate teaching assistantship. I had not met Miguel prior to observing his Basic Communication course in fall 2019. Miguel completed a Teaching in Higher Education certificate program, and he regularly incorporated a wide variety of active learning techniques in the classroom. Miguel was unable to participate in an interview for this study because of scheduling conflicts.

Nikita (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches Basic Communication and Introduction to Public Relations. I had not met her prior to observing her Basic Communication course in fall 2019. Nikita's courses are scheduled in the evening to accommodate her full-time employment in public relations. She has been teaching at Urban University for seven years and expresses doubts about her teaching knowledge and her teaching effectiveness. Nikita expresses a strong commitment to her students. When asked about her approach to teaching, she responded:

I do feel like it's more than just me adapting my classroom to my students [pause] how they are that night, if that makes sense, it's more than that for me. It's totally more than that [pause], and I feel like that I am in the minority [deep breath and exhale]. I bet there are teachers that don't do what I do because they are probably not . . . because they were probably trained [nervous laughter] not to do it. (personal communication, November 14, 2019).

Nikita recognizes her teaching approach may be different than the doxa of effective teaching for the department. While she doesn't refer to her actions as heterodoxy, her comment is a demonstration of agency and her resistance of the doxa of student-centered teaching.

Thomas (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches two sections of Basic Communication at Urban University and he also teaches Basic Communication at Religious University. Thomas also teaches at one additional institution that was not included in this study. Thomas has a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Fine Arts. I had not met Thomas prior to observing his teaching in spring 2020 when I observed two sections of Basic Communication at Urban University. I did not observe his teaching at Religious University because of scheduling conflicts, but his teaching practices at both sites were discussed during the interview. When describing what drew him to teaching, Thomas outlined his passion and enthusiasm for theater and the difficulties in finding full-time tenure track work as a theater professor:

Well, I wanted to teach theater . . . you don't make a lot of money doing [theater]. So, I figured I wanted to get a full-time tenure track position someplace where it would give me the ability to work in theater because I really love theater classes. It's just fun. It's a tremendous amount of fun. And I wanted to be able to help students develop their creative skills. And then the reality struck. And I ended up teaching public speaking and English classes, because that's what's available. And since tenure track positions are so difficult to acquire at this point, I have just figured out this little, you know, this niche where I can continue to teach the same types of courses where they are required courses because then they're always available. (personal communication, May 13, 2020)

Like Chelsea, Thomas expressed a desire for full-time faculty employment. Thomas represents what Tuckman (1978) referred to as a hopeful full-timer, and he is the only adjunct faculty in the study who taught at multiple institutions. He described the necessity of teaching multiple courses per semester to survive:

If I don't have five [courses], I won't survive. I'll end up having to put everything on a credit card to make ends meet. And then it's just, you know, perpetual debt. Six per semester is an ok amount, that's decent. But if I can get seven [courses], [long pause and deep breath] if I could get eight, I would do it. (personal communication, May 13, 2020)

Thomas is the only participant in this study who cobbles together full-time work through adjunct teaching at multiple institutions of higher education.

Wanda (pseudonym) is an adjunct professor who teaches a variety of courses. In fall 2019, I observed Persuasive Writing. Wanda has a deep relationship to Urban University. Wanda spends a lot of time on campus and can be seen regularly engaging in conversations with faculty of all ranks. She appeared very comfortable on campus and was always eager to chat before and after her class observations. Scheduling conflicts prevented an interview with Wanda.

Interviews were conducted with four faculty at Bucolic University. Below are brief profiles of each Bucolic University adjunct.

Annabelle (pseudonym) has a long relationship with Bucolic University where she has been an adjunct since 2014. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in journalism and is employed full-time at Bucolic University. She teaches a course on news writing and reporting, which is required for three different communication majors at Bucolic University. Annabelle was also asked to develop and teach a special topics course on the

gig economy and freelancing for journalism students, which was offered for the first time in spring 2020. Annabelle was paid for her special topics course development time and the rework of the fully online news writing and reporting course that she will be working on in summer 2020. When asked about what drew her to teaching, Annabelle outlined her personal experience in the classroom, her desire to stay connected to the field, and the opportunities to earn extra money and to network:

I've always [pause]. I really enjoy being a student and I've always enjoyed that student-faculty interaction and thought, I would like being on the other side . . . I also thought it would be a good way to stay connected to journalism. As I mentioned, my [pause] . . . day job is in marketing communications and while I do some freelance writing, it's [pause] I just [pause and speech fillers] it's just one way to keep one foot in that kind of journalism world and keep up with trends in the industry and what's happening and, and all of that. I mean, the money was also nice. You know, when I started teaching, I was in my mid 20s, and not making a ton of money at my day job. . . . that's changed since then I've changed jobs and gotten promotions and things but at the time, the extra like, couple thousand dollars a month really came in handy. And yeah, and it's also just been a good networking opportunity as well . . . I may want to teach more one day. . . . We'll have to see what happens there. But yeah, it's just [pause] just been a nice kind of addition to my portfolio. (personal communication, April 20, 2020)

While low pay is often described as a hallmark of the adjunct faculty experience, Annabelle's description provides an alternate understanding as she expressed that she taught for the extra money. Annabelle directly addresses the benefits of being an adjunct with her references to networking and to adjunct teaching as a way to build her professional portfolio. This illustrates Bourdieu's concepts of embodied and cultural capital. As an adjunct faculty member, she teaches at a university, and this status represents membership into a class of people, faculty. When Annabelle refers to the ability to network and the "nice kind of addition" to her portfolio, she is revealing the cultural capital of an institution of higher education and serving as a member of the

faculty, which represents authority, credentials, and qualifications related to the field of journalism.

Like Annabelle, Dorothy works full-time and is an adjunct professor at Bucolic University. Dorothy began teaching in fall 2019. Like Annabelle, Dorothy teaches a required course on news writing and reporting. Dorothy has a bachelor's in communications and a master's in journalism.

Similar to Annabelle, John is an alumnus of Bucolic University and he also works full-time at Bucolic. Prior to working in higher education, John worked for several years as a journalist. John has a bachelor's in communications and journalism, a master's in communications, and a master's in higher education. Similar to Annabelle and Dorothy, John teaches the required course on news writing and reporting.

Since 2015, Timothy has been an adjunct professor at Bucolic University, but he has been teaching at other universities since 2010. Timothy works full-time in communications in county government. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in journalism at Bucolic University and has a master's degree in strategic communications. When asked what drew him to teaching, Timothy spoke of enjoying lectures and earning extra money for his children's college:

I have always done workshops and presentations on communications and I just [pause] I always really liked it. And to be honest, at the time when I was really starting to think about this, my kids who are now all adults and grown, they were [in] middle school, and I thought you know, they need to go to college and you know, I'm doing okay, but it would be nice to pay off student loans faster. So, I went . . . got my master's in strategic communications . . . online . . . I'm an online learner. And I really liked the program and [pause and speech fillers]. I just liked all the opportunities that were there and so I thought well I would like to teach online so I that's kind of how I started. (personal communication, April 16, 2020)

Timothy prefers to teach online and has taught at multiple universities, including a small school that “ran into financial problems and . . . had to close their campuses” (personal communication, April 16, 2020).

The participant introductions reveal that many adjunct faculty enjoyed learning and viewed teaching as a way to give back. Second, even though the adjunct status is low within the university hierarchy, media and communication adjunct faculty participants recognized the embodied and cultural capital of adjunct faculty employment. Yet, outside the university field and doxa, adjunct faculty have found ways to leverage their university affiliation as part of their work and as part of their businesses. Similar to Gappa, Austin, and Trice’s (2007) findings regarding length of service, adjuncts in this study had long relationships with their institutions. These participant introductions reveal the doxa of media and communication adjunct faculty who are giving back through teaching. This was especially common for those adjuncts who are alumna of the institution where they teach. The average length of service of 7 years suggests an important element of adjunct faculty labor conditions revealing that the experience of contingency occurs in tandem with long records of service. Now that I have introduced the participants, I discuss the themes found across the interviews and participant observation.

### **Theme 1: Precarity as an Organizing Principle**

Over 70 percent of faculty are contingent (AAUP, 2016, para. 2). Adjunct faculty experience contingency through semester-based or fixed-term contracts. Neoliberalism influences the doxa of contingency as adjunct faculty hiring occurs to fill a specific need and as a flexible and cost-effective alternative to full-time tenured/tenure track faculty labor. The idea of precarity is often central to discussions of the adjunct experience

(Childress, 2019; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Gappa, 2008; Kezar, DePaolo, & Scott, 2019). Typically, adjunct faculty experience precarity through uncertainty of contracts and limited academic freedom. While the adjunct faculty participants experienced precarity with contracts and some academic freedom, the nature of precarity was experienced differently as all but one of the adjunct participants in this study are employed full-time outside of the adjunct faculty role. I begin with those types of precarity that are often used to describe the adjunct experience: contract precarity and precarity caused by low pay and limited benefits. Next, I describe how participants in this study experienced precarity in room/building assignments, and even the days and times of courses. Finally, I incorporate the way in which COVID-19 disrupted the Spring 2020 semester and created a new form of precarity through the wholesale move to remote instruction. COVID-19 disrupted the doxa of in-person teaching as everything moved online.

The earliest example of contract precarity occurred during recruitment of study participants. A review of departmental webpages provided a list of media and communication adjunct faculty affiliated with the department. A prospective participant responded to an email inquiry about participating in the study as follows,

I did not teach in Spring 2020, and I learned Friday that I will not be adjunct teaching in Fall 2020, either, as my section has been eliminated from the schedule. I'm scheduled (tentatively) to adjunct teach again in Fall 2021 but not before then. (John M., personal communication, May 12, 2020)

Prior to our interview, Maxine learned she was not on the schedule to teach in the fall 2020 semester. When asked about how she learned this information, Maxine shared

highlights from her conversation with Liam (pseudonym), the assistant department chair, about the lack of courses available in fall 2020:

Liam told me that another faculty, another like actually [pause] like an assistant professor, or whatever their title is needed a class, and this was a class they were willing to teach. So, it's nothing personal. (personal communication, April 20, 2020)

While Maxine doesn't speak about precarity, this represents one of the ways in which adjunct faculty experience precarity and provides an illustration of the field of higher education when experienced as both a full-time employee and an adjunct.

Despite good relationships and the best efforts of department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors, there is precarity in the schedules of adjunct faculty as adjunct faculty are assigned after full-time faculty and only if the enrollment requires an adjunct faculty member. Thomas teaches at multiple universities and relies on his schedule remaining relatively constant from semester to semester. In one semester, he described how a change to one course at one institution impacted his entire schedule:

But at Urban, it's great because Mitchell really gets me the schedule early, and I can say I want the same classes and with the exception of the fall of . . . last year where, for some reason, . . . there was some confusion in the department about how to assign adjuncts. I've always gotten the classes at the times that I wanted . . . It usually works out. You know, but the problem of being an adjunct is that if some professor . . . [is] trying to get an elective that is some obscure class that students don't actually want and . . . their class doesn't fill, I have been bumped. Okay. They work with me to, you know, when that happened the last time that happened was spring . . . Somebody is taking that class. We need to shift you over here, but can you do this other one. And I do it because I have no choice. (personal communication, May13, 2020)

Thomas's comment illustrates two elements of neoliberalism. Thomas, by his own description, describes how he is switched around between classes. In other words, his labor is interchangeable with other faculty labor. His description of the elective course

that doesn't get adequate enrollments to run provides an example of commodification. Courses must be popular enough to generate sufficient enrollments to run or to be what Tanya, department chair, described as a "profit-center" (February 3, 2020). While it is more unusual for the fall and spring semesters, Tanya explained that enrollment numbers play a factor in courses available for adjunct faculty,

It actually . . . almost never happens that I have to let an adjunct go due to under-enrollment in the fall and spring. In the summer, it often happens that I have to let an adjunct go due to under-enrollment. (personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Insufficient enrollments result in course cancellations and growing enrollments provide more opportunities for adjunct faculty.

Adjuncts have little control over what room they teach in, what time they teach, and even whether they are put on the schedule. While some might argue that room or building location is not specifically precarity, I contend that the classroom is part of the learning conditions, so I have chosen to include several of examples of what I refer to as room or building precarity. Room and building precarity is not exclusive to adjunct faculty. In spring 2020, one of David's courses was taught in a computer lab, and the other course was taught in a small room packed so tightly with desks that there were no aisles between the rows. In Iana's classroom, a portion of the ceiling fell down, and the initial solution was to tape the seats to prevent students from sitting in the impacted area. In the following class, a large chunk of debris fell from the ceiling, and only then was her class relocated to another room. A second example of room/building precarity occurred at the start of the semester, Iana taught back-to-back classes in different buildings. The Urban University schedule has 10 minutes between classes on the schedule. For the first

two weeks of class, there was a broken elevator in the building where her second course was held. Until the elevator was repaired, Iana ended her earlier class five to ten minutes ahead of the scheduled end time to allow her (and the students enrolled in both classes) to get across campus and up the stairs to the third floor. Thomas taught when sick with the flu because as an adjunct, he has no paid sick time.

In spring 2020, COVID-19 extended the concept of precarity more broadly to all of higher education with the sudden departures from campus and the ongoing uncertainty about enrollments for the fall 2020 semester. This disjuncture resulted in significant changes to teaching practice. The pedagogy of online teaching is different than the pedagogy of in-class teaching. The doxa of in-person instruction was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic when all faculty were required to move courses online. All faculty (tenured/tenure track, full-time non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty) experienced precarity and uncertainty through remote learning. As a result, the rupture appears to create a moment of dialogue fostering Freire's (1970) principles of cooperation and unity for liberation. All faculty, regardless of rank or status, experienced the move to online at the same time, this allowed the normal structures and systems that obscure domination and oppression to be put aside. Media and communication adjunct faculty participants were included in communication about the transition, and they were encouraged to participate in department discussions and workshops offered by the Teaching and Learning Center. This provided adjunct faculty with voice and participation in the community (Curnalia & Mermer, 2018). Chapter 7 further explores the impact of COVID-19.

## **Theme 2: Adjuncts Have Jobs**

“Adjuncts have jobs” (Tanya, personal communication, February 3, 2020). These were the words spoken by Tanya, department chair, and she went on to describe the ways in which the adjuncts’ full-time employment outside of higher education contributed to student learning. This is one aspect of the labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication that stands out and is different from the doxa of the adjunct experience that is typically covered in the literature (Childress, 2019; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Gappa, 2008; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). The full-time jobs of adjunct faculty in media and communication contribute to the ways in which they support the curriculum. The full-time employment or business ownership of media and communication adjunct faculty illustrates a form of social capital through industry connections and at the same time illustrates the social capital gained by adjunct faculty through teaching at a university. Finally, this theme reveals the neoliberal university’s emphasis on careers and the way in which media and communication adjuncts as working professionals contribute to and support higher education’s careerist orientation.

At Bucolic University, all of the study participants were employed full-time and at Urban University, five of the nine observed adjunct faculty were employed full-time or were business owners. Two of the faculty were recently retired. As full-mooners or semi-retired, adjuncts have social capital that comes from their professional field. This social capital, as represented by industry experience and an established network, is valuable to students and the department. Only one adjunct, Thomas, exemplified the “hopeful full-timer” (Tuckman, 1978, p. 308) or “freeway flyer” (teaching at multiple institutions during a semester). Media and communication adjuncts in this study were employed full-

time in other capacities both within and outside the university. To use the language of the gig economy, these adjuncts have full-time jobs, and teaching is their side hustle.

In the introductions to participants, I noted that several of these adjuncts used their adjunct faculty positions as capital, specifically Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of embodied and cultural capital. Media and communication adjunct faculty with professional experience or business ownership have additional social capital, particularly as it related to internships and employment outcomes, and this played an important role in the classroom. Department chairs and students recognized this capital, but more importantly it reveals the way contingency and increased reliance on part-time faculty increases the neoliberal orientation of the university.

The ability of "full-mooners" (Tuckman, 1978) to link students with internships and employment is another representation of Bourdieu's concept of social capital that media and communication adjuncts provide to students and the department. Bourdieu (1990) defines social capital as the physical and assumed resources accrued through one's social relationships and connections (pp. 108–110). In other words, this can be thought of as what you own and who you know. Several adjuncts participating in this study illustrated social capital as current or former professionals in the advertising, communications, journalism, marketing, and public relations industries with many connections. When employed full-time as professionals, media and communication adjunct faculty possess a unique form of social capital that might not be available from a newly minted Ph.D. who has not yet worked or built an extensive network.

