

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Tenure-Track Faculty: Motivations, Expectations, and Experiences

Abstract approved:

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Jessica E. White

This study explored the motivations, expectations, and experiences of tenure-track faculty members at a public research institution. Through semi-structured interviews with twelve participants, the study utilized a constructivist paradigm to qualitative research to address the individual experiences of faculty members entering the professoriate and pursuing tenure. With this methodology and building on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) as a theoretical framework, the study identified six themes addressing the participants' motivations, expectations, and experiences: (a) academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate, (b) working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession, (c) performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors, (d) involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor, (e) choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity, and (f) working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession. In conjunction with the methodology, these findings serve to inform

institutional awareness and understanding of faculty by exploring the dynamic connection between motivations, expectations, and experiences.

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Tenure-Track Faculty: Motivations, Expectations, and Experiences

by  
Heather S. Pearson

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APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing College Student Services Administration

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Dean of the College of Education

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Heather S. Pearson, Author

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## Tenure-Track Faculty: Motivations, Expectations, and Experiences

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

In the history of higher education in the United States, the faculty role has encountered extensive change in its structure since Harvard was founded in 1636. Originally, institutions of higher education served in a moral development and instructional capacity, with faculty fulfilling the role of teacher for the institution (Cohen, 1998). As colleges and universities took on new functions and evolved with developments in education, including increased specialization of academic discipline and introducing graduate education, expectations of faculty work expanded to include additional functions in research, service, and extension. Today's faculty consists of professors of varying ranks, including Professor, Assistant Professor, and Instructor, among others. Within these ranks, the variance increases to include different appointments balancing research, teaching, service, and extension duties, as well as indicating various time commitments (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). In some cases, faculty raise portions of their own salary through grants and research. To say, "I want to be a professor" does not nearly present a sufficient explanation of what one would actually want to do within that role given the complexities of what one could do as a professor for any number of different institutions.

The perceptions and subsequent image of a college professor is complicated. In looking at the rising costs of higher education in the status quo, authors Hacker and Dreifus (2010) argue that faculty motivations and the process of tenure pose significant problems for collegiate institutions. Primarily, Hacker and Dreifus propose

that bloated costs are associated with the favoring of research, faculty sabbaticals, and light course loads over teaching processes, and that this is counter-productive to the mission of higher education and the role of faculty in that mission. A prominent portrait of the faculty experience in Hacker and Dreifus' *Higher Education?* is of a person interviewing for an Assistant Professor position in Political Science. The interviewee expresses interest in only teaching his doctoral work and makes egregious demands about teaching loads and extensive time for sabbatical, displaying excessive arrogance stereotypically associated with faculty in higher education. Concluding their focus on faculty, Hacker and Dreifus write that "though often exceptionally well paid and able to exercise more control over their lives than the members of practically any other profession, college and university professors often express surprisingly low levels of job satisfaction" (p. 28). In short, Hacker and Dreifus, in addressing one aspect needing to be reformed in higher education, direct their energy in presenting an unsavory picture of faculty from their expectations to the lack of satisfaction found within the profession. The general question lingering in response to their conceptions of faculty: What do faculty members want and expect, and consequently experience, when they enter the professoriate?

Like Hacker and Dreifus (2010), some studies have looked at the motivations and expectations of faculty to address the earlier question of what faculty want and expect from the professoriate (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Eckert & Williams, 1972; HERI at UCLA, 2009; Lindholm, 2004; McInnis, 2010). Primarily, faculty members are looking for academic freedom and the autonomy of the career, often

motivated by an interest in their respective discipline (Eckert & Williams, 1972; Lindholm, 2004; McInnis, 2010). Additionally, faculty are motivated by the academic environment of higher education (Eckert & Williams, 1972; Lindholm, 2004). In this capacity, research has become a motivating factor for individuals to enter the professoriate in that being a professor creates the lifestyle conducive to that type of academic exploration.

The subsidiary question that follows is whether faculty members are experiencing what they hoped they would in their expectations of the professoriate. Hacker and Dreifus' (2010) research indicates that faculty have low levels of job satisfaction. Thirty years prior, though, Eckert and Williams (1972) saw high morale and job satisfaction in their study of faculty. Sorcinelli (1992, 1994, 2007) has also found relatively high levels of job satisfaction among the faculty she studied but she, like Eckert and Williams, also found high levels of stress among her participants. Given recent economic conditions for higher education, new problems are introduced for the professoriate in navigating the stresses potentially undermining satisfaction. With stress related to lacking a balance within the professional world (handling multiple job functions) and between the professional and personal world, Sorcinelli (1994) saw that the increasing stress of faculty work contributed to lower levels of satisfaction with the job. The sense is, though, that the satisfying aspects of faculty work will offset the negative stresses of the position. After an exploration of the literature on the subject of faculty motivations, expectations, and experiences, this

study looks to explore these issues further by learning more about individual faculty stories related to their own experience

### **Research Questions**

The research questions of the study come back to the complexity within the faculty role introduced in the first paragraph: What do faculty members want and expect, and consequently experience, when they enter the professoriate? As such, the research aimed to explore the following question: Why do tenure-track faculty members choose the path of the professoriate? Subsidiary questions of the study include: (a) What do current tenure-track faculty members believe is the purpose of the professoriate? (b) What are their expectations of the work they would be doing within the professoriate? And (c) Is what they do within their work consistent with their perceived purpose of the professoriate and their expectations of the work they would be doing? Primarily, it is my goal to explore and understand the relative stories of faculty members, focusing on the congruence between their motivations for becoming a professor and the reality of their current experiences.

### **Significance and Purpose of the Study**

Currently, research has been widely done to explore the nature of the faculty position within higher education (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Dee & Daly, 2009; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; HERI at UCLA, 2009; McInnis, 2010; Sorcinelli, 1992; 1994; 2007). Additionally, research has been conducted periodically to determine various reasons individuals have for becoming faculty at colleges and universities (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Eckert & Williams, 1972; Henkel, 2010; Lindholm,

2004; McInnis, 2010). Finally, studies have also been conducted measuring job satisfaction of faculty (Dee & Daly, 2009; Eckert & Williams, 1972; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; HERI at UCLA, 2009; Sorcinelli, 1992, 1994, 2007). This past research speaks to the experience of faculty as a collective. Adding to this growing body of research, the scholarly significance of this study rests on exploring the connection between motivations, expectations, and experiences for a subset of the faculty community: tenure-track faculty, with the primary focus being on faculty motivation. As work-life balance and healthy initiatives become more salient in Student Affairs work, there also existed within the literature a valuable opening in looking at this faculty role through this practical lens. The study contributes to a greater understanding of the faculty experience and how faculty can be better supported by an institution, supplementing current dialogue addressing faculty experiences. Lastly, the study is personally motivated by my interest in faculty and their experiences. I do not have a desire currently to become a professor but I do have an interest in exploring the unique aspects of faculty members and their work. And as this study was largely inspired by the observation of the successes and challenges of one faculty member in particular, the purpose of this study is to explore the individual experiences of faculty as it relates to their motivations and actual experiences within the professoriate.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that informed this study is the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994). An important aspect embedded into the theoretical framework is the dynamic nature of the

individual, with extensive influence from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. The significance of a social-cognitive approach to career choice is that it "emphasizes the role of self-referent thinking in guiding human motivation and behavior" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 81). In short, "the theory hypothesizes that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies both predict academic and career interests" (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003, p. 36). The tenets of this theory will be used to provide context and discussion points for the data collected from this study and it is reviewed in greater detail in Chapter II.