Media and communication adjunct faculty have the embodied cultural capital from their professional lives and experience. In other words, they are “industry-insiders” and yet at the same time, as adjuncts, they are “outsiders” to the university. Media and communication adjunct faculty used their professional experiences to answer questions about internships, careers, and the workplace, which expanded credibility with students. David shared a specific example of his application to a prominent New York ad agency, including showing his original cover letter. Student-driven discussions of careers and internships were common and may provide evidence of college serving the neoliberal purpose of preparing workers. One aspect of the attention to employment and internships was how adjunct faculty connected students to colleagues and internship opportunities. Chelsea shared information on event logistics positions and volunteer opportunities. On multiple occasions, Iana and David shared information on internship job postings at regional firms. I regularly observed media and communication adjunct faculty speak with students about preparing for upcoming interviews, reviewing resumes and cover letters, and conducting postmortems on a job interview. The media and communication adjunct faculty often did this at the front of the classroom before the start and the end of the class. These impromptu meetings also occurred outside the classroom on benches in the hallways and occasionally in the nearby coffee shops.

Media and communication adjuncts incorporated examples from their professional lives, including presenting work products such as ad campaigns, telling stories about failed pitches, sharing examples of what happens when an ad agency loses a client, and showing how commissions are calculated on advertising sales. Iana regularly shared the ways in which different agencies are structured and used her work experience

in different types of agencies and with different types of clients to explain theoretical concepts. David shared his approaches to managing personnel in his firm and highlighted some of the unique benefits that made his firm a top place to work in the region. When asked about the unique things that she brings to the classroom as an adjunct, Nikita articulated the importance of real-world experience to students:

I try to explain to them when you are out [there]. When you are working, this is what happens. I try to give them concrete examples. Sometimes they listen, sometimes they don't. I try to bring that to the classroom. I think that is why a lot of students take adjuncts because of that reason exactly. (personal communication, November 14, 2019)

Nikita's comment illustrates that adjunct faculty recognize the value and capital of professional experience for students. Maxine used her work experience as a community organizer to illustrate concepts of social justice. Even Thomas used his work in the theater to illustrate public speaking concepts in the basic communication course. All of these illustrate Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of capital, as well as best practices of teaching as represented by Brookfield's (2006) concepts of credibility, particularly expertise and experience.

### **Theme 3: Little Oversight**

In Theme 1, I outlined the ways in which adjuncts lack power and often have little control over what room they teach in, what time they teach, and whether they are put on the schedule. In Theme 2, I demonstrated the social capital of the media and communication adjuncts who are working professionals. In Theme 3, I use Bourdieu's practice theory to highlight the tension between the university-defined curriculum and the instructor's role and agency to enact local changes.

Before covering the specific examples of agency, it is important to return to the department administrators comments on observation of teaching practice. Both Katelyn and Craig, sequence heads, commented on observing adjunct faculty at least once a year and ideally, once per semester. David, an adjunct participant, who has been teaching two years noted being observed only one time since he started teaching. Based on my observation and interview data, adjunct faculty participants were not observed during the period of study; nor did the data, reveal any findings related to outcomes, goals, or course objectives.

Normally quizzes are required in the Basic Communication course, but Nikita regularly replaced quizzes with alternative public speaking activities. In the activities, she had students spend time outlining and creating three key points. Each of the students spoke on the assigned topic. On one occasion, students in the class gave each other feedback, and on another occasion, limited feedback was provided by Nikita. Each of the speeches were timed, but Nikita did not stop students who went over time. When asked about this during the interview, she commented, “I decided that we are not doing a test on this. Let’s just get enough in there that they know what they need to do for their speeches” (Nikita, personal communication, November 14, 2019).

Bourdieu’s (1977) idea of agency helps us see the ways in which adjuncts can resist or conform in the classroom. Adjuncts have agency to decide how to use the class time, whether or not they will use PowerPoint slides, what kinds of assignments they will require, and other aspects of the classroom community. Given the lack of oversight, I anticipated more variability in course syllabi, yet as will be covered later in this chapter, the syllabi showed very little variation between instructors of the same course topic. The

only counter to adjunct's agency is the occasional evaluator and the student evaluation forms. No classroom evaluations took place with the adjunct faculty participants during my observations. I point this out because there were times where some of the teaching was not grounded in pedagogic best practice.

While several of the departments included in the study had sequence heads and course directors to support faculty, many of the adjuncts had limited interaction with anyone except the department chair. Adjunct faculty in the study were largely left on their own to design, deliver, and modify the course as they saw fit. While several adjunct faculty described looking at other instructors' syllabi or reviewing sample assignments, the adjunct faculty in this study expressed the importance of being able to control what happens in the classroom. The importance of this independence is illustrated by David's comment on being observed in his first semester teaching:

I always joke how I tried to make that my best class because I knew she [the observer] was coming in. So, I have all these engaging exercises that I even got her involved with . . . she came out of class, "Like, wow, that was really great." Since that day, I've never had anybody else come or question because I guess my reviews are good and the word of mouth, but they really don't meddle here at all. And I think that's what's been amazing is that they let you teach your own style, how you want to teach, and they assume the students are learning. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

Both Maxine and Miguel commented that no one had come to observe them teach. One might anticipate more variability in course syllabi and other aspects of teaching, yet as will be covered later in this chapter, the course syllabi showed very little variation despite the lack of oversight.

#### **Theme 4: Love of Teaching**

This brings us to the fourth theme encountered in this study, love of teaching. In the brief introductions earlier in this chapter, many of the media and communication adjunct faculty expressed a love of teaching and a desire to give back. As an introduction to the love of teaching theme, I return to the brief orientations or start of semester events that most of the media and communication adjunct faculty experienced. When describing these orientations and events, the sequence heads, course director, and the adjunct faculty mentioned content related to the curriculum, yet none mentioned pedagogy or active-learning practices as part of this content. While teaching is highly personal and often reflects the individual's values and beliefs about learning or the ways in which prior learning was experienced (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015), this study used the doxa of student-centered learning to highlight effective teaching practices and reveal moments where teaching was less effective. It is important to note that all teachers experience effective and ineffective moments. It is also important to note that the media and communication adjunct faculty participants in this study may not be representative of all adjunct faculty as they all agreed to have their teaching observed. Everyone who teaches does not necessarily enjoy teaching or engage in best practices.

While each teacher approached teaching in different ways (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004, p. 305), the scholarship of pedagogy, teaching, and learning provided a framework to examine adjunct faculty teaching practices. Many of the adjunct faculty in this study expressed deep loyalty to the institutions where they worked. Nearly all of the adjuncts expressed a love of teaching. Modeled after Weimer's (2013) description of "commitment to learning" (pp. 156-58), I describe a love of teaching as "emotional

attachment” (p. 156) to content or topics; “passion for the material” and a willingness to reveal personal learning goals (p. 157). To state it more simply, a love of teaching is revealed in an instructor’s enjoyment of the classroom interactions and excitement about the topic. A love of teaching came up in the interviews with department chairs as an important aspect of adjunct effectiveness. Later, I will show that students also expressed the importance of love for the topic and for teaching as important to learning. To start the examination of teaching practices, I begin with teaching philosophies and then move on to the active-learning and learner-centered teaching practices and then conclude with findings from the student focus groups and the textual analysis of course syllabi.

### *Teaching Philosophies of Adjunct Faculty*

This study explored teaching philosophies and faculty beliefs related to teaching and learning through interviews and informal conversations. A teaching philosophy is a written statement that articulates the ways a faculty member thinks about teaching and learning, and it directly impacts what happens in the classroom. A teaching philosophy reveals the faculty’s understanding and relationship to teaching practice. Describing the truth of teaching, Brookfield (2006) stated, “It is a more a personal truth, one smelted and shaped in the fire of our practice so that it fits the situations we deal with every day” (p. 11). Brookfield’s description could also describe the habitus of teaching. A teaching philosophy articulates the habitus of media and communication adjunct faculty’s views of teaching and learning integrated with the lived experience of teaching practice.

To better articulate the purpose and goals of teaching philosophy, I return to Meyer, Rose, and Gordon’s (2014) universal design for learning (UDL) framework of why, what, and how to show the three elements of a teaching philosophy: why you teach,

what you teach, and how you teach it. Of the media and communication adjunct faculty participants, only Thomas had a formal written teaching philosophy. This is also notable as Thomas was the only “hopeful full-timer” (Tuckman, 1978) and the only participant that consistently worked at multiple institutions each semester. When asked about his teaching philosophy, Thomas summarized three pillars of his philosophy as “learning by doing and creating” and “making them [students] responsible for the class . . . in the sense that they’re responsible to engage with the material and present their ideas,” and the third pillar is “engage [students] in their own critical thinking processes” (personal communication, May13, 2020).

With some prompts and encouragement, every media and communication adjunct faculty participant could articulate an idea or statement for their personal teaching philosophy. Nearly every faculty member focused on learning and application of skills as illustrated by Timothy’s comment:

I tell students at the beginning of each semester, my goal is just that they learn something out of the course that they can apply to their daily lives or their job, and that they just kind of grow personally and professionally. You know, my approach is that, you know, I try to be connected with them in such a way that they’re not afraid to, to contact me if they have questions. (personal communication, April 16, 2020)

Timothy demonstrates Brookfield’s (2006) concept of authenticity, particularly the indicators of congruence, responsiveness, and personhood. Nikita’s response to a question on teaching philosophy illustrates a similar commitment to learning and expands it to excitement about the topic, “I want them to learn. I want them to be excited about whatever we’re teaching and know that it’s useful” (November 14, 2019). Annabelle also

centered her statement around fostering student curiosity. Like Nikita and Annabelle, Chelsea's teaching philosophy focused on attitude and curiosity:

Positive attitude and curiosity are everything. That's my thing. If you're curious, and you have a good attitude, and I feel like that could go in any kind of discipline, but I really feel like curiosity and a good attitude can teach anybody anything. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

Similar to Chelsea and Annabelle, Iana also focused on curiosity, as well as student success and questioning. Iana said,

I want every student to succeed. I want to make them curious and question. [pause] I want to give them skills that might help them get a job down the road, and I want [pause] to maybe show them something new that they've never seen before [and] that might excite them. That's my super joy! If they don't know what [communication concept] is. If you don't know what it is, you would have no idea that it's an industry and it's a big industry. (personal communication, April 20, 2020)

Iana is an exemplar of Brookfield's (2006) concept of credibility, particularly the indicators of expertise, experience, and conviction. Iana's statement clearly calls out the career focus and the potential for jobs based on skills gained from her course. This illustrates the ways in which the neoliberal doxa becomes integrated into teaching practice.

Several of the media and communication adjunct faculty participants expressed values consistent with a neoliberal orientation to education: individualism, employment outcomes, and career success. At the same time, the media and communication adjunct faculty teaching philosophies shared these common themes of applying knowledge and learning: concept application, learning to learn, sparking curiosity, generating excitement for the field, and helping students succeed. When combined with participant observation, the teaching philosophies showed the habitus and embodiment of the principles and

characteristics of active learning and learner-centered teaching, as well as the neoliberal influence of higher education as the path to employment.

### *Active Learning and Learner-Centered Teaching*

The labor of media and communication adjunct faculty is teaching. To explore teaching labor, I return to the doxa represented by learner-centered teaching. This section uses classroom observations beginning with the initial class meeting and extending through the final class meeting. A separate section on assessment and feedback is covered and finally, I conclude this section with examples of ineffective teaching observed during my fieldwork.

### *Syllabi*

The course syllabus is textual artifact of teaching and provides details on the structure, format, and organization for a course. Slattery and Carlson (2005) stated, “A strong syllabus facilitates teaching and learning” (p. 159). As part of the study, I examined the ways in which differences in syllabi were associated with faculty rank and the extent to which adjunct faculty devised syllabi. I analyzed 88 course syllabi<sup>16</sup> to answer RQ 3: What do course syllabi reveal about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication?

The intellectual labor of the course syllabus and the use of standard course syllabi revealed some of the ways that neoliberal influences continue to “diminish and trivialize the intellectual work of teaching” (Sprague, 1992, p. 8). While Sprague (1992) said this

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<sup>16</sup> The syllabi have not been included in the references to protect the anonymity of participants.

in the broad context of the teaching profession, it is and remains a concern that impacts media and communication adjunct faculty who are cast “in the role of technicians who manage classrooms and implement ‘teacher-proof’ curricula designed by others” (p. 8). Nikita’s comment on her course syllabus provides an example of these “teacher-proof” curricula:

It [the course syllabus] is exactly the same one that Michael put out. There’s no surprises. The only thing that I do is change the schedule because it’s [long pause] you know for snow days or I was traveling so we missed a date. (personal communication, November 14, 2019)

Another basic communication instructor, Chelsea, further illustrates the ways in which the syllabus is used. “For the syllabus, I pretty much follow whatever the department wants us to have for the syllabus” (personal communication, April 17, 2020).

The course syllabi analyzed for this study provided limited information about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication. In many cases, a common departmental syllabus was used across all sections of the same course with variations limited to the schedule, the assignment topic and occasionally the type of assignment, i.e., a paper versus a quiz. This unified syllabus resulted in a common structure, format, organization, and presentation. It also reveals the policy-driven doxa of the syllabus. While some syllabi provided explicit directions on assignments, most shared a common departmentally established tone and lacked any specific views on teaching and learning.

One finding related to course syllabi involves how media and communication adjunct faculty addressed the lack of dedicated space or facilities to meet with students or the use of shared space as a place to meet with students. The orthodoxy of adjunct faculty

work is the lack of office space, and at the same time, the orthodoxy prescribes that adjunct faculty meet with students. To address this contradiction with the field's doxa, some adjunct faculty address the lack of office space directly on the syllabus as illustrated by this quote from Iana: "I do not have an office on campus. I will be available to meet with you MWF after 11:00. Feel free to make an appointment with me during class or email me" (Iana, course syllabus). This quote from Jodi acknowledges the lack of an office and proposes an alternative: "I don't have a campus office, but we can meet before or after class in the [Building Name] café." (Jodi, course syllabus). Others take an indirect approach when covering office hours on the course syllabus, "After class or by appt. Tues/Thurs." While office space was not generally available to adjunct faculty participants, one department provided a small room with study carrels used by graduate students and adjunct faculty. A few use the shared office space provided for media and communication adjuncts and graduate students teaching the basic communication course and refer to it on the syllabus, and those who work on the campus in administrative or student support roles use their work offices to meet with students, as illustrated by Maxine's description of office hours:

Due to the nature of my day job, I do not have office hours BUT am almost always on campus or nearby. Feel free to reach out to me to schedule an appointment, and I can often see you within the week. My office is in [Building Name], but incredibly unintuitive to find, so potential bonus points if you can find it without me telling you where it is (not actually, but maybe). (Maxine, course syllabus)

This notable example was one of the few examples of personality in a course syllabus.

A final finding related to course syllabi involves how instructors reviewed the course syllabus during the initial class meetings. Instructors took a range of approaches

from distributing printed copies of the course syllabus, an instructor-reading of the syllabus, a student-reading of the course syllabus, and finally, an acknowledgement of the course syllabus followed by a call for questions and a short syllabus quiz in the learning management system. In Iana's courses, she embraced the syllabus as a contract model. Following the syllabus review in the first course meeting, she asked students to print and sign the fourth page of the syllabus for submission at the second class meeting.

Course syllabi provide an opportunity to reflect on the field of higher education and the doxa of the syllabus. Many universities have policies that dictate required course syllabi elements. This represents the field of the university. At the same time, the department may have preferred approaches to syllabi content and even how the course syllabi are presented in the class, this represents the field of the department. The individual media and communication adjunct faculty operate within the field as a teacher and as a professional with industry knowledge about the topics. This provides yet another set of doxa related to the course syllabi and the intersection of the higher education and industry fields. All of these fields are related and interact with one another. The relationship and intersections of field and doxa may explain why there were relatively few variations among course syllabi. It may also reveal the limited authority and autonomy of media and communication adjunct faculty.

### ***First Class Meetings and Learner-Centered Teaching***

The first class meetings are important to setting student expectations for the course (Cavanagh, 2016, p. 62). Lyons, McIntosh, and Kysilka (2003) define four purposes of the first day of class: (1) answer questions related to course objectives, (2) set expectations for performance in the class, (3) provide students with a sense of who you

are as an instructor, and (4) learn about the students in the course. Several of the adjunct faculty engaged students in activities to understand student preferences, including asking, “what do you hate in a class?” and “what do you like in a class?” (Iana, personal communication, January 15, 2020); “what do you want to learn?” (Jodi, personal communication, January 14, 2020); and David used notecards for Brookfield’s minute paper exercise with the question, “What are three things that you want to learn about advertising?” (personal communication, January 14, 2020). A minute paper is described by Brookfield (2006) as “one of the best-known classroom research techniques” (p. 37) as it allows teachers to get student feedback at the beginning or end of class. In the subsequent class, David presented a PowerPoint slide summarizing the students’ comments from the minute papers.