### **Methodology**

This research was designed as a qualitative study maintaining a constructivist paradigm on knowledge and truth. Conducted at a large, public, high-volume research institution in the Pacific Northwest, twelve individuals participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews speaking about their experiences becoming and being professors. The study was not designed or intended to provide concrete generalizations about a common faculty experience but rather to explore the realities of twelve experiences, informing an understanding of this community. The intent of the research was to develop greater understanding and insight into individuals comprising the faculty of higher education and consider their stories within the context of existing literature and theory.



## **Definition of Key Terms**

Throughout the course of this study, terminology is employed to discuss a broad scope of topics related to career development and faculty. This is a list of terms used throughout the thesis and the intended definitions of those terms.

**Faculty.** Professors are often grouped together representing the faculty body, an academic collective of individuals within an institution of higher education. Defining faculty is complex in that it may be defined differently across organizations (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). The faculty body, though, is often comprised of individuals within specific disciplines serving the function of educating students on information within those disciplines. However, some faculty do not have a teaching component to their position that includes courses. The role of faculty members is not limited to teaching courses within an institution but has various facets through institutions depending on promotion and tenure processes. These may include: (a) teaching, (b) research, (c) scholarly activity, (d) service, (e) clinical work, and (f) extension. Additionally, there are ranks with the faculty, indicating one's position type, such as Assistant Professor or Associate Professor, with further classification depending whether one is tenured, tenure track, or non-tenure track. Professoriate is often used interchangeably with faculty, identifying the collective body of professors within higher education.

**Tenure.** The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2010) defines tenure as “an arrangement whereby faculty members, after successful completion of a period of probationary service, can be dismissed only for adequate

cause or other possible circumstances and only after a hearing before a faculty committee” (para. 1). Tenure-track and tenured faculty are those individuals that are either in the process of acquiring tenure or have already completed and achieved tenure.

**Research and Scholarship.** These two are addressed together as they used to be synonymously related (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Blackburn and Lawrence distinguish, though, in their research framework that “research deals with published products, whereas scholarship involves keeping up to date with the literature and other intellectual activity” (p. 105). Research within this study will be understood in the context of Blackburn & Lawrence’s work; it is the process that creates a concrete product within an institution, such as an article or a grant proposal. Scholarship is different in that it is rooted more in professional development where one works to enhance their knowledge within a discipline.

### **Personal Statement**

During my graduate studies, I took the opportunity to enroll in an undergraduate class simply to fulfill my personal curiosity in that subject. After a few weeks in the class, I found myself puzzled and inspired by the interaction between my fellow students and the faculty member teaching the class. The students were often challenging to engage and teach. Subsequently, I often wondered how the professor came to be a professor and how she maintained motivation to teach this course week after week, assuming she did. And when envisioning the career path of being a professor, I wondered, was this course the kind of environment she desired for herself?

Was this professor satisfied or fulfilled in the work she was doing? Naturally, this course is not the only experience informing the professor's work but it did propel me to explore the factors that comprise her motivations and general happiness in the face of student apathy and disrespect prevalent in this particular course. In some regard, I was reminded of the opinion I had towards faculty as an undergraduate student without the foresight or relativistic assessment to fully understand the role of faculty and the privileges and challenges accompanying their work. Faculty can be easy to blame and criticize, especially when mistakes are made, but they are real people fulfilling a dynamic and valuable role in highly pressurized situations across the country.

Additionally, I am preoccupied with my perception that vocation often serves as a primary identifier in contemporary society. The possible impact, or lack thereof, of this on the existential understanding we have of ourselves is interesting and has been explored by many theorists, such as Josselson (1987) (as cited in Reybold, 2003). As I plan to exit graduate education in pursuit of employment soon, I personally feel insecure about the level of satisfaction I can reasonably expect from my career and its impact on my life. With faculty serving in an incredibly complex, challenging, and demanding role, an element of my desire to study faculty was to see and understand the impact their vocational experience has on the balance and well-being of the person.

## **Organization of Thesis**

The presentation of this study and the findings consists of five parts, beginning with Chapter I, the introduction. The next chapter, Chapter II, is the literature review presenting information about the history of faculty in higher education, the culture of academia, including research and teaching and how it is fostered from professor to professor, the impact of promotion and tenure on faculty members, current research on faculty motivations and job satisfaction, and a review of the Lent et al. (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory. Chapter III: Research Design explains the study design itself as well as addresses the research questions, data collection and analysis, and study limitations. The data is presented in Chapter IV: Results, where a summary of the participants' experiences and key themes are addressed. Lastly, in Chapter V: Discussion, I summarize the data analysis presented in Chapter IV and provide conclusions of the study based on the data collected. In the final chapter, I also address future implications to the study.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Throughout the history of higher education in the United States, the role of the college professor has evolved to include roles beyond teaching, often to reflect the needs and desires of the institution. And as Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) note in regard to this evolution, “the pressures are wide and intense for today’s faculty navigating their role in an ever-changing landscape of higher education” (p. 3). The faculty role largely began with teaching, then service and research were added to the mix, adding new tensions to a complex role. Now, “faculty have been asked to blend these three traditions, but despite this idealized expectation, a wide gap now exists between the myth and reality of academic life” (Boyer, 1990, p. 15). The purpose of this study is to explore the individual experience of faculty as it relates to their motivations and actual experiences within the professoriate.

Studies regarding faculty motivations, satisfaction, and perspectives are not entirely common but some literature is available. In order to fully grasp the experiences of each tenure-track faculty participant, literature was compiled to contextualize previous knowledge collected about faculty. The literature review primarily covers (a) an historical context and changes to the faculty role, (b) the current faculty culture particularly as it relates to research and teaching, (c) the nuances of promotion and tenure, (d) faculty motivations, (e) satisfaction, and (f) Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The scope of the literature review, ultimately, is to provide greater understanding of the current body of knowledge about faculty and their experiences within the professoriate.