A supportive learning environment is central to the learner-centered approach and requires faculty to engage the student in the learning process, build bridges between concepts, and nurture a classroom community (Brookfield, 2006; Dewey, 1938/1963; Fink, 2013; Freire, 1970). In this study, active learning was observed to be an iterative and continuous process in which faculty examined and reflected on student learning using activities, quizzes, and discussion. Based on these observations, assessments, and feedback, processes led to changes to teaching. This is what Brookfield (2006) referred to as “skillful teaching” (p. xi). While I observed and discussed changes to teaching practice with media and communication adjunct faculty participants, this study did not support the examination of how those changes impacted the learning outcomes, course goals, or objectives.

According to Weimer (2013), “Learning requires discovery and invention. Good teachers know when to hang back and be silent, when to watch and wonder at what is taking place all around them” (p. 62). The media and communication adjuncts participating in this study embodied and embraced active teaching. In the classroom, adjuncts worked to connect theoretical constructs to the real world and provided clear links between theoretical constructs and application. One illustration is McCarthy’s (1968) 4 P’s (product, price, place, and promotion), which is taught in both marketing and advertising courses. Each of the adjuncts observed took a different approach. Still, each found a way to connect the 4 P’s to three things: the contemporary marketing context, the relationship to the coursework and assignments, and finally, how to demonstrate understanding in the context of a job or internship interview. The connection to jobs was repeated throughout my observations and interviews. The job or employment connection highlights how theoretical constructs are typically presented in relationship to the workplace.

In learner-centered teaching, faculty facilitate learning by providing the conditions that open pathways and opportunities for learning by ensuring that students master the material and gain skills to learn (Weimer, 2013). Learner-centered faculty embrace the role of facilitator and support student in navigating learning (Weimer, 2013, p. 62). Learner-centered teaching is hard work for both students and faculty. The following examples illustrate some of the ways that adjunct faculty modeled and embraced the learner-centered approach, including in-class learning activities, use of current advertisements, and exercises to practice the skills required for the workplace.

David's classes were highly engaging, and throughout the observation, he regularly incorporated active learning activities. To facilitate these activities, he brought markers and flip chart paper. Students worked in small groups to come up with real-world examples for the course topic, such as tag lines, storyboards, or marketing campaign slogans. Following the COVID-19 move to online, he adapted his active learning approaches to experiment with some small group activities using the Zoom breakout rooms feature, and in one exam review session called on me to answer a question.

As professionals with full-time work outside of academe, the media and communication adjunct faculty incorporated work products from their profession or invited guest speakers to class meetings. As the start of most observed class meetings, David used PowerPoint slides of current print ads to get students thinking and talking about key concepts in marketing and advertising related to the class topic. David also regularly used small group work where students formed small advertising agencies to develop taglines, campaigns, and storyboards for contemporary brands. In public speaking, Thomas encouraged students to find the argument and identify the specific ways in which persuasion was used in TED Talks and other public speeches.

Both Iana and David integrated commercials into their courses. As the courses were observed in the Spring 2020 semester, the Super Bowl ads were a big part of both of their courses. I highlight one of the specific ads since it was used to illustrate several course concepts and the practical decisions around what to do with the ad campaign given the changing context. In the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl, a Planters' commercial showed Mr. Peanut's heroic death, when he died to save his friends following a car crash.

At the end of January 2020, Kobe Bryant, a former Los Angeles Lakers basketball star, and his daughter died in a plane crash. This provided a real-world case study that both Iana and David used to help students think through what should happen to the Planters' advertising campaign. Students debated and discussed different approaches and the reasons why they would stop or continue the advertising campaign.

The process of regularly providing and receiving feedback is a best practice of effective teaching. I observed media and communication adjunct faculty provide feedback using rubrics, written comments, and in-class reviews. The basic communication course rubrics were integrated to the learning management system and all instructors used the same rubrics. David also used rubrics within the learning management system. David's rubrics for low point assignments consisted of single word descriptions providing an outline of required elements to detailed multi-sentence descriptions the elements required group projects.

Having just argued that most adjuncts love teaching, practice active learning techniques, and use effective pedagogical practices, I now want to complicate this point by outlining several places where adjunct faculty teaching practices did not appear to be effective or seemed to undermine student learning. Katelyn, sequence head, described how industry knowledge is insufficient for effective teaching:

There is something to be said, you know, for being on that bleeding edge of what's going on and seeing the things that are happening in the field. So, it is nice to incorporate that level of industry knowledge tempered with, again, providing positive experience for the students because I've seen it . . . you know [long pause], I've been in a classroom with an adjunct who I'm observing, and I've seen them, you know, kind of teaching off of just their industry experience and not employing best teaching practices (personal communication, April 20, 2020).

Katelyn's comment illustrates the importance of providing a framework for effective teaching. This is consistent with the best practices pedagogy (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Weimer, 2013) and underlines the importance of attention to teaching practice as part of the support for media and communication adjunct faculty, and more broadly, all faculty.

There are three specific examples that I would like to highlight to illustrate poor educational quality or less effective teaching: poor quality visuals, including PowerPoint slides and handouts; dismissiveness of key or foundational concepts, and lastly, confusing navigation within the learning management system. While many of the adjunct faculty had professional slides, one adjunct's syllabus and slides were of poor quality and contained many fonts, many font sizes, and a multitude of colors. While color-coding can be useful for organizing content, there was no discernable pattern that could be determined or understood. Universal design for learning (UDL) reminds us that when we think about handouts, materials, and even our lectures, we must consider how does this engage learners in the learning process. When PowerPoint slides are unprofessional, media and communication students, particularly those with design skills, may be less likely to engage with content. In other words, the representation of the content may negatively impact the students' learning.

The doxa of educational quality includes integrating the theoretical and the practical. As Cross and Goldenberg (2009) noted, adjuncts are teaching an increasing number of introductory and lower-level courses. Many of the courses in this study were introduction or lower-level courses that provide the foundation for future course work. The basic communication course provides the theoretical foundation for future courses in

both rhetoric and persuasion. However, in the classroom, Nikita was regularly distrustful of theory in her basic communication courses and often skimmed over those parts of the curriculum. I mentioned the importance of theory to public speaking during our interview and asked about her perspective on theory. She replied and explained her approach to theory:

I have to disagree with you. I am not sure how important theory is in the real-world. That ethos, pathos, and whatever the third one is [long pause] [*Nicole: logos*] Logos. Thank you. No offense, I don't think that theory matters. As much as just getting up there. (personal communication, November 14, 2019)

While it is true that practice is essential in public speaking, it is also true that the theoretical constructs of ethos, pathos, and logos have relevance to public speaking, advertising, marketing, and persuasion. Theories help students understand and explain communication through comprehension, prediction, and criticism. In other words, theories and theoretical constructs provide students with the ability to interpret, describe, and question the world around them. When students lack a theoretical understanding, they may not be able to reproduce or perform actions in other contexts and they are less prepared to engage in citizenry.

The student focus groups provided the student perspective on practices that were not student-centered and illustrate the student doxa on the use of educational technology. While most media and communication adjuncts used the learning management system effectively, one student, Shanae (pseudonym), shared her frustration with the learning management system setup during student focus group:

The [learning management system] has a tab called syllabus. Why do instructors load a static PDF of assignments and not use the schedule? And why would you use the syllabus tab and then disable it, I have to spend, like, 10 minutes trying to find it every time. (personal communication, March 23, 2020)

This comment reflects students' expectations for educational technology use. It reveals the doxa of using educational technology and it also reveals the ways in which students are limited in how they can provide this type of feedback to media and communication adjunct faculty. This example provides an illustration of a practice that is counter to the doxa of student-centered teaching. It is important to note that these practices and observations are likely not exclusive to adjunct faculty but are provided as a counterpoint to the earlier examples of student-centered learning practices. In the next section, we will look at additional examples that illustrate and refute the doxa of student-centered teaching using the student experience as observed during fieldwork or as discussed during the student focus groups.

### *Students Perspectives of Adjunct Faculty*

In observing adjunct teaching practices, I also observed the student experience. While this dissertation is not focused on students, there are some notable student-focused observations that inform our understanding of the adjunct experience and exemplify the care that adjuncts have for students. The first example focuses on a student sleeping in class, and the second example shows the ways in which new students are incorporated into the classroom community. Thomas's class is an accelerated evening class held from 5:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m. one time per week. After the first 40 minutes of the first class meeting, a sleeping student began to snore loudly. The students sitting near the student occasionally nudged the student to wake him. Thomas continued to teach and used strategies to help engage the sleeping student, including moving around the room, asking questions, and calling on a student sitting next to the sleeping student. Thomas did not call out the student in class or attempt to embarrass him. After class, Thomas asked the

student to stay and spoke with him. He acknowledged that it was tough to have evening classes and clarified his expectations for his classroom. “It is important that when you are here that you are awake and participate. If you are sleeping, you can’t participate, and that is an important part of this class” (Thomas, personal communication, January 30, 2020).

The next two examples show how Thomas checked for new students and how David incorporated a student who added the course late into the classroom community. During the second course meeting of his full-semester course and before taking attendance, Thomas asked, “Is anyone new here?” and proceeded to welcome the student to the classroom community and caught them up on what they missed (personal communication, January 23, 2020). Like Thomas, when a student joined David’s class on Tuesday of the second full week of classes, David welcomed the student. At the end of class, David walked up to the student and commented about the learning management system and the assignment that was due at the end of the week. David reassured the student, “look over everything and be sure to email me any questions. Let me know if you have any concerns about submitting the assignment due on Friday” (personal communication, January 23, 2020). These examples illustrate “awareness of how students are experiencing their learning and perceiving teachers’ actions” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 17), which is one of the three assumptions of skillful teaching.

This study also included focus groups with students enrolled in the classes observed. While these student focus groups were a secondary component of the study, they revealed that students understand some of the differences between tenured and adjunct faculty in media and communication. Students do not know or understand the

work of faculty. Nineteen students participated in three focus groups of six to seven participants in spring 2020. All focus group participants were students enrolled in at least one of the courses taught by media and communication adjunct faculty participating in the study. Pseudonyms identify all students, and the comments reflect only a portion of the data collected from the student focus groups.

Focus groups revealed student assumptions and beliefs about the work of faculty. Students discussed that all faculty are responsible for teaching, being organized, and preparing students for jobs. Students did not distinguish or identify differences in cultural capital between adjunct faculty and tenured/tenure track faculty. Job preparation and higher education's role in preparing the workforce came up multiple times in student focus groups, as illustrated by this quote from Mary, "Did we say like, prepare us for [pause] their job is to prepare us for the next step of our lives. Like we're all here because we want a job" (personal communication, March 10, 2020). In contrast, Cindy was less concerned about employment and wanted an expert doing the teaching:

Within your major, it's important for the professor to educate the student on a specific topic. Okay, you would expect the professor to know about the topic very well. And to like transfer that sort of knowledge onto . . . students. . . . so, when the student goes out to the world and goes into their own field, hopefully, you know, with the same major in their school, they have all that knowledge behind them. (personal communication, March 10, 2020)

Cindy's comment illustrates the student desire for what Freire (1970) referred to as the "banking model" of education with her desire to have the knowledge transferred from faculty to student. Cindy also commented on the importance of helping students learn as part of the work of faculty. Ashley built on Cindy's comment and added that faculty

should help students learn things that are unknown, but brought the discussion back to the future job or employment outcome:

I guess to like go off that to teach us things that are in our major that we would never know, otherwise. 'Cuz like, I've learned things in my major that I'm going to need when I'm like applying for jobs that like I didn't know before. (personal communication, March 10, 2020)

These student comments reveal the doxa of the neoliberal university with higher education goals focused on jobs and career outcomes.

The focus groups also revealed the limits of how students understand differences between faculty ranks and the idea of tenure. Ashley commented on the working conditions of faculty noting the importance of offices and the availability of space to meet privately with students:

I guess it's hard to say. I know, at Urban University, all full-time professors have an office. Some of them without windows, which is really hard for me to understand, like I wouldn't want to work in the closet. I know that they [full-time faculty] are paid way more than adjunct professors, like exponentially more. And I know it's also really difficult. I've had experiences where I've had to, like meet an adjunct professor and they're like, "well, I don't have an office, let's meet in this building." And then it's like challenging to like, have a one-on-one. (personal communication, March 10, 2020)

Notice that Ashley does not distinguish between tenured, tenure track, and NTT full-time faculty. Another illustration of the lack of understanding of tenure came from Matthew who described tenure like seniority:

I think tenure is like [short pause] when like you've been teaching for so long that like once you reach a certain amount of years that you probably get the benefits or if you're laid off like they won't come after you first. (personal communication, March 23, 2020)

Matthew does not seem to understand the elements of tenure, specifically the role of research. In understanding the work of faculty, students focused on what they personally

experience, which is teaching. Finally, the focus groups showed that students did not factor faculty rank into decisions about what course to register for or the college selection process. When asked the question about how faculty rank factors into their course selection process Mary commented:

So, I just use Rate My Professor all the time. That's the one thing I use and the only thing I use. [pause] I don't care if they're like an adjunct or like a full-time professor. I care about how, like, other students liked him or her. (personal communication, March 10, 2020)

Ashley and other students confirmed by saying "I agree" or nodding their heads affirmatively in response to Mary's comment.

Students shared positive and negative experiences with adjunct faculty and while they did not use the words, authenticity or credibility. They articulated ideas that are consistent with Brookfield's (2006) four factors of credibility (expertise, experience, rationale, and conviction) (pp. 58–66) and his four factors of authenticity (congruence, full disclosure, responsiveness, and personhood) (pp. 67–73). A key theme was the idea that adjunct faculty were approachable and understanding as illustrated by Andrew's quote:

If I'm having an issue, I can approach them and they probably can look at it as they've dealt with many people in the field, so they probably know, a lot of the quirks and tics that people have. (personal communication, March 23, 2020)

Andrew's description of approachable faculty is consistent with Brookfield's description of what students' value, "to be able to trust and rely on them" (p. 55). Similarly, this is what Weimer (2013) referred to as "caring" (p. 155). Weimer describes caring "as an occasional kind comment, a bowl of candy . . . , conscientious responses to email queries" (p. 156). I observed kind comments, candy and snacks in the classroom, and

students noted quick responses to email requests to a variety of queries from missing classes, extension requests, or letters of recommendation.

One way to view the student comments on adjunct faculty is that the precarity experienced by media and communication adjunct faculty raises the conscientização of the student experience and the shared feelings of domination and oppression elevate the reactions of care and empathy (Freire, 1970). Alternatively, the flexibility and the student-centered orientation of media and communication adjunct faculty may reveal the ways in which the potential negative feedback from course evaluations might shape how teaching practice is performed with a bias towards those approaches that ensure positive evaluations.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

Media and communication adjunct faculty have jobs, either as business owners or full-time employment outside the university or within the university. Unlike the typical portrayals of adjunct faculty who cobble together full-time work across several higher education institutions, full-time employment and business ownership of media and communication adjunct faculty increases social capital and reduces some aspects of precarity. This reveals the neoliberal university in two ways. First, the labor of media and communication adjunct faculty is flexible, low-cost, and able to adapt to the changing needs of the department and the industry. Second, as professionals, media and communication adjunct faculty have more social capital due to network connections which support internships and jobs. Internships and jobs for students are needed by the neoliberal university that prioritizes career and employment outcomes over other outcomes for higher education. Prior to COVID-19, adjunct faculty participants in this

study experienced precarity through room assignments, having to teach when sick, and scheduling issues. With COVID-19, there may be more precarity for these adjunct faculty. The media and communication adjunct faculty participants have jobs or have recently retired and represent a departure from the widely-held notion of Tuckman's (1978) "hopeful full-timer or the adjunct as seeking full-time work as a professor. Except for Thomas, the participants in this study worked full-time, owned their own business, or were recently retired.

Hirst (1971) previously described "teaching [as] . . . a polymorphous activity: it quite literally takes many forms" (p. 7). Participant observation and interviews revealed the diverse teaching practices employed by adjunct faculty in media and communication. Media and communication adjunct faculty employ the doxa of effective teaching. Practices are informed by the habitus and their own perceptions of good teaching. Similar to Brookfield (2006), this study observed a diversity of effective teaching approaches which were grounded in the media and communication adjunct faculty's background, prior teaching experience, and understanding of pedagogy. This represents the media and communication adjunct faculty member's habitus of effective teaching. In most cases, this habitus was informed by the best practices of teaching and learning.

Course syllabi presented the learning goals, the course objectives, and how students are assessed. While the course syllabi revealed the overall design of the course, they provided limited insight into the "scholar's intellectual labor" (Rhody, 2018). The use of standard course syllabi revealed the neoliberal influences that continue to "diminish and trivialize the intellectual work of teaching" (Sprague, 1992, p. 8). A standard, departmental syllabus was often used across all sections of a course with

variations limited to the schedule, the assignment topic, and occasionally the type of assignment. The ways in which adjunct faculty addressed office hours and the lack of space to meet privately with students varied widely across syllabi with some calling attention to the lack of an office and others providing alternatives such as coffee shops.

Adjunct faculty's love of teaching fosters credibility and authenticity (Brookfield, 2006). They convey their expertise, experience and conviction for what they do through a passion for the subject. At the same time, adjunct faculty bring their whole selves to the classroom, share openly, and demonstrate care and interest in students in achieving their personal goals. The habitus and embodiment of active learning principles and learner-centered teaching were observed regularly and discussed in the interviews.

Neoliberal doxa appeared in teaching philosophies and in teaching practices. While only one adjunct had a written teaching philosophy, the love of teaching was pervasive in the teaching philosophies articulated in the interviews. The other common themes shared by most adjunct faculty participants included: application of concepts, sparking curiosity, generating excitement and interest in the discipline, and helping students succeed. In teaching practice, the neoliberal doxa of employment outcomes was observed with class time spent on how to prepare for job interviews and how to explain theoretical constructs during an interview.

While there is much discussion surrounding the doxa of educational quality, adjunct faculty are largely on their own to teach in a way that makes sense for their classroom and topic. This is a relief for experienced adjunct faculty, but for new adjunct faculty, this could be overwhelming. The adjunct faculty participants engaged students in

active learning, encouraged discussion, and found ways to bring real-world scenarios into the classroom. Textual analysis revealed little variation from the departmental syllabus for most courses and the course syllabi analyzed for this study provided limited information about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication.

Student focus groups revealed that three key aspects related to the labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty. First, students do not understand the work or labor conditions of faculty and they do not understand the purpose or meaning of tenure. Second, students emphasized the importance of faculty being organized and preparing them for jobs, revealing and reinforcing the doxa of the neoliberal university that was observed in the classroom and discussed in interviews with adjunct faculty participants. Third, students do not rely on faculty rank to decide whether to take a course or in their selection and enrollment in university.

The final takeaway is that adjunct faculty have agency and they can resist, conform, or transform the doxa of active learning and educational quality. This suggests the importance of providing a regular and systematic form of peer review and teaching evaluation for adjunct faculty. Regular and consistent feedback has the potential to greatly improve teaching practice for adjunct faculty in media and communication. As Cross and Goldenberg (2009) noted, “university instruction is an academic matter with significance for the fundamental undergraduate educational mission of a university” (p. 36).

## **CHAPTER 7: COVID-19, DISRUPTION, AND ONLINE TEACHING**

In March 2020, cities, towns, and college campuses across the United States faced the realities of a global pandemic caused by COVID-19, a particularly contagious and novel virus. This rapidly spreading virus was further complicated by the ease of spread and the range of ways individuals experienced the illness, from asymptomatic to a shutdown of major organs. Colleges and universities faced the difficult decision of what to do and how to keep students and faculty safe during the unusual circumstances of a global pandemic. This chapter documents the COVID-19 context and addresses RQ1 (How do the labor conditions of adjunct faculty differ from full-time tenured and tenure track faculty labor conditions in schools of media and communication?) and RQ2 (How do the labor conditions of media and communication faculty shape the ways in which communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning are employed in the classroom?).

Before we examine the neoliberal influences of the pandemic, I return to my earlier definition of neoliberalism in universities. Neoliberalism in higher education is a set of practices that favor revenue generation, individual rights, and expansion over and above services and responsibilities to the public good. While each of these elements (revenue generation, individual rights, and expansion) were present pre-COVID, they were rendered more visible by the events and the response to the global pandemic.

COVID-19 reveals the neoliberal university in three ways. First, it exposes higher education's increased reliance on tuition dollars as represented by student enrollments. Second, it shows how university labor is managed. Third, it displays the stratification within that labor. As a preview of these ideas, I have selected five headlines from the

*Chronicle of Higher Education* from March 26, 2020, through August 7, 2020: (1) “After Coronavirus, the Deluge: Administrators have Been Waiting for the Opportunity to Finish What They Started” (Berlinerblau, 2020); (2) “Who Gets to Teach Remotely? The Decisions Are Getting Personal” (Pettit, 2020a); (3) “With Latest Layoffs, U. of Akron Has Lost Almost a Quarter of Its Faculty Since Pandemic Began” (McLean, 2020); (4) “Presidents Say Fall Semester Might Not Be So Bad. They Still Plan Cuts, Just in Case” (Kelderman, 2020); and (5) “First They Came for Adjuncts, Now They’ll Come for Tenure: And Who Will be Left to Stop Them?” (Burmila, 2020). These headlines reveal the uncertainty, the disruption, and the growing precarity within U.S. higher education institutions. In the case of precarity, these headlines allude to broader contingency in higher education beyond adjunct faculty labor.

In addition to participant observation and interviews with adjunct faculty and to further illustrate the COVID-19 context, I also analyzed a small sample of websites, publicly posted letters from university leadership, opinion pieces, newspapers’ letters to the editor, and social media posts. Because of the transitory nature of online letters and social media posts, this analysis is not intended as a comprehensive or systematic review of the available content, but rather a contextualization of the pandemic’s emergent themes: disruption of time or tempo (Bourdieu, 1977); remote instruction as the heterodoxy of online learning; heightened uncertainty caused by financial realities; and the conscientização (Freire, 1970) of new alliances rooted in shared precarity. My text sources included institutional letters from senior leadership and posts to Facebook groups, such as Adjunct Professors United for Justice (private group); Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent faculty (public group); Tenure for the Common Good (public

group); and Adjunct Chat (public group). Finally, I included my personal experience working at Temple University as both an adjunct faculty member and an administrator, in an auto-ethnographic turn, supported by analyzing COVID-related emails sent to the Temple community. This approach extends the deep interrogation of fieldwork and interviews by examining the dialogue in semiprivate and public social media forums.

COVID-19 represents a rupture and significant change to everyday life. The semester's normal progression was interrupted, and disruption was felt in the tempo, processes, and most broadly within the systems of higher education. After March 16, the normal tempo of the academic semester was interrupted, and universities were unable to mark the passage of time with the traditional markers.

### **COVID-19 and Remote Instruction**

To understand the move online and the use of the term remote instruction, it is necessary to understand how higher education institutions and programs are accredited. Accreditation is the process of reviewing an institution or program against a certifying organization's standard(s). Higher education institutions in the United States are accredited by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation, which governs the six regional commissions of higher education, including the three commissions responsible for the East Coast of the United States: Middle States, Southern States, and New England. The three universities where I conducted my research have active accreditation with the corresponding commission. The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC) is an example of a formal accrediting body in communication. My research sites have active accreditation with the AEJMC and other professional associations associated with majors offered at each location. The National

Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and the Quality Matters organization are some of the regulators for online education. The influence of these accrediting bodies is evidenced by the conscious use of the term “remote instruction” rather than “online.”

“Well-planned online learning experiences are meaningfully different from courses offered online in response to a crisis or disaster” (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Torrey, & Bond, 2020, para. 1). When instruction is moved online because of emergency or crises, it is referred to as “emergency remote teaching” (Hodges et al., 2020, Emergency Remote Teaching section, para. 1) or what I refer to as remote instruction to mirror the language used at my research sites. As Hodges et al. noted, “effective online learning results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development” (Effective Online Education section, para. 1). In other words, high-quality online instruction takes time and thoughtful planning.

By mid-March 2020, many colleges, including all of my research sites, shifted to remote instruction. The “remote instruction” reference provides an essential illustration of how markers of quality are used in academe. It is important to note that the additional labor required by faculty to shift to remote instruction was mandatory and unfunded at all of my research sites, which illustrates neoliberalism through the extraction of unpaid labor from faculty. The unfunded labor of remote instruction included learning the technology required to teach online, reworking or recording of lectures; redesigning assignments; and even providing support to students. This labor was significant and directly benefited the institution. This provides a higher education example of the extraction of resources as represented by disaster capitalism, a concept created by Naomi

Klein, an author and social activist, in her 2007 book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Klein described the process by which a government uses a crisis, a war, or even a natural disaster to exploit the public's attention on the crisis and push through policies to benefit those with power and resources. The unpaid faculty and staff labor required for remote instruction represents the extractive qualities of disaster capitalism as all faculty were expected to spend time and resources to move course content to online as a result of COVID-19 directly benefiting the higher education institutions and the administrators.

While the dates were similar, the timing relative to the semester varied by research site. For Urban University, this move occurred after spring break. At Bucolic University and Religion University, the declaration of the global pandemic coincided with spring break and resulted in an extension of spring break to accommodate the move to remote instruction. The teaching and learning centers at each research site quickly offered a range of classes, online support, including evening and weekend consultations to support the move to remote instruction. As previously noted, no participant in this study indicated that they were compensated for the time required to move to remote instruction. None of the adjunct faculty participants were provided with any equipment (such as a webcam, microphone, computer, etcetera) to facilitate the move to online. All participants in this study were also expected to have high-speed internet at home to support remote instruction and synchronous live sessions via the web conferencing tool.

Remote instruction describes the transition to online during the pandemic. The term, remote instruction, illustrates a break from the doxa of in-person higher education and online education. Doxas are the unspoken norms or truths of practices (Bourdieu,

1977). When COVID-19 required all instruction to move online, it was fast and not governed by the normal processes and procedures of online education. Instructors who had never taught online found themselves navigating online environments for the first time. Christopher, assistant department chair at Urban University, commented on this disruption to higher education and the potential shift in the doxa of in-person higher education experience that represents the orthodoxy of in-person instruction:

Higher education is going to be one of a number of industries across the economy that is going to be looking at what we do and how we've done it, and what's going to change because we've all been forced to go online. I think when things get back to quote, normal, unquote, there's gonna be a lot of questioning of, "Do we need to have all these classes in person?" I will tell you, at least anecdotally, from my students, they miss being in the classroom. I don't think it's just because they're stuck inside their house or their apartment. They miss the interaction. They miss the social aspect. (personal communication, April 15, 2020)

While Christopher alludes to a possible transformation of higher education, he also reasserts the doxa of higher education, emphasizing the importance of in-person and on-campus learning as part of the college experience. In Spring 2020, COVID-19 disrupted this doxa for students, faculty, and administrators.

By March 18, all study participants, adjunct faculty, department administrators, and all university employees, moved to remote work. All faculty had to rework lectures, modify assignments, and adapt group projects. In the study, adjunct faculty adapted to remote teaching in several ways. Some prerecorded lectures and posted them to the learning management system. The approach to prerecorded lectures varied greatly based on the adjunct faculty member's experience using recording tools and how each thought about the course learning objectives. Some held synchronous class sessions using a

videoconferencing tool. Adjunct faculty in the study modified or eliminated assignments and presentations, particularly group projects and presentations.

Simultaneously, department administrators had to prepare and support all faculty teaching in-person courses to move to remote instruction. The department administrators needed to assess and consider technology, including home computer equipment and web cameras. In this way, this study revealed the attention to the mechanics of teaching practice but little attention to the learning outcomes, goals, or objectives.

In one department, the department administrator created a weekly online session for all adjuncts to share ideas and challenges about moving to remote instruction. It is important to note that the weekly session was not mandatory and was uncompensated. Adjunct faculty commented that they found the weekly session useful. David, adjunct faculty at Urban University, commented on this during an interview:

One of the nice things has been since we've been doing this [remote instruction because of COVID-19], Tanya has had two Zoom sessions with about 25 adjuncts. And . . . it's just good to, you know, hear what people are doing. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

The need for communication and community among faculty is not new. Berg and Seeber (2016) note the loss of community: “Academic rituals that were conceived as community building are on the decline” (p. 74). COVID-19 and the rapid pace of change required more frequent communication. Patrick, a department chair, reflected on how his communication with adjunct faculty increased during COVID-19, and he reflected on how his future communication practices might change as a result of the experience:

I think that the pandemic is really showing me that . . . communication [pause] my instinct was that it's important to communicate in this difficult time, but it may be that this is a teaching moment for me that this kind of communication can

continue, you know when things get back to relatively normal. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

The changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to raise awareness of media and communication adjunct faculty. Suddenly, adjunct faculty, tenured, tenure track, and full-time non-tenure track were unified through a shared experience. All faculty were navigating how to move from the familiar field of in-person classroom instruction to the new field of online learning. While in-person and online teaching share some pedagogical approaches, significant work was required to move education online. This unifying experience appears to have triggered *conscientização* (Freire, 1970) or critical consciousness for all faculty experiences, including adjuncts.

Patrick, department chair, described how Zoom meetings during COVID-19 created better connections with media and communication adjunct faculty:

I had another meeting with adjuncts earlier this week. . . Some of them were hired before I came. And I wasn't completely straight on exactly who everybody was because some of them I hadn't even met. So, I was thinking to myself, you know, maybe I'd seen them in the hallway or whatever, but I was like, . . . 'This Zoom thing is actually pretty good' because I get to make sure I match a face to the name better than I have been. (personal communication, May 1, 2020)

Patrick acknowledged that it is vital to know who the adjuncts are and recognize them in the hallway.

The move to fully online instruction as a result of COVID-19 illustrates Bourdieu's heterodoxy. The orthodoxy of teaching practice at my research sites happened mostly on campus and in the classroom. By contrast, Timothy, an adjunct faculty member at Bucolic University, has taught exclusively online for five years. In his experience, he saw potential in the heterodoxy caused by the move to online, as illustrated by his comments about Bucolic University's transition to online learning:

I've talked to people at Bucolic University about how they had to move mountains of stuff online for everybody. And I'm sure that the transition was challenging for some professors who had never taught online. . . . [COVID-19] is kind of forcing them to do that. . . . I see it . . . as a real opportunity for people to learn, and this will open up more doors for more students, I would hope. (personal communication, April 16, 2020)

Like faculty, students experienced significant stress during the transition to remote instruction. Faculty shared ideas on how to be supportive of students and the shift to online courses. David, an adjunct faculty member, commented on his attendance at one of the sessions and how that inspired him to create a short video of his home life experience to humanize the online classroom experience:

I went to one session where they had a bunch of adjuncts talking about Zoom and teaching after the first week. And one of the professors that was on said, "you know, one thing I did was I took my laptop around and showed them like my garden [and] . . . how I am because they're [referring to students] human and they want to see that." So that got me to thinking like, okay, I'll just push it and . . . Fortunately, you know, my kids were home and they're good with the computer. So, they were able to edit it and put it together. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

This video is an example of David's professional field, marketing and advertising. The doxa of the field of marketing and advertising provided approaches to connect with students using a video. The video had a "cool dad" feel and featured David's children and contemporary music and pop culture references. David's video creation can also be viewed as more traditional use of Freire's (1970) conscientização. He saw the pressures of the students and wanted to provide a way to connect through the video.

Using the pedagogy literature, David's video creation is an action representing care for students (Brookfield, 2006; Weimer, 2013). David's day-in-the-life video showed his COVID-19 quarantine experience and illustrated Brookfield's (2006) concept

of authenticity and personhood by revealing his home experience. David talked about the feedback that he received from students:

That [day-in-the-life video] was probably the highlight of the semester. And. . . without even asking anything, as soon as it finished. I could show you the comments. I probably got 15 to 20 comments from each class going, “like this made my day. This is like, you know, something that we needed. Great. I loved it. It’s fun.” (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

This anecdote further illustrates how adjuncts, like all faculty, care for students. When David saw the stress of his students in his online classroom, he created a moment of levity with a short humorous day-in-the-life video. Since I was unable to hold focus groups in April or May, I was not able to ask students about the impact of the video and how they interpreted it.