## **Historical Context**

In speaking of higher education, Bogue and Aper (2000) write, “what began in this nation as a relatively modest and small configuration of largely quasi-private institutions, serving relatively restricted and elite purposes and clientele, has evolved into a diverse system having important social, political, and economic impacts on our nation” (p. 15). This is an astute observation of the changing dynamic in American higher education. Originally serving the purpose of providing instruction to young men, colleges and universities were constructed in America as the country grew from the colonies to a nation. The instruction found in these original schools included grammar, classical languages, rhetoric and so forth, serving to educate minds (Bogue & Aper, 2000). Additionally, institutions were locations for students to gain moral development and schools could serve as parents for displaced students in fostering standards of behavior (Cohen, 1998). With the introduction of the German model of research institutions and the Morrill Land Grant acts in the latter half of the nineteenth century, higher education became heavily involved in research and practical application of knowledge (Bogue & Aper, 2000). The German model of education was represented in American higher education early in the nineteenth century, however its full impact was felt later that century with increased faculty specialization and the development of graduate education in more research orientated institutions, like Cornell University and Johns Hopkins University (Cohen, 1998). The first Morrill Act of 1862 created land-grant institutions that had a broader area of service with regards to the population comprising the institution, eventually providing liberal and

practical education in agricultural and mechanical disciplines (Cohen, 1998). For some institutions established under the Morrill Act of 1862, state legislatures were able to make determinations about curriculum and research for their colleges and universities (Bogue & Aper, 2000).

As higher education transitioned to the twentieth century, institutions took on new roles: (a) increased access to education, (b) community and civic service, (c) assessment and evaluation, (d) continuing education, (e) professional development, and even (f) entertainment (Bogue & Aper, 2000). With the GI Bill passage, research dollars from the government were directed to academic institutions (Dee & Daly, 2009). Consequently, universities and colleges receiving federal funding were now likely to have federal regulations impacting the administrative capacity of the institution (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Universities were no longer just locations to care for adolescents or teach the elite young facts of life but to be contributive to the overall production of society through their new roles. In three centuries, higher education had endured many changes and is a staple of American culture, however, Blackburn and Lawrence note that “universities have also become, in many ways, the equivalent of the country’s giant industrial corporations, with all the bureaucratic accouterments – vice presidents for everything, for example, where once a dean or two handled it all” (p. 1). Managing more work and functions than the original roles higher education provided for institutional administration, the image of the university and college has been transformed.

Through these changes, the perception of higher education and its role has shifted since Harvard's founding in 1636. In order to make sense of higher education, mission differentiation became a common practice resulting in the concept of an ideal research university as an aspiration for some institutions. As such, Dee and Daly (2009) write that "efforts were frequently formulated by college leaders and trustees as strategic plans for institutions to rise to higher levels within the Carnegie classification system" (p. 4). During the 1980s, higher education in the United States saw that "the rising emphasis on scholarship coupled with the increasingly competitive culture reinforced beliefs within institutions that they should be attentive to their status relative to other institutions" (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 205). The nature of the academic professorship changed as a result, emphasizing higher research productivity of faculty.

**Evolution of Faculty Roles.** As higher education has changed so too has the faculty role, "no longer does a quick reference to teaching, research, and service suffice to explain the work of the faculty member. Faculty roles have become increasingly complex and challenging, both for individuals to carry out and for institutions to support" (Dee & Daly, 2009, p. 2). Changing from a role focused on instruction, faculty are now experts in specialized fields, act as scholars for the government, conduct grant-based research, and serve on institutional committees, leading faculty to perceive and likely approach their roles differently. However, a perception of faculty now is that they have "abandoned students for their laboratories and carrels, that the time they should be spending teaching now goes into the writing



of trivial articles no one reads, ... and that they are only interested in teaching courses in their specialty” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 2). Knowing that many functions of the faculty role are mandated through the history of higher education and may not necessarily be an active choice of individual faculty, this aspect is tangentially explored through this study.

Currently, scholarship, research, and publication are incredibly important aspects of faculty life, especially as research “has become an increasingly important criterion for promotion, tenure, and career success in four-year colleges” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 115). As the German model of higher education was loosely adopted in the United States, research became a prevalent element of higher education. Dee and Daly (2009) write, “research and graduate education functions were grafted on to existing institutions. Faculty at these institutions became responsible not only for undergraduate education, but also for graduate programs and research productivity within their academic disciplines” (p. 3). Prompting greater levels of faculty specialization and professorial expertise, the government also began to supply funding to faculty for research with the passage of the GI Bill,

The growth of large scale government funded science enabled faculty members to control revenue streams that were separate from institutional budgets, thus giving them some degree of autonomy from the administrators who controlled those budgets, which in turn reinforced notions of academic freedom. But the proliferation of research products from these endeavors also solidified within the academic profession a positivist, scientific methods model of knowledge generation, which affected publications priorities not only within the natural sciences but also in the social sciences, arts and humanities, and professional fields. (Dee & Daly, 2009, p. 4)

As higher education incorporated higher levels of research and scholarship production within their institutional mission and the government utilized faculty professors as a means for spearheading research, the role of faculty began to reflect a strong research emphasis. In some cases, it may be a choice of faculty today to “abandon” their educational duties as Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) indicated, however the role of faculty in higher education has grown to demand multiple things from individual professors, potentially even negating the chance of having a choice. Ultimately, faculty members’ interpretation of value to the different parts of the faculty role will shape their opinion of faculty work choices.

### **Academic Culture**

Most faculty members are informed of their job duties through a written contract outlining how much of their job is devoted to research, teaching, service, extension, and so forth. However, it is often the academic culture of an institution that provides for an interpretation of the various functions within a faculty role. Consequently, a modernist interpretation of culture implies that “an organization’s culture, then, teaches people how to behave, what to hope for, and what it means to succeed or fail” (Tierney, 1997, p. 4). Tierney continues to note, “some individuals become competent, and others do not” (p. 4). However, this is not the only interpretation of how culture may be developed and fostered in an institution. Tierney also writes about the postmodern perspective on culture development and that it “is not so much the definition of the world as it is, but rather a conglomeration of the hopes and dreams of what the organizational world might be” (p. 6). This

interpretation reflects each person within the process, and changes as a new person comes into the organization. There is another alternative approach to culture for Tierny: “one radical interpretation might be that we have a postmodern culture operating within a modernist framework: conflict and discontinuities exist because people do not know what is expected of them” (p. 14). In regards to faculty and this study, the academic culture is important to understand how motivations may interact with the culture if the culture places expectations on faculty or if the faculty member is able to integrate into the culture.

The culture of research institutions today is one that highly emphasizes the value of research and scholarship within an institution, supported by having higher Carnegie aspirations (O’Meara, 2006, p. 86). In response to the growing role of research, Boyer (1990) developed a more integrated interpretation of scholarship, including teaching as a necessary function of research and scholarship. O’Meara found that research institutions are more likely to resist Boyer reforms on scholarship as research expectations, citing the desire to improve institutional rankings particularly within the Carnegie classification, and the developed research orientation of faculty as significant barriers to changing the culture of scholarship. Additionally,

doctoral/research universities are significantly more likely than baccalaureate colleges to note confusions about the definitions of teaching, research, and services as scholarship, and faculty fear that if the reward system changes, faculty careers and programs will be less marketable or transferable. (O’Meara, 2006, p. 86)

There is a challenge within research institutions to adequately define scholarship for faculty. In the confusion, the culture within the research university often pushes

faculty to publish or perish, setting research as the paramount function of the faculty role (Brandt, 1970). However, it is this culture that allows the university to maintain the position of authority and legitimacy in scholastic communities (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). Given the growing weight on advancing knowledge, legitimacy in higher education is connected to research and scholarship partly based on educational reforms of the late nineteenth century. Particularly with research at an institution, Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) note there is a high level of isolation that is contradictory to a collective spirit within research. Tenure-track faculty must then engage in a balancing game of reconciling research standards and teaching practices informed by their colleagues and mentors.

Within the context of understanding academic culture, there are four subsections further addressed in this section: (a) socialization, (b) research, (c) teaching, and (d) research and teaching tension. Socialization focuses on the process by which new faculty are introduced to the academic culture of their institution. The other three subsections address how this institutional culture is shaped, considering these factors.

**Socialization.** “Culture gets defined as the sum of activities ... that exist in the organization and create shared meaning. The definition of socialization pertains to the successful understanding and incorporation of those activities by the new members of the organization” (Tierney, 1997, p. 3). Within an institution, formal and informal processes exist to introduce new members to the culture of the academy, such as faculty orientation or mentoring programs (Mendoza, 2008). Formal methods are

those incorporating development programs, workshops, and the process of promotion and tenure. The informal process incorporates younger faculty modeling older professors, encouraging new faculty to build upon the teaching style and emphasis on research of these older faculty mentors (Mendoza, 2008).

As an example of this socialization, Shim and Roth (2009) state, “novice professors have much to gain from conversations with and observations of experienced professors who are willing to share their ideas about teaching” (p. 1). Developing strategies to foster these opportunities is a new function of higher education - teaching faculty about teaching and research, and what it means to be faculty. Institutions may often utilize faculty development programs to incorporate and assist in the training of faculty. And as the academic culture of faculty is probably not the same as when Harvard opened in 1636, one can expect that how faculty perceive the purpose of higher education may have basic foundational tenets that ebb and flow with changes throughout higher education.

Tierney (1997) conducted a study of the socialization process of tenure-track faculty to determine and analyze the modernist and postmodern interpretations of socialization. In the study, Tierney saw how faculty learned to focus their time throughout their work, measuring effectiveness in teaching, research, and service. Through these aspects, the participants determined the facets and worth of each function of the faculty position. This was learned for faculty not through training sessions or presidential speeches but through “the pace of work, what was important and what was not, by being involved in the microscopic aspects of the culture of their

organizations” (Tierney, 1997, p. 12). Entering the professoriate, many participants indicated they had preferences for either teaching or research as motivations but nothing that would indicate they were connected to a deeper purpose within the institution (Tierney, 1997). One participant related this to junior faculty motivation for participation on university committees “not because they were interested or committed to the goals, but because they had internalized the attitudes of what it takes to be a good faculty member” (Tierney, 1997, p. 13). These expectations of the culture are connected back to more extrinsic values and motivations, reflecting what Tierney refers to as a modernist interpretation of socialization. An effect of this process to socialization is an increased pressure to be successful in interpreting the culture without really being able to identify a deeper institutional purpose or ethos. Without doing such, new faculty members are more prone to failure (Tierney, 1997).

The socialization of faculty does not just begin with taking a professorship in a new institution; Austin (2002) writes, “the literature on socialization implies that an individual’s understanding of the faculty career begins with the graduate school experience or even earlier, not with the first faculty position” (p. 96). While socialization will likely look different considering variations of discipline, it can be a crucial point for graduate students considering the professoriate. Through their programs, students are “exposed to the types of skills and expectations likely to confront them on the job” (Austin, 2002, p. 96). Often, as the culture of academia emphasizes research, this is presented as a priority for graduate students, leading to extensive training in conducting research. Austin argues, in response, that “the

socialization process in graduate school must change substantially for new faculty members to work effectively in the ever changing world of higher education” (p. 95).

**Research in the Academic Culture.** After World War II, life for faculty in the University changed extensively. As war research was supported by the government, funding became readily available for the research function of the professorial role (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). As funding, and consequently research, continued after 1945, teaching at the time was still considered the paramount function (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Research then exploded, with publications and journals rapidly increasing in number. The spurt in knowledge development was most likely a result of “societal needs and requests; competition among universities to be recognized as the best (with faculty publications rates determining the standings); attempts to satisfy faculty members’ intrinsic desires while incidentally providing extrinsic rewards” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 118). The positive is that this growth in research development has arguably contributed to a greater access to knowledge and a higher quality of information, so in some capacity, questions within the different fields are being answered and knowledge is becoming more rich (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).

Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) conducted a study measuring the factors motivating a professor to conduct research. A primary finding of the study is the nature of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, as “while intrinsic motivations must be high, faculty do respond to what they see and believe the organization honors” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 176). It is arguably a dangerous implication for

research. The overemphasis of extrinsic rewards compromises the intrinsic value of research for many faculty, and essentially faculty are engaging more in research because of the extrinsic rewards of promotion. In some cases, where a faculty is on a “soft-money” appointment, the faculty salary is comprised of external funding secured by the faculty member, thus propelling an additional motivation towards research. Additionally, faculty are more prone to prefer research, given the demands of research, its extrinsic value to promotion, and their research background. (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).

For success in research, it is recommended that faculty teach classes fitting their research agenda, gain adequate access to resources to better develop skills and a research program, and have multiple projects incubating so one is not stalled (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). As an example, this study found that “professors with strong cumulative research records tend to be more prolific publishers” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 135). The process of training strong researchers creates establishes a more research-oriented culture. However, faculty identified additional needs to be successful with the increasing push for research, such as a need for institutional outcomes and research expectations to be more explicit, training for writing grants, and more time and assistance provided by the institution itself (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).

**Teaching in the Academic Culture.** Teaching has long been an important part of the faculty role in higher education. As research has been introduced and expanded within this role, teaching has undergone significant change. With this change,



teaching, like research, is not viewed and valued similarly between faculty. Each faculty is likely to approach this aspect of their position differently from one another. Kerlinger (1970) noted that even within the realm of teaching, individual faculty members will value different styles and practices over others and this may not correlate with student expectations (Kerlinger, 1970).