Universities are sites of care: care for students, care for faculty and staff as employees, care for knowledge through the generation and distribution of knowledge, care for the public, and care for profit. Demonstrating care for the public (and possibly to gain political capital), Temple University provided infrastructure to support the COVID-19 response. As Montgomery County became one of the first COVID-19 hotspots, Temple University supported a COVID-19 drive-thru testing site at the regional campus in Ambler, Pennsylvania, for several weeks until it was moved to Montgomery County Community College (Scott, 2020). Temple University provided its sports and event center, the Liacouras Center, free of charge to the City of Philadelphia to use as an overflow hospital (Whelan, 2020). Like Hall (2020), I view these acts of care through a lens of suspicion as my colleagues and I, across the institution, were burdened with surveillance and tracking of work productivity through detailed work plans and days filled with back-to-back videoconference meetings to plan and re-plan a response to the

pandemic. This planning included developing multiple scenarios with a strong emphasis on varying levels of budget cuts, including furloughs and layoffs.

### **Layoffs, Union Busting, and Financial Exigency**

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the labor of universities and disrupted the normal labor conditions for all faculty. This disruption to the doxa, tempo, and habitus of higher education has impacted enrollments and revenue. Jessop (2018) used the term, “fisco-financial crises” (p. 104) to describe how neoliberalism results in cuts to higher education’s service to the public good. In the article, Jessop (2018) suggests that the fisco-financial crises are largely exaggerated, but I believe COVID-19 represents a fisco-financial crisis with implications for the future of higher education.

Illustrating the financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on furloughs and layoffs throughout the pandemic. Bauman’s (2020) article used data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to report the loss of over 19,000 college employees between February 2020 and March 2020. In the article, Bauman (2020) reported that 190 colleges and universities had taken actions to furlough, layoff, or reduce the workforce through the nonrenewal of contracts for more than 48,000 employees, which is believed to be an underestimate based on the data collection process. A few examples highlight furloughs, layoffs, union busting, and financial exigency threats. These examples include both adjunct faculty who live with the notion of precarity and full-time NTT, tenure track, and tenured faculty as Pettit’s (2020b) ominous headline in the *Chronicle of Education*, “Faculty Cuts Begin, With Warnings of More to Come.” In the article, Pettit noted that the letters sent to impacted faculty refer to not being reappointed rather than a layoff.

Ohio University provides another example of COVID-19's impact to university labor due to publicly available data on salaries for Ohio University faculty and staff. On Friday, May 15, Ohio University's President, M. Duane Nellis, sent a public letter to the university community titled, "Entering a Time of Difficult Change." In the letter, President M. Duane Nellis announced the non-renewal of 53 instructional faculty members and the voluntary separation or early retirement of 74 tenured faculty members. Nellis's letter also outlined a reduction of 94 administrative positions, eliminating 140 members of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and a detailed plan for furloughs and salary reductions. The letter also described the 15 percent pay cut taken by both the president and the provost. For Nellis, this pay cut is approximately \$73,000. This number was estimated using 15% of the annual salary of \$489,357 listed on *The Post's* Salary Guide website, which outlines the salary information for 4,371 employees of Ohio University. As a counterpoint, I calculated the adjunct pay using the Ohio University adjunct teaching rates for the 2019–2020 academic year (Ohio University Regional Higher Education, n.d.). An adjunct faculty member with a Ph.D. teaching one three-credit hour course with at least eight students would be paid \$3,273. For further perspective, Nellis's pay cut is equivalent to the pay for approximately 22 courses taught by adjunct faculty members.

Other examples from media coverage include furloughs, layoffs, and the elimination of positions. For instance, on April 24, 2020, Erdley, a reporter at TribLIVE, reported, "Penn State will reduce spending by 3% and furlough some 2,000 employees at half-pay, effective May 4 through June 30" (para. 1). Soon after, on May 20, a *New York Amsterdam News* article called attention to the John Jay College of the City University of

New York provost's plan to "eliminate 450 adjunct positions, almost 40 percent, of the college teaching force, to combat revenue loss due to the COVID-19 global pandemic" (Johnson, 2020, para. 2). Days later, the *Delaware News Journal* noted, "The University of Delaware is laying off over 1,100 part-time employees as of June 1, the latest in a series of spending reductions to offset losses brought on by the pandemic" (Alamdari, 2020, para. 1). The University of California Berkeley's (UC Berkeley) April 21 announcement of a hiring freeze on adjuncts that included "all pre-continuing lecturer appointments and reappointments" for the fall 2020 semester resulted in a petition published as a Google Doc to UC Berkeley administrators ("Petition to Berkeley Administrators," n.d.). In this petition, the layoffs of 600 adjunct faculty, referred to as lecturers in the petition, were discussed and the alternative of cutting administrators and coaches pay was proposed. These examples are important because they speak to financial exigency.

These examples illustrate the realities of a flexible and disposable workforce and represent more than two thousand expendable adjunct faculty. Only Ohio University noted impacts to tenured faculty stating that 74 tenured faculty members accepted early retirement or voluntary separation agreements. Financial exigency is one of the few situations (other than cause) that allows for the elimination or firing of tenured faculty. COVID-19's impact on the higher education bottom line may be increasing the precarity of tenured and tenure track faculty. This precarity may be part of the reason for increased activity by organizations, such as Tenure for the Common Good.

Post-COVID-19 interviews and interactions reflect this rupture through questions about the future, particularly uncertainty about future contracts. Many media and

communication adjunct faculty participants have taught for more than five years and have experienced consistency and relative certainty of being offered course(s) each fall and spring semester. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on enrollment seemed likely, with many universities planning for fully online summer instruction. David, an adjunct faculty member at Urban University, expressed this uncertainty in describing the upcoming fall semester:

This is probably the first semester coming up . . . that nobody knows [about enrollment], you know what I mean. And if it ends up being virtual, I'm sure there's going to be [long pause]. All the adjuncts are [long pause]. Everyone's kind of on notice. . . . I'm sure they'll consolidate [classes]. (personal communication, April 17, 2020)

David's quote is an illustration of the uncertainty experienced by adjunct faculty but also the realities of cost-cutting through consolidation of courses.

Christopher, assistant department chair, acknowledged the COVID-19 challenges experienced and the on-going impact it might have. Like Patrick, Christopher appeared to experience conscientização (Freire, 1970) as he speculated on the future need for adjuncts and seemed to imply that there might be an impact due to enrollments:

I hope there are those in higher ed [who] are thinking further down the road because, yeah . . . Obviously enrollments are gonna, you know, everything's gonna change . . . I don't think anybody knows . . . How it pertains to adjuncts down the road, we're still gonna need them. I don't know any university that has all the full-time faculty they want or anything. So, we're still going to need them, I think. (personal communication, April 15, 2020)

Christopher's comment reaffirms the doxa of contingency and makes clear that the media and communication adjunct faculty will be the first to go if enrollments drop. Despite indications that COVID-19 may disrupt future semesters, Christopher, with minor hesitation, expressed the continued need for adjunct faculty. Yet at the same time,

Christopher's comment reflects Bourdieu's orthodoxy concept with his statement, "we're still gonna need them" (personal communication, April 15, 2020) which illustrates the ways in which reliance on adjunct labor is part of the doxa of the department. The practice of relying on media and communication adjunct faculty labor is the generally accepted practice or what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as habitus.

### *My Experience of COVID-19 as an Administrator and as Adjunct Faculty*

The COVID-19 rupture provided an opportunity to use a self-ethnographic approach to examine my own experience at Temple University. The following section summarizes my understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic as an individual, an adjunct faculty member, and an administrator.

First, as an individual, I am privileged. During the COVID-19 quarantine, I was able to work from home. I had plentiful food, quality healthcare and telemedicine, high-speed internet, and other nonessentials that rendered quarantine an inconvenience but not difficult or impossible. I had the luxury of a partner who shared household responsibilities, and I enjoyed abundant ways to connect with friends and family at a distance. Despite all of this, I spent much of my COVID-19 quarantine tired and emotionally exhausted. At the same time, media channels spoke of all the free time available during quarantine. This created great cognitive dissonance for me as I worked more hours, and all boundaries between different parts of my life were removed. I now worked, taught, and lived my personal life confined to a single space, my home. I use this context to illustrate the tensions that I experienced in my navigation of COVID and as a way to document my experience as it may share elements with others working in higher education during this time.

The rupture of COVID-19 resulted in a change to the doxa of the university. One example of changing doxa is a university policy change for the Spring 2020 semester that provided students with a choice on grading that included three options: standard letter grades, pass/fail, or credit/no-credit. The credit/no-credit option allowed students to receive a grade and earn the credits without impacting grade point average (GPA). A second example was the change to the withdrawal deadline which was extended until the last day of classes for all students.

As an adjunct faculty member, my course was already taught entirely online. However, both my students and I experienced the stress of navigating a global pandemic and coursework. One of my students lost a job and had to pick up two part-time jobs. Another student, working in healthcare, experienced increased work hours, and struggled to balance the workload of a graduate course with his employer's demands. Another student revealed that he shared the only home computer with a spouse working full-time from home. My approach to these situations relied on the flexibility and the recognition that everyone navigated a dynamic, rapidly changing, and never-before-experienced crisis.

As an administrator of non-credit and continuing education programs, I was responsible for canceling all of our in-person programs beginning March 16, 2020. The units are self-supporting and, in normal times, revenue-generating. The responsibility-centered management model, also known as RCM (see Whalen, 1991), is a fiscal management and budgeting approach adopted at Temple University approximately five years ago. In RCM, each academic unit or program is responsible for supporting itself by generating income and covering all of their expenses.

Entrepreneurship, individual rights, and globalization are fundamental tenets of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). My units are the embodiment of the revenue generation and individual rights characteristics of neoliberalism in higher education. My responsibilities include administering several programs that offer non-credit learning opportunities ranging from summer camps, academic pre-college programs, personal enrichment, professional development in management, leadership, real estate, and other topics, and lifelong learning programs for adults over 50. These programs are self-supporting and rely on entrepreneurship. Each of these units regularly makes decisions about what programs are profitable, subsidized (potential to be profitable), subsidized (public good), or loss-leaders. Every program decision requires considering how to market, promote, and manage offerings efficiently and cost-effectively. Popular instructors, who often have a dedicated following, exemplify the individual rights aspects of neoliberalism. We rely on these instructors to develop new offerings that will appeal to our student population, and at the same time, our non-credit instructors are free to propose a wide variety of topics based on their personal or individual interests. While none of my units are currently global, I was responsible for an international professional development program focused on building relationships with international corporations, organizations, and governmental agencies<sup>17</sup>. As these few examples illustrate, my role as an administrator serves the neoliberal university by fostering entrepreneurship through the creation of programs in our units or with other departments across the university, fosters individual rights by encouraging our instructors to develop courses that will

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<sup>17</sup> The unit focused on international professional development programs began reporting to the Office of International Affairs in 2018.

appeal to student interests, and fosters globalization through relationships with international partners.

The realities of the COVID-19 shutdown required a careful evaluation of all staff functions and determining who could work from home. It also needed a quick pivot to decide the programs that could be moved online and those temporarily or permanently canceled. This iterative process involved understanding complex public health information and making decisions that impacted employees' livelihoods, which mirrors some of the decision making that was happening at a broader scale across the university.

An analysis of Temple University email communication provides an understanding of how COVID-19 was framed for the university community. All email correspondence referenced was sent to the entire Temple community or the alumni and donor community and was received between January 30, 2020, and June 12, 2020. This correspondence does not include any communications that occurred as part of meetings or those sent as part of the planning process, because of the sensitive nature of those communications. This summary shows a timeline of the evolving situation and analyzes the 17 emails related to COVID-19. On January 30, 2020, the first email with a subject of "Information on Coronavirus" covered the restrictions for travel to China and confirmed no cases at Temple University campuses. One month later, on February 28, 2020, the second email related to COVID-19 summarized the impact on international campuses, including restrictions on spring break travel for students at the Temple Rome campus and the move to online courses following spring break. The February 28, 2020, email introduced the Temple University COVID-19 FAQ website. There were eight emails sent during March 2020. Most of these emails dealt with the evolving situation and the

transition to remote instruction. The March 25 email closed with, “As you spend time taking care of your families, please remember Temple is here to help if we can” (Englert and Epps, personal communication, March 25, 2020). Across all of the emails, four words (or variations of the words) appeared regularly: (1) students, (2) continuity, (3) planning, and (4) outlook. While the emails spoke of some financial implications, various ways to describe the budget cuts and spending restrictions resulted in the theme not being in the top five via the automated word coding with NVivo.

Never before had American universities experienced a simultaneous disruption to the academic year's tempo and traditional milestones. The doxa of the college experience centered around campus life was incompatible with the fully online experience that concluded the Spring 2020 semester. Temple University was experiencing and navigating what colleges and universities across the United States were also navigating. It was a time of uncertainty filled with the realities of the significant impact of COVID-19's mid-semester shutdown and the related loss of revenue from housing, parking, dining services, and the costs associated with moving to remote instruction, and the unpredictable enrollment for the Fall 2020 semester. While universities had experienced periods of financial difficulty in the past, COVID-19 changed the college campus's orthodoxy with social distancing requirements and, in some cases, a virtual experience.

### **New Alliances & Conscientização: Tenure Support for the Adjunct Condition**

The rupture caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the global unrest is similar to Rudolph's (1962/1990) “disjunction between society and institutions,” which results in challenges to doxa (p. 410). As Rudolph stated, “disjunction often brought academicians into conflict with important interests that had a stake in the status quo” (p. 410). The

earlier examples illustrated the tension between a total disruption (a nearly nation-wide lockdown caused by the pandemic) and the pressure of institutions and corporations to proceed with a business-as-usual attitude. The disruption caused by COVID-19 provided an opportunity for groups of academicians like Tenure for the Common Good to issue a public statement and call for action.

As Freire (1970) noted, "dominators are compelled by necessity to divide the oppressed" (p. 172). COVID-19 provided a disruption to the regular practices and tempo of higher education. This rupture may have influenced department administrators and tenured/tenure track faculty to look more closely at adjunct faculty's labor conditions. The conscientização or critical consciousness resulted in a moment of unity or what Freire described as "a form of cultural action through which they [the oppressed] come to know the why and how of their adhesion to reality" (p. 173). COVID-19 brought all faculty together in what Freire terms "communion" (p. 171). "Communion in turn elicits cooperation" (Freire, 1970, p. 171).

While it may have been prompted by their own feelings or perceptions of precarity, adjunct faculty who had been hidden in plain sight, were suddenly acknowledged as part of the academic community through organizations such as Tenure for the Common Good. According to its website, Tenure for the Common Good is an activist organization focused on bringing together tenured faculty to support the working conditions of adjuncts and graduate student instructors. Tenured faculty represent what both Freire (1970) and Bourdieu (1977) call the dominant class. It appears that the experiences of COVID-19 raised their awareness or conscientização (Freire, 1970) on the conditions and precarity of adjunct faculty. The central argument of Tenure for the

Common Good (n.d.) is to change the tenure concept from recognition of “the professional achievements and privileges of the individual scholar” to a focus on “the common good” (para. 2). Tenure for the Common Good encourages tenured faculty to organize and exert power on the issue of the academic labor casualization and to push back on the doxa of contingency. On March 30, 2020, Tenure for the Common Good issued the “Statement on Equity and Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic” via its website. The COVID-19 Statement on Equity and Teaching called attention to the online teaching mass migration with limited support and preparation; foreshadowed the austerity measures and tightening budgets; and advocated for adjunct faculty to “have the same resources, assistance, and protections against financial and professional damage that tenure track faculty have” (Tenure for the Common Good, 2020, para. 8).

Between February 2020 and May 2020, hundreds of new members joined the Tenure for the Common Good Facebook which nearly doubled from several hundred members to almost 800 members. At first this seemingly political action appears to be conscientização (Freire, 1970) or a raising of critical consciousness for adjunct faculty and it may well be, but I believe that the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 resulted in empathy for their contingent colleagues. The total disruption to the normal tempo and doxa of the university left many feeling vulnerable. The organizing and presence of Tenure for the Common Good comes at a time when there is a real and significant threat to the university as a public good. The threat to academic freedom and tenure appears similar to the 1920s when the idea of academic freedom and tenure originated, and later in the 1940s when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) ratified the *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. AAUP encouraged higher

education institutions to embrace academic freedom and tenure as a way to protect faculty from the conflict between religious and political sectarianism and “new science” as discovered through research (Rudolph, 1962/1990, p. 411).