Speaking of this varying style and motivations, Serow, Van Dyk, McComb, and Harrold (2002) wrote:

More than most professionals, academics are said to place a premium on the chance to do work in which they believe. But not all academics are drawn to all parts of their work. So it may be that varying preferences for the teaching role or for the research or service roles comprise a basis for the formation of distinct cultural entities. (p. 27)

In regards to this distinction within the culture of teaching, Serow et al. claims there are two types of cultures: official and oppositional. The official culture is closely connected with the development of teaching centers, and values institutional faculty development initiatives and professional associations (Serow et al., 2002). Faculty subscribing to this movement may likely conduct research and contribute to the body of knowledge on the scholarship of teaching. Their general approach to teaching is couched more in principles and values related to education (Serow et al., 2002). For the oppositionists, these faculty members directed their frustration with the state of teaching in higher education to the administration that places more emphasis on research and to faculty colleagues for accepting that emphasis as they view the primary purpose of faculty is to teach, not conduct research (Serow et al., 2002).

Current research, though, conducted through faculty development centers and professional groups dedicated to teaching, indicates a changing trend, overall, in teaching and learning styles, impacting the nature of faculty work. Surveying individuals of the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education about challenges faculty members are currently encountering with these changes, Sorcinelli (2007) saw that for “faculty members who are accustomed to lecturing while students listen, learner-centered teaching may require new and unfamiliar teaching skills and raise fears about lack of coverage of content of less control over assessment activities” (p. 7). Sorcinelli (2007) found three primary areas in which challenges were presented to faculty: (a) what it means to be a professor is changing along with (b) the composite student body and (c) the nature of teaching and scholarship (Sorcinelli, 2007). For the professor role, faculty are seeing more tasks proscribed to their job descriptions and with such, faculty are finding it difficult to navigate increased pressure in their roles to keep up with teaching and research (Sorcinelli, 2007). Compounding the changes to teaching and the faculty role, faculty noted in the survey that the “growing diversity of students is an admired aspect of American higher education; at the same time, it places considerable demands on faculty members” (Sorcinelli, 2007, p. 5).

An additional challenge for faculty is one that also serves as another element in the culture of teaching, high-quality teaching and faculty improvement. Identified by Blackburn and Lawrence (1995), faculty question how high-quality teaching is even measured. Student ratings are arguably attributed to characteristics of faculty beyond

their control and beyond teaching, and peer and administrator-based evaluations are also riddled with complications (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). But for faculty to improve in teaching, assuming there is a need, it depends on motivation, “critics assume that faculty could teach better if only they would try harder” (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 196). Thus colleges and universities have been devising ways to address this assumed challenge, however individual faculty perceptions of themselves and the environmental desires and supports affect the way they may approach teaching.

In conclusion, faculty are saying this: I am very good at teaching (self-efficacy) (self-knowledge). If I am also genuinely interested in teaching (self-knowledge), and if I believe that my institution cares (social knowledge), I will give a lot of time to teaching. If I am not very interested or do not believe that my institution cares, I will not give much time to teaching. All of this is irrespective of where I work (what type of college or university), what field I am in, how long I have been an academic, what rank I hold, what my specialty is (all career variables), whether my department or institution supports teaching, or whether my colleagues care about teaching (both social knowledge variables). (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 204)

For teaching in higher education, the culture struggles to support faculty development while acknowledging the work faculty already put into their courses and instruction. It is not something that is readily developed in many graduate programs as research is priority in graduate education, indicated in the section on the culture of research. Ultimately, teaching is acknowledged as important and vital to the process of education but there are struggles to find support for teaching at times.

**Research and Teaching Tension.** Several studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between research and teaching within higher education,

particularly as it pertains to the faculty role and the culture within academics (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Brandt, 1970; Dee & Daly, 2009; Fox, 1992; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010, Tang & Chamberlin, 1997). Some conclusions of these studies reveal essentially no negative correlation for faculty in their motivations between research and teaching. However, there is still concern about the complicated structuring of the faculty role (Dee and Daly, 2009). This may be the case for many faculty members in how they interpret the culture of their institution.

An ongoing theme in understanding the difference and potential tension between research and teaching is an understanding the nature of scholarship. The interpretation of scholarship has changed within higher education. Earlier it was viewed more creatively, “and its integrity was measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn” (Boyer, 1990, p. 15). However, as Boyer contends, scholarship and scholarly activity is now restricted to basic research. In addressing this change Boyer (1990) wrote, “surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one’s investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one’s knowledge effectively to students” (p. 16). Boyer then redefined scholarship as addressing four unique functions of faculty that can overlap: (a) scholarship of discovery, (b) scholarship of integration, (c) scholarship of application, and (d) the scholarship of teaching. Each adds to a more complete picture of the scholars, our faculty, and presents a concept for how institutions may re-engage the conflicts and incongruence found in the ongoing conversation of teaching versus

research. An institution may have a challenging time in supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning if it is primarily a research institution, as the practice of research and publication has more value in both the position descriptions of faculty and the promotion and tenure process.

In their studies looking at faculty perceptions of tenure, Tang and Chamberlain (1997) primarily studied regional state universities with a research focus. They found that faculty attitudes toward having to do both teaching and research were not positive:

Faculty members, on the other hand, are less inclined to agree with the mission of the university that both teaching and research are essential parts of their jobs. They believe that they have not been rewarded for their teaching activities. Further, they believe that they enjoy teaching, that research interferes with teaching, and that they should be required to do either teaching or research, but not both. (Tang & Chamberlin, 1997, p. 223)

Additionally, Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) found, in regards to faculty motivations, that “besides wanting to pass their knowledge on to the next generation and to get young people excited about ideas and learning, those who choose the professorial career do so because research attracts them” (p. 116). The primary factors, they discovered, was that the intellectual challenges of research are stimulating, engaging, and, overall, quite enjoyable (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Universities, consequently, encounter a predicament in promoting both research and teaching and learning practices if faculty members are not responsive to both.

Fox (1992) analyzed the relationship between the prominent functions of the faculty role, and also addressed how this relationship changes for different types of institutions. One perspective is that research and teaching work as a joint activity and that each mutually relies on the other. A second perspective is that research and

teaching are segmented from the other and creates ongoing tension within the functions (Fox, 1992). The study focused on faculty within one discipline throughout the country and the primary finding of the study is that there is indeed “a strain between research and teaching” (Fox, 1992, p. 301). Contributing to this ongoing strain, Fox found that “faculty members’ strong interest in, commitment of time to, and orientation to research, as well as their perception that their departments reward research activities, support publication productivity; the parallel teaching factors do not” (p. 301). Fox indicated that this reflects a faculty with two distinct interests that conflict, not one interest serving multiple functions. This primary conflict for faculty is reflected within and perpetuated by other internal organizational conflicts, such as the disciplinary identity and institutional identity of faculty and the shifting focus of institutions on graduate over undergraduate education (Fox, 1992). Thus, Fox acknowledges that the evolution of higher education is strongly connected to the tension existing between research and teaching.

### **Promotion and Tenure**

The role of tenure in higher education is arguably a divisive one. Arising out of the changes in higher education, “tenure systems became more prevalent to ensure and protect academic freedom” (Dee & Daly, 2009, p. 3). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2006) argues that the process of tenure is one that is vital to the health of academic freedom by supporting faculty interests and economic security. “Many professors declare they need the lifetime guarantee because their efforts to pursue truth – and by extension their careers – are constantly under attack”

(Hacker & Dreifus, 2010, p. 134). For institutions, the process of promotion and tenure provides formalized and measurable guidelines in which to execute the mission of the institution and reflect the values of its community. Tenure ensures integrity of faculty by providing needed compensation for the work faculty do in all functions of their position (AAUP, 2003). While for the individual, “tenure and promotion (tenure especially) are momentous points in their professional career, providing not only employment security but also a guarantee of status in the academic profession” (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 212). With the positive extrinsic nature of tenure, there are ongoing challenges to this opportunity related not necessarily to the merits of the tenure concept but in its execution.

Until relatively recently, the language and process of promotion and tenure was largely more fluid. Looking at institutional practices for promotion and tenure in between the 1970s and the 1990s, Youn & Price (2009) found in a study of four different institutions that there were not many rules developed for a process such as tenure or faculty review. But since the 1970s, particularly as control of decision-making for faculty hiring and personnel management became less paternalistic in the structure of the institution, “more elaborate procedures and new personnel policies unique to each institution were introduced” (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 212). Also occurring at this time was an emphasis-shift from teaching to research. As institutions became increasingly competitive, this was reflected in department determinations for recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices, also emphasizing specialization, “academic departments that aspire to be nationally-known tended to seek narrower

niches by stressing specialty areas and expertise. It seems that an emphasis on a narrow niche follows in tandem with an emphasis on stronger credential requirements” (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 228). Blackburn & Lawrence (1995) reiterated a similar sentiment about the tenure process in regards to the effect of research in that it is now incredibly important in the promotion and tenure process for faculty to produce publications.

Tang & Chamberlain (1997), in conducting studies on faculty perceptions on promotion and tenure, have been able to confirm the perception that research is paramount to teaching. The professors within their studies indicated that research was valued more than teaching by their institution and is often preferred given that measuring research effort is perceived to be more standard than evaluating quality teaching (Tang & Chamberlain, 1997). Faculty, consequently, give more weight to research, as Tang & Chamberlain state, “so that they will be reviewed favorably by administrators and peers when they are up for tenure and promotions. It is clear to these professors that research productivity will be related to the real rewards in the academic setting” (p. 216). In these studies, faculty respondents did indicate that there was a place for teaching effectiveness within the promotion and tenure process, just not as vital as the practice of research and publication (Tang & Chamberlain, 1997). Regardless, as mentioned with the sections on research and teaching in the academic culture, each faculty member values research differently. The perception is that research is favored in the promotion and tenure process, which may be an opportunity or a challenge depending on the interests of the faculty member.



As noted earlier, Hacker and Dreifus (2010) maintain a critical outlook on the value of tenure in higher education, advocating that tenure compromises intellectual freedom and creativity for faculty. Furthermore, Hacker & Dreifus discuss an inherent contradiction towards academic freedom embedded in the tenure process,

Though the stated rationale for tenure is the protection of free inquiry, the demeanor required to obtain it depends heavily on caution. To get past a tenure committee, assistant professors are increasingly expected to produce at least on book, several scholarly articles, present papers at conferences, teach large introductory courses, and perform “service” to their institution, the last mainly by sitting on committees. (p. 146)

While seeing and articulating the value to promotion and tenure, Hacker & Dreifus contend that its significant challenge is the pursuit of promotion and tenure. It does not foster the same level of academic freedom desired with a tenured faculty position.

A common challenge for faculty, regardless of their motivation and perspective on tenure, is that tenure processes are not clear and not always standardized across disciplines or even within institutions. Tenure has been identified as a way to keep quality faculty and has provided a consistent, quantifiable way of determining quality (Youn & Price, 2009). It seems logical then that faculty members would want to have consistent assessment practices in determining quality professors. However, “tenure has come to be viewed as an instrument that shields the uncaring, incompetent, slothful, and duplicitous from corrective action” (Bogue & Aper, 2000, p. 171-172). While the function of tenure promotes academic freedom for those faculty having been tenured or currently pursuing tenure, perceptions of tenured faculty can be a negative perspective on the process of promotion and tenure.

## **Motivations**

It is apparent, given the structure of current faculty roles, that a prominent reason for individuals to become professors is academic freedom; it is a common value transcending discipline and institution for higher education in the United States (McInnis, 2010). Along with authority in their field of study and personal autonomy, “this is, for many, the major attraction of an academic career over more favorable salaries and conditions in other walks of life” (McInnis, 2010, p. 152). In a study of faculty at the University of Minnesota, Eckert and Williams (1972) found that internal motivations were prevalent in a faculty member’s choice for entering the profession. Additionally, Eckert and Williams reported that “among the prime reasons specified for choosing this field were a desire to work with college-age students, enjoyment of working conditions, keen interest in a particular subject, and an expectation that this career would be intellectually challenging” (p. 34). This also extended to choice in employing institution in that motivations for being a professor at one institution over another were intentional and related often to their interests in academia itself, such freedom and independence or contact with students (Eckert & Williams, 1972).

As research activities grew in significance for higher education and faculty, the intellectual challenges of research are perceived by faculty as stimulating, engaging, and overall, quite enjoyable. Consequently, faculty are incorporating additional motivations for entering the professoriate, “besides wanting to pass their knowledge on to the next generation and to get young people excited about ideas and learning, those who choose the professorial career do so because research attracts them”

(Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995, p. 116). McInnis (2010) connects this back to the motivation of faculty as fiercely independent people in that “the distinctive characteristic of academic identity associated with autonomy is the universal expectation on the part of individuals that they have the freedom to pursue their own intellectual interests. That is, they believe they should be able to decide what they will research and teach” (p. 153). This motivation of faculty, particularly with research, is paramount in pursuing the profession and especially in navigating it. In some cases, with responding to institutional reform, “individual autonomy in the workplace is vigorously defended even, in extreme cases, where it runs counter to the strategic goals of institutions or threatens the survival of academic departments” (McInnis, 2010, p. 147). The academic identity accumulated throughout the evolution of the faculty role places a significant emphasis on the autonomy of faculty, and is reinforced within individual faculty members in how they join the professoriate.