Academic freedom allows faculty to explore, challenge, resist, and transform society through education and research. The AAUP 1940 Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure argued that the common good relies on the unencumbered search for truth and free expression. The Principles push the notion of the collective and the idea of education as a public good, stating, “Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole” (AAUP, 1940, p. 1). Rudolph (1962/1990) outlined tenets of academic freedom that illustrate ideas on how faculty can resist the neoliberal forces. Rudolph’s four tenets of academic freedom are (1) experimentation, (2) indifference to tradition and inherited truth, (3) tolerance for error, and (4) constant inquiry (p. 412). Tenured faculty organized, leveraged their academic freedom, and resisted the neoliberal forces with the COVID-19 Statement on Equity and Teaching, which proposed four categories of actions for tenured faculty to support the common good of higher education: (1) support for teaching; (2) changes to evaluation, renewal, and hiring processes; (3) protections for academic freedom, intellectual property, and professional autonomy; and (4) care and support for adjunct faculty (Tenure for the Common Good, 2020).

In the comments section of *Academe*’s posting of the COVID-19 Statement on Equity and Teaching, Jane Harty said, “I hope this doesn’t sound too rude, but does it take a pandemic to bring the plight of so many NTT faculty to light? Perhaps this is a bit of a silver lining to something so horrible” (Tenure for the Common Good, March 31,

2020, 11:25 p.m.). A counterpoint to the silver lining, Wolfman-Arent's (2020) WHYY story highlights the precarity and disposability of adjuncts in higher education. In describing the uncertainty broadly facing higher education and the uncertainty facing adjunct faculty, Ray Betzner, the associate vice president for executive communication and the spokesperson for Temple University, stated, "They're in the same situation I'm in. . . . I could be released tomorrow. I have no guarantees. I have no tenure" (Wolfman-Arent, 2020).

While I don't know his statement's intention, Betzner's comment represents the neoliberal push against tenure in two ways. First, under neoliberalism, all labor is equal. Betzner's comparison of his role to contractual adjunct implies that both have precarity as labor in the university. Second, Betzner's comment focuses on the individual rather than the collective. In each of his three "I" statements, Betzner represents individualism, a central tenet of neoliberalism. Finally, I call attention to Betzner's focus on tenure as an employment protection. Like the student focus group participants, Betzner has focused on the employment aspects rather than tenure's academic freedom aspects.

Tenured and tenure track faculty appear to share these increased concerns as evidenced by *Chronicle of Higher Education* opinion pieces and the membership growth of groups such as Tenure for the Common Good. The opinion pieces and the creation of groups that are pushing back on anti-tenure movements also reveal a heightened awareness of the conditions of adjunct labor or conscientização (Freire, 1970). This also demonstrates Bourdieu's (1977) concept of agency as a way to resist and transform the dominant culture. As Hall (2020) notes,

The capitalist University cannot save us, because it is driven by short-term economic interests, rather than the long-term conditions of life. . . it functions through cultures of silence, obfuscation, paranoia, intensification, and wait and see (p. 6).

Like Jessop (2018), Hall is suspicious of the increasing practices of academic capitalism. Perhaps the pandemic did not shine a light but rather illuminated the realities and dispelled the myths that tenured life in the ivory tower is protected. Higher education's response to the pandemic shows the neoliberal encroachment on the idea of tenure and the further erosion of academic freedom.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The dangers of “academic capitalism” (Jessop, 2018) and the disruption caused by COVID-19 highlight the ways in which the commodification of higher education pushes us further from higher education as a public good. Using Jessop's (2018) five stage model, we have not yet reached total privatization, but the doxa of neoliberalism and resource extraction as exemplified by the labor of media and communication adjunct faculty and the labor of all faculty with the COVID-19 move to remote instruction hints at what may be coming. A fully neoliberal university is realized with Jessop's fifth stage of academic capitalism through a fully privatized and “finance-dominated system” (p. 106) would result in precarity for all, including those with tenure and especially those in disciplines that can't be easily commodified.

The shift to remote teaching was mandatory and altered the field of in-person, classroom-based instruction. Faculty with no plans to teach online had to navigate the transition to fully online instruction. While nearly all U.S. higher education institutions experienced it, it was not unlike a natural disaster where emergency protocols were

activated, and things operated differently than in pre-COVID times, thus disrupting the orthodoxy and creating the heterodoxy of remote instruction. The move to remote instruction required significant additional labor by all faculty, and this labor was unfunded at all of my research sites.

"Conscientização" is Freire's (1970) term to describe critical consciousness. In conscientização, individuals reflect on history and the current social context. The realities of the COVID-19 pandemic raised the critical consciousness of adjunct faculty's understanding of students, raised administrators' consciousness of supporting adjunct faculty, and raised tenured and tenure track faculty's awareness of adjunct labor conditions' precarity. In other words, COVID-19 may have provided an aha moment, which led to increased involvement in groups such as Tenure for the Common Good.

COVID-19 has revealed the fragility of the neoliberal university where risk is borne unequally within the university structures, particularly by students and contingent labor. The rupture of COVID-19 has revealed the weaknesses of higher education, including dependency on tuition dollars, the reliance on technology, the exploitation of faculty labor, the threats to academic freedom and tenure, and the realities of adjunct contingency. Higher education is employing financial exigency to enact pay cuts, hiring freezes, furloughs, layoffs, and eliminating academic programs. The global pandemic and world-wide disruption drive neoliberal forces to expand contingency across higher education faculty and staff ranks. Contingency and precarity are no longer exclusive to adjunct and non-tenure track (NTT) faculty. Financial exigency brings precarity to all, including tenured and tenure track faculty.

## **CHAPTER 8: PRECARITY FOR ALL**

Using Bourdieu's practice theory and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, this dissertation reveals the structures, relationships, and constraints of the neoliberal university through an examination of the labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty. In doing so, this dissertation reveals the complexity and tensions created by the reliance on contingent teaching labor in schools of media and communication. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy reveals disparities to show the lived experience of people, both those with power and capital and those without power and capital. Part of this study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic which created a disjunctive moment with generative possibilities for new structures and exposed the tenuous realities of expanding precarity for all academic laborers. The examination of both structures and actions highlights an interwoven dependence among all actors involved in higher education's teaching labor.

### **Revisiting the Dissertation's Thesis**

This dissertation sought to uncover the complex and conflicting structures and practices that shape teaching and learning within the contemporary American university through the theoretical and methodological frameworks of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). A history of American higher education, including the role of faculty and higher education economics and budgeting, foregrounded the analysis and the literature of student-centered learning was used to demarcate the doxa and the habitus of effective teaching. To understand these structures and practices, this multi-method qualitative study relied on a variety of approaches that allowed the researcher to zoom in

and zoom out between institutions and individuals revealing the interactions between doxa, habitus and capital in the fields of higher education and its participants within schools of media and communication.

My research findings were presented in three analytical chapters, beginning with the structures and practices of the discipline as represented by professional associations and the lived experiences of administrators who recruit, hire, orient, and evaluate media and communication adjunct faculty. Next, media and communication adjunct faculty labor conditions and teaching practices were presented, which showed the unique and varied ways that media and communication adjunct faculty express the habitus of active-learning techniques, engage with students, and reflect on their teaching experience. The final analytical chapter used the rupture of COVID-19 with the wholesale move to online instruction for all faculty to highlight the current and broader context of the American higher education system under stress and in “fisco-financial” crisis (Jessop, 2018, p. 104). These findings work together to reveal the labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty, the realities of competing doxas, and the pervasive ways that neoliberalism is present in teaching practice, student expectations, and the structures of the university.

### **Summarizing and Mapping the Results**

My most interesting observations and the results of this dissertation are best understood through the theoretical lens of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977) and the liberating features of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). Practice theory shaped my analysis and allowed me to re-examine my data in a fresh light and as a result, uncover the dialectic tensions in contemporary higher education —lifetime employment of tenured

faculty versus the semester-based employment of adjunct faculty; research versus teaching; skills versus theory; and tradition versus innovation. This study revealed the lived experiences of media and communication adjuncts who have primary full-time employment outside of or within the university and view teaching as a gig or side hustle. As a result of their full-time employment, media and communication faculty in this study are different than typical representations of adjunct faculty as all but one taught exclusively at one higher education institution.

As sites, schools of media and communication are boundary spanners between the theoretical, classic liberal arts and the applied/professional. In examining the communicative aspects of teaching and specific acts of communication, teaching materials, course syllabus, and student interactions, the dissertation brings to life the social and political forces of the neoliberal university. By understanding media and communication adjunct faculty's experience, it is possible to understand the influences and demands of the neoliberal university, which constrains actions, pushes risks to individuals, compels entrepreneurship, and fosters stratification and competition. Using this understanding of neoliberalism, academic capitalism is resisted, and we ensure that higher education remains a public good for future generations.

Each of my five research questions (RQs) operate in tandem to reveal the labor conditions and teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty. The research questions build upon the work of earlier scholars who were interested in the labor of adjunct faculty (Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Childress, 2019; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Gappa & Leslie, 2009; Kezar, DePaola & Scott, 2019) and those interested in the teaching practices (Ambrose et al., 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Fernback, 2015; Fink, 2013;

McGuire, 2015; Weimer, 2013). The tumult caused by COVID-19 reveals the neoliberal university in crisis and extends the literature of higher education (Dorn, 2017; Labaree, 2017; Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965; Zelizer, 2011).

In response to RQ 1 (How do the labor conditions of media and communication adjunct faculty differ from full-time tenured and tenure track faculty labor conditions?), this study found several differences in labor conditions between media and communication adjunct faculty and full-time tenured and tenure track faculty. First, media and communication adjunct faculty are only responsible for teaching and do not have responsibilities for research or service as part of their contract. Media and communication adjuncts lack power and have little voice in the department, and often have little control over what room they teach in, what time they teach, and even whether they are put on the schedule. Despite these challenges, the media and communication adjunct faculty participants in this study were committed to teaching and collectively had 85+ years of teaching with some just beginning their adjunct teaching to others having more than 20+ years of teaching. The average length of service of 7 years suggests that media and communication adjunct faculty participants have long-standing relationships with the higher education institutions participating in the study and many participants mentioned a love of teaching. Despite the long-standing relationships, media and communication adjunct faculty participants in this study experienced precarity through poor pay and a lack of benefits, including no paid sick time. A mediating condition to how the study participants experienced pay and benefits precarity was as a result of primary employment within and outside of the university. This also represents Bourdieu's

idea of heterodoxy for adjunct faculty who are typically portrayed as cobbling together full-time employment through teaching contracts at multiple institutions.

In response to RQ 2 (How do the labor conditions of media and communication faculty shape the ways in which communication pedagogy and best practices from the scholarship of teaching and learning are employed in the classroom?), this study found that the teaching and professional habitus of media and communication adjunct faculty informs pedagogy and practice in the classroom. This is consistent with Brookfield's (2006) observation on teaching, "many of our actions are uninformed in that they involve us teaching in certain ways simply because we have been told we ought to" (p. 24). The teaching philosophies of media and communication adjunct faculty reflect how the neoliberal values of careers and jobs are prioritized in the classroom. While media and communication adjunct faculty are typically dominated by tenured/tenure track faculty, most of media and communication adjuncts in this study had the social and economic capital of business (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002) through their full-time work outside of academe. At the same time, media and communication adjunct faculty gained capital through a university affiliation which was beneficial to their full-time work and networks. Business ownership or full-time employment outside or within the university represents an important difference between media and communication adjunct faculty and adjunct faculty in other disciplines. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of agency provides context for how media and communication adjunct faculty resist, conform, and transform teaching practice as a result of the ability to enact change in the classroom combined with limited oversight of teaching practice.

In response to RQ 3 (What do course syllabi reveal about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication?), this study found that most media and communication adjunct faculty used a departmental syllabus with little variation suggesting syllabi are a policy-driven document. Most syllabi shared common structure, format, organization, and presentation revealing a lack of autonomy in creating an intellectual work product. The office space and office hours section of the syllabi revealed how media and communication adjunct faculty are different and lack resources to meet privately with students. Ultimately, the course syllabi analyzed for this study provided limited information about the teaching practices and labor conditions of different types of faculty in schools of media and communication.

In response to RQ 4 (How do department chairs and administrators in schools of media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions, and does this understanding impact the practices surrounding recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation processes?), this study found department chairs and administrators in schools of media and communication understand adjunct labor conditions and felt trapped by the competing doxas of educational quality and contingency. Despite understanding the ways in which last minute hires of contingent adjunct labor (doxa of contingency) impact student learning (doxa of educational quality), the recruitment, hiring, orientation, and evaluation practices were constrained by system structures and university bureaucracy which favors the doxa of contingency.

Media and communication as a discipline must keep pace with rapidly changing and evolving technology. This study found that department chairs and administrators

relied on media and communication adjunct faculty to bring real-world experience to the classroom, particularly professional practice, knowledge about an industry, and skills related to technology or new software. The rate of change combined with industry-specific skills is a driver for hiring adjunct faculty as was mentioned by department chairs throughout the interviews.

With certain courses or specializations, the adjunct faculty bring industry-specific skills to the classroom and potential jobs or internships for students through their full-time employment outside of academe. To use an advertising term, the unique selling proposition (USP) of media and communication adjunct faculty is their domain-specific and technology-based skills that reflect current practice in the industry. Tanya, department chair, described, “Our adjuncts are very different. Our adjuncts are working professionals who are very happy to be teaching one course a semester in most cases” (personal communication, February 3, 2020). Reinforcing the adjunct-related findings from RQ 2, the department administrators recognize the social capital of adjunct faculty in media and communication who are employed as professionals outside of the university.

The department chairs, sequence heads, and course directors thought carefully about how to recruit, hire, orient, and evaluate the work of media and communication adjunct faculty. Recruitment was ongoing, and turnover was somewhat regular because the media and communication adjunct participants in this study have other jobs. Reliance on media and communication adjunct faculty for essential elements of curricula resulted in loyalty to long-time media and communication adjuncts. To counter the instability of a contingent workforce, participants established specific, well-defined roles and processes

to support and evaluate the teaching labor of media and communication adjunct faculty, but time constraints and other demands presented difficulties in having that occur systematically or regularly. This reveals how the doxa of contingency and the doxa of productivity result in differences between espoused practices and actual practices. Many of the actions and practices of department chairs are consistent with Gappa and Leslie's (1993) assertion that a "university strengthens itself through the wise use of part-time faculty" (p. 277), but the orienting and evaluating practices illustrated opportunities for improvement. The administrators expressed feeling overwhelmed with the work of managing media and communication adjuncts, articulated the difficulties of reliance on majority contingent teaching labor, and felt trapped by the irremediable demands of the neoliberal university.

In response to RQ 5 (How do students in media and communication courses taught by adjuncts understand adjunct labor conditions?), this study found students in media and communication courses taught by media and communication adjuncts have a limited understanding of the work of faculty and understand only superficial aspects of media and communication adjunct labor conditions. The neoliberal influence is well-established in habitus of students and was most evident in their descriptions of the labor of faculty. In student focus groups, students described the faculty work that they experienced (teaching), and largely ignored the work that they did not experience (research). Students did not seem to associate the labor of advising and other service activities with faculty. The neoliberal influence is well-integrated into student thinking about the purpose of higher education, specifically that the role of university teaching labor is prepare students for employment.

Students expressed limited understanding of differences between faculty ranks and when selecting courses, rely on other students' opinions.

### **Interpretations**

This project highlighted the vital role of adjunct faculty in media and communication in providing direct links to industry and supporting the rapid pace of change, particularly in new technologies. Specifically, this study showed that media and communication adjunct faculty are deeply committed to students and teaching, but lack the support needed to make wholesale changes to teaching practice. Department administrators have significant workloads in recruiting, hiring, orienting, and evaluating media and communication adjunct faculty, and time limitations resulted in evaluations that rely heavily on the end-of-semester student evaluation forms. The COVID-19 crisis revealed the difficulties of reliance on tuition dollars and exposed the precarity of all faculty, including tenured, tenure track, full-time non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty.

Unlike other studies that focused on “hopeful full-timers” (Tuckman, 1978), the media and communication adjuncts in this study were primarily “full-mooners” (Tuckman, 1978) or “semi-retireds” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). In other words, the adjunct faculty were employed full-time or recently retired and viewed adjunct teaching as a gig or a side hustle. The media and communication adjunct faculty recognized the social capital of being a professor (even if they were not supposed to use that title) and they used this distinction and the social capital (Bourdieu, 1977) to advance their personal networks and businesses. In this study, media and communication adjunct faculty participants were deeply committed to teaching and viewed teaching as a way to give back. Tanya, department chair, also described the benefits that adjunct faculty get from

teaching. She stated, “They're doing it for the reward and the satisfaction to enhance their careers, to enhance their resume, and you know, they just love doing it” (personal communication, February 3, 2020). Many media and communication adjunct faculty participants had strong ties to the college or university where they worked and an even stronger allegiance to the students in their classrooms. While not exclusive to media and communication adjunct faculty, I contend that anyone who cares about the future of higher education should care about whether the people doing the teaching have a love of teaching and whether these people have the support required to be successful in the classroom.