For academic faculty, there is no set path for entering the profession. McInnis (2010) notes that this socialization largely occurs in postgraduate studies and doctoral programs, however it begins with undergraduate education and, in some cases, earlier. During undergraduate studies, individuals begin to pursue academic interests and evaluate their skills and goals in life (McInnis, 2010). However, Eckert and Williams (1972) acknowledge that among their participants “serious consideration of college faculty service as a career goal came rather late, typically not until after the individual had graduated from college” (p. 34). Regardless of the moment when one identifies the professoriate as a vocation, the individual discipline for people “has long been

seen as the primary source of academic identities, an epistemic community with a distinctive culture in which there is a powerful dynamic between ways of knowing and ‘ways of being in the world’” (Henkel, 2010, p. 8). As institutional academic identities become increasingly more fluid for individuals, academic interest in one discipline may be less of a consideration for individuals in their reasoning for entering the professoriate (Henkel, 2010).

In 2003, Lindholm (2004) conducted a study on faculty motivations. She utilized Astin’s (1984) need-based socio-psychological model of career choice in informing her study about faculty and the factors that contributed to their career choice as professors. Background research for Lindholm’s study did not portray balanced information towards faculty motivations, with new studies conflicting with the previous characteristics established as potential determinants of faculty motivations. However, recent data has consistently showcased two common themes and attractors for individuals interested in the professoriate: challenge and freedom (Lindholm, 2004).

In her results, Lindholm (2004) saw two aspects emerge explaining the motivations of faculty entering the professoriate: (a) the need for autonomy, independence, and individual expression, and (b) the allure of university work environments. There were several faculty identified in the study, explaining the development of either of these two primary motivators: (a) early experiences and family influence, (b) undergraduate and graduate school experiences, (c) personal

competence, (d) intentional choice of profession and chance, and (e) mediating influence of environmental factors.

It is apparent that there is not one path for those desiring to become college and university professors. Linholm's (2004) study reflects a wide array of contributing factors explaining one's potential motivation for entering the professoriate. However, Lindholm acknowledged a few limitations to her study that this research attempts to address. First, the study consisted largely of older faculty members that began their careers before the 1980s. In addition, these participants had already undergone the tenure process. While that would not affect their reasons for entering the professoriate, it is a markedly different lens for the profession than for those currently pursuing tenure. Secondly, while studies have been conducted on career satisfaction of faculty, this study did not approach how the motivation of professors is maintained continually through the profession.

### **Satisfaction**

For the dim portrait they employ in describing faculty interests and motivations, Hacker and Dreifus (2010) found that faculty are not satisfied with their roles on campus for a variety of reasons. As also noted in this paper's introduction, Hacker and Dreifus (2010) saw incredibly low levels of job satisfaction for professors. This is not without reason. Dee and Daly (2009) found that "there appears to be a concomitant speed up in expectations for full time faculty work. Full time faculty are now working approximately 20% more (national average of 49 hours per week compared to about 40 hours in 1984), but are earning only 70% of the median salary

for other highly educated professions” (p. 9). Hacker and Dreifus (2010), in identifying reasons for lower satisfaction, continued to write, “in our travels, we’ve attended quite a few academic social functions. Whether we were in Berkeley or Boston, the talk was similar: the students are semi-literate; the schools’ president is anti-intellectual; the new parking rules are inequitable; and there’s this boorish colleague who filibusters at meetings” (p. 28). In 1972, Eckert and Williams found similar factors leading to dissatisfaction among faculty at the University of Minnesota: red-tape, poor facilities and attitudes of colleagues, and low salaries. However, with the vast majority of their participants, 84 percent, indicating that they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with being faculty, the Eckert and Williams study suggested that faculty had “reasonably good morale, with satisfactions with academic life quite decisively outweighing irritations and frustrations” (p. 26).

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA has also been compiling data about faculty. For the 2007-2008 cohort of academic faculty, HERI at UCLA (2009) found that 74.8 percent of faculty were satisfied with their career. Another important aspect to HERI at UCLA is the differences in job satisfaction between men and women, with men reporting greater levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, the study found that “male faculty are also much more likely than female faculty to be satisfied with their job security (80.8 percent vs. 72.8 percent) and their prospects for career advancements (57.7 percent vs. 49.9 percent)” (HERI at UCLA, 2009, p. 3). A much smaller percentage, 34 percent, believe they have a healthy balance between their work and personal lives (HERI at UCLA, 2009). Sorcinelli

(2007), in separate research, found that balance is a significant concern for faculty and those constructing faculty development programs. It is a factor that could be helpful in combating the stressful nature of a faculty position, particularly those in un-tenured roles, and improving overall job satisfaction.

Sorcinelli (1992, 1994, 2007) has focused much of her research and work on new and junior faculty, finding that satisfaction among new faculty is high for a majority of them. In particular, Sorcinelli (1994) notes that “satisfaction with the intrinsic rewards of the career (i.e., factors intrinsic to academic work itself and not dependent on external circumstance) is especially strong and consistent” (p. 474). In addition to intrinsic factors, work environment is additional source of satisfaction (Sorcinelli, 1994). Sorcinelli (1994) also found that faculty commitment to the intrinsic motivators of their profession remain high while their satisfaction may drop over time, with stress occurring as an ongoing issue.

Despite high levels of satisfaction, Sorcinelli (1994) also found that there is a growing number of new faculty feeling stressed in their role. In determining the causes for an increasing number of faculty stress, Sorcinelli (1992,1994) identified several key stress points for new and junior faculty: (a) not enough time, (b) inadequate feedback and recognition, (c) unrealistic expectations, (d) lack of collegiality, and (e) work-life balance. HERI at UCLA (2009) reported that sources of stress for faculty “were self-imposed high expectations (80.1 percent), lack of personal time (74.1 percent), and managing household responsibilities (72.7 percent)” (p. 4). A dominant concern for first-year faculty was isolation and the lack of concrete support from

senior faculty, leading to a less collegial environment than desired (Sorcinelli, 1994). Additionally, high self-imposed expectations from faculty, coupled and supported by departmental expectations, is an ongoing source of stress and pressure for new faculty navigating their role in an institution (Sorcinelli, 1994). While Sorcinelli (1994) found new and junior faculty identify a lack of feedback, recognition, and reward as critical for developing stress in their career, this is perpetuated for faculty through unclear criteria for promotion, tenure, financial assistance, and recognition. Primarily, faculty identified time, the lack of, and balance as the driving forces leading to stress and dissatisfaction with their role, often manifesting in external impacts such as marital stress, illness, and anxiety (Sorcinelli, 1994). While faculty, as they become more experienced, work to address balance in their lives, the “data also indicate that faculty were less satisfied with the balance between their work and nonwork life after being a faculty member for several years” (Sorcinelli, 1994, p. 476). With increasing sources of stress, more faculty are identifying stress as producing overall negative sentiments towards their vocation (Sorcinelli, 1994).