The love of teaching comes through in teaching practice. Brookfield (2006) noted that “students want to know their teachers stand for something and have something useful and important to offer, but they also want to trust and rely on them” (p. 55). In this study, the media and communication adjunct faculty supported students, demonstrated acts of caring, and provided a wide variety of non-teaching-related support. In the classroom, most media and communication adjunct faculty participants effectively integrated theoretical concepts with the practical. All of the media and communication adjunct faculty expressed a teaching philosophy, but only one had a formal written document. A teaching philosophy is one way that media and communication adjunct faculty can more closely align with the doxa of tenured/tenure track faculty who typically have to provide a teaching philosophy as part of the materials submitted when applying for jobs.

COVID-19 changed the orthodoxy of departmental communication and how media and communication adjuncts were supported, as illustrated by the weekly Zoom groups and email communications to faculty of all ranks. These inclusive practices

suggest that it is possible to support media and communication adjunct faculty during times of crisis and as an ongoing practice. Before COVID-19, stratification informed the doxa of communication, which was distinct for adjunct and tenured/tenure track faculty. Moving all courses from classroom instruction to online/remote instruction required different communication practices. This subtle shift is an exemplar of Curnalia and Mermer's (2018) concept of voice, "an action performed by members of an organization and a perception held by members" (Curnalia & Mermer, 2018, p. 132). COVID-19 changed long-held practices and shifted how media and communication adjunct faculty were included in the department. The use of weekly Zoom meetings during the transition to remote instruction, the acknowledgment that email listservs could be combined, and even how the university shared information about the transition represent a shift in practices related to media and communication adjunct faculty.

The crisis of COVID-19 and the unpaid labor required to move online demonstrated the neoliberal extraction of resources and provided an illustrative example of Klein's (2007) concept of disaster capitalism. In disaster capitalism, a crisis, in this case, COVID-19, is used to exploit attention and take actions that benefit those with power and resources. The extraction of unpaid labor is one example of disaster capitalism, but the creation of COVID taskforces responsible for all decision making throughout the crisis is another example that represents consolidation of power outside of the normal governance processes. Milton Friedman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist and a champion of free-market policies, said in the introduction to the 2002 edition of *Capitalism and Freedom*, "Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying

around” (Friedman & Friedman, 2002, p. xiv). COVID-19 provided the crisis, and now we must examine the ideas lying around higher education. One idea that has been lying around relates to tenure: Is this the moment when broader forces move toward eliminating tenure?

Outside of my research sites, the COVID-19 disruption fostered the new alliances between tenured/tenure track faculty and non-tenure track faculty, as illustrated by Tenure for the Common Good. Tenure for the Common Good is an activist organization with the mission of uniting tenured faculty to support the working conditions of adjuncts and graduate student instructors (Tenure for the Common Good, n.d.). Tenure for the Common Good’s Statement on Equity and COVID-19 outlined how “austerity environments . . . will affect contingent faculty first and most harshly” (2020, para. 1). COVID-19 provided the crisis that forged new alliances and put aside the hierarchy and stratification central to U.S. higher education. Perhaps tenured/tenure track faculty sensed a new form of domination through the institutional financial pressures caused by COVID-19. As austerity measures were implemented due to declining enrollments, tenured and tenure track faculty became more interested and, more importantly concerned about the precarity of non-tenure track faculty, including adjuncts, but likely saw and felt their own precarity as institutions spoke of financial exigency and terminations of tenured faculty (see *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles: Bauman, 2020; Berlinerblau, 2020; Burmila, 2020; Kelderman, 2020; Mclean, 2020; Petit, 2020b).

### **Connections and Meaning**

These findings cannot be considered separately from each other, they must be viewed in relation to each other and require the ability of zooming in and zooming out to

see the pragmatic, theoretical, and most broadly societal implications. These implications influence researchers in both communication and higher education, as well as higher education institutions, media and communication administrators, and adjunct faculty.

“Faculty members and faculty work are the heart and thus, the health of every college and university” (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, p. 49). The work of the neoliberal university is to commodify knowledge, which makes faculty the academic laborers who produce the knowledge product of the university. It is important to remember that all faculty work is labor. Intellectual work is labor. Teaching is labor. Service is labor. Research is labor. Running a department is labor. Shared governance is labor. The commodification of higher education has led to a devaluing of academic and intellectual labor, which has fostered questions regarding the purpose and value of higher education as public good supported by the local, state, and federal governments. Increased reliance on adjunct faculty as a flexible and disposable workforce may be pushing universities further from a public good. Recognizing that all work is labor is essential because labor represents one of the largest costs to colleges and universities (Labaree, 2017).

Schools of media and communication were uniquely positioned to reveal the tensions between classical, theoretically based, liberal arts programs and skill-focused, employment-ready vocationally oriented programs. While most contemporary higher education institutions face the tension between the liberal arts and the vocational, schools of media and communication render this problem more visible. It is this tension, particularly the bridge between the theoretical and the applied, that drove some of the reliance on adjunct faculty at my research sites. Schools of media and communication relied on adjunct faculty to teach current skills, new technology, and a variety of

introductory courses. The use of media and communication adjunct faculty to support specific aspects of the curriculum, such as new technology, reveals a critical contradiction related to media and communication adjunct faculty. On the one hand, media and communication adjunct faculty are vital members of the academic community responsible for important elements of the curriculum. On the other hand, media and communication adjuncts are like all other adjunct faculty, a flexible, on-demand, and disposable labor force that serves the neoliberal university. By most accounts, media and communication adjunct faculty teach with limited support or little recognition of their contributions to the university. The teaching labor of media and communication adjunct faculty enables tenured and tenure track faculty to conduct research, pursue grants, and publish which are all essential to knowledge production and the productivity mantra of the neoliberal university.

### *Pragmatic Implications*

This study extends the literature on adjunct faculty through the representations of the media and communication adjunct faculty study participants who were employed full-time outside academe and viewed teaching as a “side-hustle” rather than the more common portrayal of the adjunct that is cobbling together full-time work through multiple part-time teaching assignments. Other areas of higher education rely on professionals for teaching, including law schools, business schools, information sciences and technology schools. Future researchers may want to examine the adjunct labor conditions of these other schools that are reliant on professionals for teaching to better understand the teaching practices and labor conditions of adjunct faculty who are employed full-time outside or within higher education institutions.

There are a number of specific recommendations that can be implemented to better support the teaching practices of media and communication adjunct faculty which are included in the Recommendations section.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The theoretical implications of this dissertation derive from the application of Bourdieu (1977) and Freire (1970) to the examination of the labor conditions of adjunct faculty in media and communication and more broadly to understand neoliberal influences in systems of higher education. The application of Bourdieu's practice theory to educational contexts is not new and it is often applied to higher education participation, inequities, and access (see Morrison, 2017). Similar to Webb, Schirato, and Danaher's (2002) relational focus on higher education participation, this dissertation extends the theoretical application by using the relationships between Bourdieu's concepts of tempo, habitus, field and capital to reveal "practices in the sites of power struggles over resources" (p. 153). This relational approach of examining the individual and the institution reveals universities role in social change and social constraint. More importantly, this study demonstrates how Bourdieu's concepts of distinction and cultural capital can reveal universities as dominant institutions providing cultural capital even to the most marginalized labor, adjunct faculty.

The theoretical contribution related to Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy is the application to the marginalized labor of media and communication adjunct faculty. This is significant since media and communication adjuncts perform teaching labor within the university, a dominant institution, and teachers are portrayed as the dominators in Freire's critical pedagogy. While Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy has been used by other

scholars to examine the relationship between teacher and student in the classroom, this study extends the theoretical model by applying critical pedagogy to examine the oppression of media and communication adjunct faculty and the domination represented by structures and practices of university administrators and tenured/tenure track faculty. Freire's dialogic principles were combined with the language of effective teaching practice to reveal opportunities for conscientização where tenured/tenure-track faculty become aware of the media and communication adjunct labor conditions. Conscientização and allegiances were amplified by the shared experience of common pedagogical practices resulting from faculty of all ranks interacting and talking as they moved classroom instruction to online instruction due to COVID-19.

This study's combination of Bourdieu's and Freire's frameworks as theory and method provide a theoretical contribution that can be used to interrogate power, structures, and actions of individuals as agents within higher education institutions and more broadly, to understand labor within dominant institutions. It reveals the ways in which Bourdieu's habitus can be applied to understand the unconscious ways neoliberalism has entered all aspects of teaching and learning from the financial-orientation of educational technology and textbook publishers to student expectations related to higher education's and faculty's responsibility in job preparation. Bourdieu's practice theory exposed the how doxa of contingency has been normalized through the departmental structures and practices and Freire's critical pedagogy provided a way to challenge the normative features of neoliberalism through the dialogic principles that expose division within the teaching labor of higher education.

The institutionalized cultural capital of higher education values tenure over most other career paths. While “academics value tenure, and tenure remains the prototype of the ideal academic career” (Gappa et al., 2007, p. 54), non-tenure track laborers are teaching more than 70% of courses at most universities, including at two of my three research sites. This illustrates neoliberalism’s doxa and reproductive qualities over the doxa of tenure as the prototypical academic career. Neoliberalism is normative and the doxa of contingency is accepted as the default for teaching labor which then devalues all teaching labor, even when performed by tenured/tenure track faculty. This devaluing of teaching labor may have larger implications for all who teach within academe.

The structures of neoliberal policies and market incentives have shaped the practices of academic labor in American higher education. The structural conditions of contingent teaching labor reveal a system motivated by financial rewards and willing to extract the value of teaching labor from those on margins and hidden in plain sight. This finding reflects and illustrates what Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) noted, “academics perform the socially important role of practicing and embodying distinction. . . . this status has the significant social function of naturalizing the privilege and dominance of certain groups in a community” (p. 135). As this study observed, few outside of the department chairs and the students that they teach know who the media and communication adjunct faculty are. One department chair acknowledged he did not know media and communication adjunct faculty who were hired before he started as department chair. Consistent with Freire’s (1970) concept of domination, media and communication adjunct faculty are excluded from the academic community except to provide the labor of teaching. Yet, the neoliberal university is not satisfied with just

labor, it exploits and extracts the social capital of the media and communication adjunct faculty members who as professionals and business owners provide connections to internships and employment for students.

### *Societal Implications*

The devaluing of intellectual labor has implications for the future of higher education institutions, particularly how to remain a public good through the fulfillment of the mission of teaching, research, and service. While these findings may seem of concern to only a small group of administrators in media and communication, they should concern anyone who cares about the future of higher education. Like Dewey (1938/1963), Giroux (2009) argued, “Pedagogy becomes the cornerstone of democracy in that it provides . . . foundation for students to learn not merely how to be governed but also how to be capable of governing” (p. 21). To be governed and to govern, students require the skills outlined in the NCA’s Learning Outcomes, including engaging in communication inquiry; critically analyzing messages; applying ethical communication practices, embracing differences; and influencing public discourse (NCA, 2016, pp. 6–7).

Public education is key to democracy and preparing students for citizenry (Dewey, 1938/1963). In public education, we are teaching students to think about and to question the world around them which is critical thinking (Fink, 2013). Imagine if students and adjuncts had the same academic freedom to push back as Patrick did when he described part of his role as department chair was to push back on policies. Teaching students to resist rather than conform is an essential element of the U.S. higher education system. When learning is instrumentalized as a tool for neoliberalism, it serves to “dehumanize students by robbing them of their right to reason, to speak, and to act” (Dale

& Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 129), and it directly impacts our democracy as Dewey (1938/1963) argued more than 80 years ago.

The economic realities and the neoliberal temptation of adjunct labor are hard for universities to resist. As Fethke and Policano (2012) noted, “Awarding tenure to a new associate professor commits the university to paying salary and benefits for at least twenty-five years” (p. 124). In contrast, hiring an adjunct commits the university to one semester with the added benefit to the institution of a relatively low salary and often no benefits. As Burmila (2020) noted in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* opinion piece, “If tenure is going to have a future, tenured professors need to do something that academia rarely encourages them to do: see themselves not as separate or elite, but first and foremost as labor” (para. 3).

One way to counter the neoliberal influence is through student-centered teaching. Centering all teaching as student-centered provides an opportunity to unite all faculty regardless of rank. The power of student-centered teaching relies on the shift to intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation engages students in learning for the sake of learning, not for grades or future jobs. In this way, intrinsic motivation fosters prosocial behaviors necessary for future citizenship and democratic participation by encouraging students to focus on the enjoyment or challenge of learning rather than a good grade.

The precarity of adjunct faculty must be put into the current context with the events of a global pandemic caused by COVID-19, the civil unrest related to police brutality, and the overall uncertainty surrounding the future of higher education as evidenced by furloughs, layoffs, and firings, which have included the release of tenured

faculty as part of financial exigency and cost-cutting measures (see Berlinerblau, 2020, Burmila, 2020, Kelderman, 2020, Mclean, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity for my fieldwork to include a rupture in higher education with U.S. universities moving all instruction online to finish out the spring 2020 semester. This disrupted the tempo and impacted many of the typical markers for higher education, including spring break and graduation.

### **Recommendations**

While I am not proposing radical ideas of universities employing only tenured and tenure track faculty or the counterpoint of eliminating tenure, this study revealed various practices, actions, and policies that can alter and, in many cases, improve the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty. Participant observation and interviews revealed the habitus of active learning and learner-centered teaching. Media and communication adjunct faculty enjoyed being in the classroom and engaged in what Brookfield (2006) described as “skillful teaching” modeling credibility and authenticity. The teaching observed was largely effective, but there are opportunities for improvement, particularly around learning outcomes, goals, and objectives. Media and communication adjunct faculty’s industry knowledge and content expertise is not sufficient to ensure that teaching is effective, and that learning outcomes, goals and objectives are articulated, assessed, and evaluated.

Regular interactions between media and communication adjunct faculty and the sequence head, course director or department chair at the start and end of the semester with reflections on teaching practice and course content, could greatly improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all faculty are aware of student-centered teaching practices.

A teaching in-service day prior to the start of each semester that is attended by all faculty (tenured, tenure-track, full-time non-tenure track, and adjunct) would provide an additional opportunity to demonstrate the importance of teaching to the mission of university. It would bring together faculty of all ranks, would build collegiality among all faculty in the department, and would provide a counter to the doxa of contingency that devalues teaching labor. All faculty should be paid for participating as it is labor that supports the mission of the university.

The following recommendations derive from the data with a focus on low to no cost ideas that can be implemented relatively easily by many departments: a departmental webpage that includes consolidated information for campus resources, such as library reserves, where to get supplies and request desk copies of books, how to get materials copied, instructions for parking on campus, how to report/handle student issues, and details on scheduling meeting space for office hours. Most departments likely have this information, and it is also likely that it was communicated at an orientation of some kind. While these resources are critical for adjunct faculty, they also support the effectiveness of all faculty.

Department chairs can provide opportunities for voice to adjuncts. This could be as simple as sharing regular updates on curriculum, posting meeting minutes from departmental meetings, and inviting adjunct faculty to join in collegial events. The in-service day provides an opportunity for faculty of all ranks to interact and share ideas which fosters collegiality and connection to the department. Curnalia and Mermer (2018) described the benefits of voice as talent retention, increased productivity, and deeper

commitment to the institution (p. 134). These benefits are essential for all faculty, including tenured, tenure track, full-time non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty.

Like Gappa and Leslie (1993) and Childress (2019), I recommend that universities consider multi-term commitments for adjunct faculty as a number of department chairs interviewees indicated that they do informally. I am careful to note that this recommendation is not what might be characterized as tenure for all. Tenure for all does not necessarily serve higher education institutions, and more importantly, students. In this way, I share the sentiment expressed by Gappa and Leslie (1993):

The tenure system as historically and currently structured is far too rigid to accommodate the needs and interests of many prospective academics. In this system, most individuals must make an all-or-nothing choice about meeting the requirements for career advancement within an arbitrarily rigid and unreasonably brief probationary period. (p. 280)

While I recognize that this removes the flexibility provided by adjunct faculty, it also reduces the department chair's labor of continuous recruitment, hiring, and orienting of adjunct faculty.

Lastly, I return to the faculty labor market. The tenure track labor market is national, and tenure track searches often last months. In contrast, the adjunct faculty labor market is local, semester-based, and searches may last weeks or in some cases just a few days. Adjunct faculty are typically recruited, hired, and oriented by the department chair. The differences between the tenure track and adjunct faculty labor markets are important to higher education institutions that are educating and preparing doctoral students, particularly those doctoral students who aspire to the tenure track. While nearly all adjuncts in the study were professionals, they also did not understand the differences in the labor market. I argue that both department chairs and doctoral programs must be

transparent on the realities of the faculty labor market, including the differences between the national tenure track and local adjunct markets. While not directly related to adjunct faculty, I contend that centering the outcomes of doctoral programs on the labor market will provide more realistic expectations for job prospects, salaries, and labor conditions to current and prospective doctoral students. Would prospective doctoral students pursue a Ph.D. if they understood the realities of a “gig” in higher education?

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The value of this study is the in-depth examination of the lived experiences of media and communication adjunct faculty revealing the tensions and precarity within the structures of higher education. My conclusions on the labor conditions and teaching practices of adjunct faculty are far from definitive. In particular, my observation of the same faculty teaching the same course in different semesters only occurred one time. It may also be that the participants in this study are outliers in both their approach to teaching and their commitment to the higher education institution. Another limitation is the lack of diversity in the adjunct faculty participants of the study. Future research should expand the examination of adjunct labor, including detailed time studies of the time spent on the labor of teaching, including preparing, grading, and reflecting on teaching practice building upon Allison, Lynn, and Hoverman’s (2014) study of George Mason University adjuncts.

There is a widely accepted argument that research supports teaching. As the neoliberal university increases expectations for research productivity, future examinations of faculty labor conditions and teaching practice should examine how tenured, tenure track, and full-time non-tenure track faculty bring research into the

classroom. Future research should ask, “Is it only possible to integrate research as a researcher?”

It is fair to say that there is no golden age of higher education to return to; there is, however, an opportunity for every institution to examine its core mission and purpose. Thelin (2004) described the “continual expansion characterized by overextension of functions without clarity of purposes, a pattern that has fostered administrative bloat, and other spending excesses” (p. 361), which has moved higher education institutions further from their core missions, particularly that of teaching. If, as Thelin (2004) argues, we return to the “fundamental matters of institutional purpose, the diverse constituencies in American higher education can once again connect past and present as a prelude to creating an appropriate future” (p. 362) and we can center teaching as central to the mission of higher education.

In conclusion, I return to where I began with Margison’s (2011) statement, “Knowledge is the unique claim of higher education” (p. 414) and the tripartite mission of universities: teaching, research and service (Furco, 2010). Universities are increasingly reliant on contingent, part-time labor for the teaching mission. Teaching translates, communicates and distributes the knowledge work of the university. This study has shown that teaching and learning works as a site to understand interactions of the field, especially the ways in which neoliberalism has infiltrated and become normalized within higher education. As a direct result of thinking, writing, and describing the teaching labor of media and communication adjunct faculty, I am left to ponder a larger question: If we believe that learning results from teaching and teaching is central to knowledge

production, then why is teaching the labor marginalized and contingent within the university?

The neoliberal university has chosen the path of low-cost, flexible resources for teaching, a function central to the mission of the university. Giroux (1988) linked pedagogy to power (p. 97) and this study reveals the relocation of power outside of those doing the teaching and even outside those hiring the teachers. This explains the constraints experienced and felt by those within and those outside the higher education system. Individuals within the system see the conditions that need changing but are limited by invisible forces beyond their control. Individuals outside the system see increasing tuition, uncertain employment prospects, and questions on the value of higher education. The Bordieuan and Freirean lenses reveal a contested space. Taken together, structures, practices, and individual agency reveal the interactions and relationships between doxa, capital, and habitus within the field of schools of media and communication revealing a system that has constrained actions through the proliferation of neoliberal ideology, shifted risk to the individual, and normalized the contingency of teaching labor. To understand the future of higher education, we must return to the university's role as knowledge producer and continue to question the reasons driving contingent teaching labor. Ultimately, what is at stake here is the future of higher education as a public good and the availability of high-quality, public education for all.

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## APPENDIX A: ADJUNCT POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Demographic/Biographic Information – Tell me about your teaching experience at \_\_\_\_\_ University (if previously interviewed, would not be needed):
  - a. Would you like your responses to be anonymous?
  - b. How long have you been teaching at \_\_\_\_\_ University?
  - c. What courses do you currently teach?
  - d. Do you teach at any other colleges or universities? Where?
2. Course Information – Tell me about your course, particularly things that may not be obvious from observing the class or reviewing the syllabus.
  - a. Size (small – under 10; medium – 11 – 35; medium/large – 36 – 75; extra large/auditorium – over 75)
  - b. Did you have additional support in the class? TA, Graduate Assistant
  - c. Describe the typical students in your class?
  - d. Could you describe the content of the course?
  - e. What are the typical assignments for the course?
  - f. Tell me about the technology you use?
3. Describe your process for developing the course and preparing for teaching?
4. Thinking about your preparation for teaching (*including any preparation during your doctoral studies*), what additional instruction or preparation have you had in teaching (include retreats, workshops, seminars, self-study)?
5. How would you describe your teaching philosophy?
  - a. Does your personal philosophy about education influence your classroom? In what ways?
  - b. Do you model your education philosophy or approach to learning in the classroom?
6. As you think about your teaching career, are there other moments or events that resulted in major changes to the way you approach teaching?
7. What are the qualities of mind and character or specific abilities that you desire for your students as a result of your course?
8. Is there anything that you want to point out about your course?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your teaching experience?

### *Study Conclusion*

Is there anything else that you would like to add? Do you have any questions before we conclude the interview?

## APPENDIX B: DEPARTMENT CHAIR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions were also used for administrators, department chairs, and course or sequence directors.

1. Demographic/Biographic Information – Tell me about your department chair role (or course director role) at Temple University (if previously interviewed, would not be needed):
  - a. Would you like your responses to be anonymous?
  - b. How long have you been serving as department chair or course director for \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ University?
  - c. What courses do you currently teach?
  - d. Have you taught at any other colleges or universities? Where?
2. Department Characteristics
3. Determining Need for Adjunct Faculty – Tell me about the process you use to determine if an adjunct faculty member is required?
4. Adjunct Characteristics – How do you identify or recruit adjunct faculty? What are the qualities or specific abilities that you look for when hiring adjunct faculty? What do you require from an adjunct (in addition to the traditional human resources documents (i.e. sample syllabi; letters of recommendations; teach back session)?
5. How do you prepare adjunct faculty for teaching and is that different from the ways other faculty are prepared?
6. As you think about your career, are there other moments or events that resulted in major changes to the way you approach hiring or working with adjunct faculty?
7. Is there anything that you want to point out about your department's use of adjunct faculty?
8. What types of professional development and support do you provide for adjunct faculty and is that different from the support provided for other faculty?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add about adjunct faculty or your teaching experience?

### *Study Conclusion*

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add? Do you have any questions before we conclude the interview?

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS

### Adjunct Faculty

*Table 2. Characteristics of Adjunct Faculty Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	# of Courses Observed	Terms Observed	Course Level	# of Years Teaching in Higher Ed	Teaching at Multiple Institutions	Works Full-time	COVID Impacted
<b>Bucolic University</b>								
Annabelle	F	--	--	200-level Communication 300-level Communication/Special Topics	6	No	Yes	Yes
Dorothy	F	--	--	200-level Communication	4	No	Yes	Yes
Timothy	M	--	--	200-level Communication	12	Yes	Yes	Yes
John	M	--	--	200-level Communication	3	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Urban University</b>								
Chelsea	F	1	Spring '20	100-level Communication	8	No	Yes	Yes
David	M	3	Fall '19 Spring '20	100-level Communication 200-level Communication	2	No	Recently retired	Yes
Iana	F	2	Spring '20	2 200-level Communication	8	No	Yes	Yes
Maxine	F	1	Spring '20	General Education – Communication	1	No	Yes	Yes
Miguel	M	1	Fall '19	100-level Communication	2	No	Grad Student	No
Nikita	F	2	Fall '19	2 100-level Communication	6	No	Yes	No
Jodi	F	1	Spring '20	Freshman Seminar	5	No	Yes	Yes
Wanda	F	1	Fall '19	100-level Communication	20+	No	No	No
Thomas <sup>18</sup>	M	2	Spring '20	100-level Communication		Yes	No	Yes

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas taught at two of this study's institutions: Urban University and Religion University.

## DEPARTMENT CHAIRS, COURSE OR SEQUENCE DIRECTORS, AND

### ADMINISTRATORS

*Table 3. Characteristics of Department Chairs, Course/Sequence Directors, and Administrator Interview Participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b># of Years Teaching in Higher Ed</b>	<b>Experience at Multiple Institutions</b>	<b>Adjunct Experience</b>
<b>Bucolic University</b>						
<b>Alan</b>	M	4/14/20	Department Chair	30+	Yes	No
<b>Urban University</b>						
<b>Tanya</b>	F	2/3/20	Department Chair	15+	No	No
<b>Patrick</b>	M	5/1/20	Department Chair	20+	Yes	No
<b>Christopher</b>	M	4/15/20	Assistant Department Chair	15+	No	No
<b>Craig</b>	M	3/24/20	Sequence Head	10+	No	Yes
<b>Katelyn</b>	F	4/20/20	Sequence Head	10+	No	Yes
<b>Mitchell</b>	M	2/28/20 10/27/20	Course Director	15+	No	No
<b>Lucia</b>	F	2/4/20	Director for Teaching and Learning	20+	Yes	Yes
<b>Other<sup>19</sup></b>						
<b>Joe Berry</b>	M	4/7/19	Organizer	20+	Yes	Yes
<b>Santa Monica College</b>						
<b>Joelle</b>	F	4/24/20	Organizer	15+	Yes	Yes
<b>Diane</b>	F	5/5/20	Organizer	10+	Yes	Yes

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<sup>19</sup> The individuals listed in this section are identified by their actual names as there was no way to fully hide their identity and they consented to the use of their names.

## APPENDIX D: BOURDIEU'S THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

Bourdieu's practice theory work is flexible and at the same time has unique terms with specificity of meaning. This table includes a brief definition for each of Bourdieu's terms used throughout the study. Definitions are largely adapted from Bourdieu's (1977) work.

*Table 4. Bourdieu's Concepts Applied to Media and Communication Adjuncts*

Theoretical Concept	Exemplars from this study
<b>Tempo</b> describes the seasonality and the normal cycle of a community.	The routine of the academic year illustrates tempo or the normal cycle of higher education. Each academic year begins the fall with the start of the fall semester and each academic year concludes with graduation at the end of the spring semester.
<b>Fields</b> are the spaces or social settings where individuals operate. Fields can be places, spaces, or institutions or as Eyal (2013) suggests that fields are "bundles of relations" rather than entities (p. 159). Doxa covers environmental description and social conditions or relationships.	Tenured and tenure track faculty operate in multiple fields, including the discipline, the professional association, the higher education institution, the department, and so forth. Adjunct faculty participants in this study were "full-mooners" (Tuckman, 1978) and operate in multiple fields, including the discipline, the company, the higher education institution, the department, and so forth.
<b>Doxa/logic of the field</b> refers to how new individuals are evaluated when entering a field and are the broadly held rules. These rules can be written and unwritten and include norms, hierarchies, values, and behaviors that are constantly interacting individuals interact within the field.	The website of one of the largest communication professional associations, the International Communication Association (ICA) reveals doxa or prevailing logic such as Ph.D. is the expected credentials for members and adjunct faculty are valued differently.
<b>Reproduction</b> is a way to understand the social processes that replicate and reinforce doxa within the field.	The policies and procedures of the university reproduce the hierarchy and reinforce the doxa of adjunct faculty as less than. The Temple University Adjunct faculty handbook and policy illustrates this with this language, "Persons appointed as adjunct faculty members shall be appointed to one of the following titles: Adjunct Instructor, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Adjunct Associate Professor, or Adjunct Professor. . . ."

Theoretical Concept	Exemplars from this study
	When used in documents or correspondence, these titles are to be used in full” (p. 7).
<p><b>Orthodoxy</b> represent the generally accepted patterns, beliefs and practices. Orthodoxy describes the doxa and the ways in which the doxa are reproduced in the field.</p>	<p>The orthodoxy of the neoliberal university relies on flexible, part-time adjunct labor to respond to variations in enrollment.</p> <p>As an adjunct at Santa Monica College, Joelle knew some aspects of her exploitation but only when she joined the tenure track could she understand the full scope. In other words, the dominated class does not understand the means and practices of domination from the subjective position.</p>
<p><b>Heterodoxy</b> represent deviations from the official position, generally accepted patterns, and practices. Heterodoxy describes the ways in which individuals resist reproduction in the field.</p>	<p>Media and communication adjunct faculty participants have full-time jobs is an example of heterodoxy of the widely held narrative of part-time adjunct faculty or freeway flyers adjuncting at multiple colleges and universities to make a living.</p> <p>The second exemplar of heterodoxy is the work of some unions which advocate for adjunct faculty by pushing back on the university practices to improve the working conditions, as evidenced by Santa Monica College who negotiated preferred hiring through associate status, multi-semester contracts, and a website of consolidated campus resources.</p>
<p><b>Habitus</b> is the ingrained habits, skills and dispositions. Habitus relies on collective history, objective structures, and reproduction. Habitus is the end result of reproduction, patterns, and conditioning to the structures which provides a shared and unquestioned way of being</p>	<p>One aspect of habitus involves the departmental practices at Urban University surrounding academic quality and teaching effectiveness in Tanya’s department. The department recognizes and values academic quality and teaching effectiveness – it is ingrained in the department’s doxa. Habitus illustrates this by the comments of the sequence heads who repeatedly mentioned Tanya, department chair, and her approach to effective teaching, including adjunct observation forms with references to active learning and student-centered teaching approaches. The adjunct faculty mentioned it and described the support that they received in teaching. Tanya’s own term of “academic malpractice” illustrates</p>

Theoretical Concept	Exemplars from this study
	this doxa by describing the importance of time for adjuncts to prepare in order to teach effectively.
<p><b>Hysteresis</b> is the dependence of the state of a system on its history and occurs due to habitus. Hysteresis constrains action.</p>	<p>At Santa Monica College, the faculty union negotiated a contract that provided benefits to adjunct faculty, such as preferential hiring status. As the contract moved into implementation, the administration resisted and were “not being quite so keen” (Joelle, personal communication, April 24, 2020) to move forward with the agreed to changes.</p>
<p><b>Capital</b> explains an individual agent’s status and power within a field. Capital includes resources and includes economic, social, and cultural aspects.</p>	<p>Capital and the differences in capital between adjunct and tenured/tenure track faculty is illustrated by the experiences of Joelle and Diane at Santa Monica College who worked as adjuncts before being hired as tenure track faculty. Joelle’s conversation with a friend about her transition to the tenure track revealed the differences in capital as an adjunct.</p>
<p><b>Economic capital</b> refers to monetary or financial resources.</p>	<p>Economic capital is illustrated for adjunct faculty in two ways: through what they bring from the field of professional experience and what they are denied at the university. First adjunct faculty participants have jobs or own businesses, so they are not financially dependent on adjunct work. In other words, most of the adjunct faculty participants did not rely on the income from teaching. Second, adjunct faculty at Urban University are not eligible for stipends that are typically paid for certain programs (Lucia, personal communication, February 4, 2020) and are thus denied economic capital within the university.</p>
<p><b>Social capital</b> refers to and is built by connections and who you know and their referent power</p>	<p>Social capital is illustrated for adjunct faculty in the connections they bring from their professional experience. This can be significant for people in power or those that own businesses.</p>
<p><b>Cultural capital</b> is an individual’s context-based or field-based knowledge, education, and tastes. Shared cultural capital results in collective identity. There are three categories of cultural capital: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized.</p>	

Theoretical Concept	Exemplars from this study
<p><b>Embodied cultural capital</b> is represented by skills, accents, dialects, and even tastes. Embodied capital is used to indicate insider/outsider status and membership into a class of people, and it is context- or field-specific.</p>	<p>Adjunct faculty have the embodied cultural capital from their professional lives and experience. In other words, they are “industry-insiders” and yet at the same time, as adjuncts, they are “outsiders” to the university.</p>
<p><b>Objectified cultural capital</b> is represented by material possessions and belongings that have cultural significance.</p>	<p>The best example for this study is this the office and possibly the office location. As one of the student focus group participants stated, “Some of those offices have no windows. . . .I wouldn’t want to work in a closet”.</p>
<p><b>Institutionalized cultural capital</b> is related to the institution and the institutional symbols that represent authority, credentials, and qualifications.</p>	<p>Adjunct faculty take advantage of the institutionalized cultural capital of teaching at a university. At the same time, full-mooners can use their connections to industry or specific companies as institutionalized cultural capital within the university.</p>