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory**

Lent et al. (1994) developed SCCT through key tenants of Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1989) wrote that “people are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental influences” (p. 1175). Lent et al. (1994) recognized this capacity of development and built in the dynamic aspects of behavior and development based on interlocking influences as central to SCCT. Consequently, SCCT was selected as the theoretical framework of



this study given its complex and dynamic nature of explaining career-entry point and encompasses both academic and career interests. It acknowledges the involvement of multiple, dynamic factors in influencing the interests and choices of individuals. The SCCT developed by Lent et al. (1994) consists of “three intricately linked aspects of career development: (a) the formation and elaboration of career-relevant interests, (b) selection of academic and career choice options, and (c) performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits” (p. 79). These three aspects of the theory often cyclically support and influence one another, in a capacity that supports individual development and choice. SCCT “emphasizes the role of self-referent thinking in guiding human motivation and behavior” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 81). It acknowledges the involvement of multiple, dynamic factors in influencing the interests and choices of individuals.

While complex, this theory was selected as a theoretical framework to inform this study as it addresses career-entry points and encompasses both academic and career related interests. There are several interrelated parts within SCCT, however this study focused on the three models developed by Lent et al. (1994) and are explained within this section of the literature review: (a) model of interest development, (b) model of career choice, and (c) model of performance. These models provided a framework for analyzing the themes found in this study. Additionally, this section also covers additional inputs recognized as valuable within the context of these three models.

However, before explaining the three models, there are socio-cognitive mechanisms from Bandura's (1986) theory that Lent et al. (1994) utilized in building the models: (a) self-efficacy, (b) outcome expectations, and (c) goal representations. These are salient factors contributing to the models informing this study. The first social cognitive mechanism is self-efficacy, which is described as judgment of one's ability to perform a task or do something (Bandura, 1986). The next mechanism, outcome expectations, postulates that individuals will act depending on the desirability of the anticipated outcome (Lent et al. 1994). The final mechanism used in SCCT is personal goals, describing one's determination to participate in a certain activity or to achieve a desired outcome (Lent et al. 1994). These mechanisms interact in various ways in each model to describe one's interests and choices in a career.

**Model of Interest Development.** Looking at a model of interest development through SCCT, Lent et al. (1994) postulate two ways the theory impacts one's career choice: (a) interests will reflect concurrent self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, and (b) interests will be shaped by vocational skills and abilities, which is influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs. Lent et al. (1994) defines vocational interests as "patterns of likes, dislikes, and indifferences regarding career-relevant activities and occupations" (p. 88). This process is one that is continual, however solidifying more as one reaches further development in a career area (Lent et al., 1994). Basically, through environmental exposure and engagement, one develops interests and skills which cyclically impact their self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). Essentially, an individual will be interested in a

vocation in which they perceive they have the ability to perform in that vocation. If someone participates in a set activity continuously and is successful at it, he may feel propelled to engage in that activity more due to his perception of success, further developing his interest. These concepts are, to some extent, causally related (Lent et al., 1994).

**Model of Career Choice.** Selecting a career requires more choices or considerations than simply selecting one job and doing it. An additional element Lent et al. (1994) built into SCCT is a more dynamic flow between interest development and career choice, focusing more on one's goals. Based on interest development, the individual develops personal goals and takes action to achieve that goal. Essentially, Lent et al. (1994) describe the model of career choice in a series of paths:

Self-efficacy and outcome beliefs jointly give rise to interests (paths 1 and 2). Interests, in turn, promote cognized career choice goals (i.e., intentions, plans, or aspirations to engage in a particular career direction) (path 3), which increase the likelihood of choice actions (e.g., declaring a correspondence academic major) (path 4). Choice actions (or 'entry behaviors,' in the parlance of Krumboltz et al., 1976) then lead to particular performance domains and achievement experiences (path 5), which may support or weaken efficacy and outcome percepts (path 6) and, ultimately, choice persistence. (Lent et al., 1994, p. 95).

Building on this framework, Lent et al. (1994) developed a few predictions regarding one's career choice, including (a) self-efficacy beliefs have both indirect and direct impacts on one's goals and actions, (b) outcome expectations have both indirect and direct impacts on one's goals and actions, (c) people will have goals for different vocational/academic fields developed through their interest areas, and (d) people may still maintain a certain profession if their goals are not met through the position. In

short, career goals may be influential elements for one's career choice but the two concepts are not committed to the other. Both may be influenced throughout the model and by other external factors, but choice reflects one's entry point into the profession. Through the action of determining and setting out to accomplish goals, the pattern of performance achieved by the individual will help to determine future career behavior (Lent et al., 1994).

**Model of Performance.** Defining the model as an expectancy/performance bidirectional link, Lent et al. (1994) describe the model of performance as one reflecting ability, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and performance goals as influential in determining one's performance attainment. The final model looks at the three social cognitive mechanisms (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals) and how they inform performance attainment and overall persistence for the individual. Essentially, the model postulates that successful performers will persist and that "successful performance will tend to enhance self and outcome perceptions, thereby strengthening one's interests and goals" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 98). Performance is identified as both individual accomplishments and overall persistence (Lent et al., 1994). Performance will be influenced, and in return influence, by one's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, in that "successful performance will tend to enhance self and outcome percepts, thereby strengthening one's interests and goals" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 98). In a cyclical capacity, ability and past performance will affect and influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations. These, in turn, will influence performance goals and consequently performance attainment, which will be then

perceived as one's ability or past performance (Lent et al., 1994). Through the model of performance, accomplishment and persistence will account for performance goals largely influenced by self-efficacy and outcome expectations, strengthening career interest (Lent et al., 1994).

**Personal, Contextual, Experiential Inputs.** A final element embedded within these models, impacting the predictions and assumptions of choice, are personal, contextual, experiential inputs. As Lent et al. (1994) describe, "these factors may serve as (a) precursors of sociocognitive variables, (b) moderators of certain key theoretical relations, or (c) director facilitators or deterrents (e.g., selection practices that restrict access to particular choice options)" (p. 101). It is here in the SCCT framework that additional individual differences and contextual situations are considered in how they influence one's self-efficacy beliefs or outcome expectations. For example, gender, race and ethnicity are considered contributors to choice as a result of social influence (Lent et al., 1994). Contextual determinants would address the opportunity structure available for one's career choice (Lent et al., 1994). These would include role model exposure, emotional and financial support for engaging some types of behavior over others, and structural barriers like discriminatory hiring practices (Lent et al., 1994). Some of the contextual determinants' influence may be subjectively determined by the individual. They still have some influence in the dynamic and ongoing career development consisting of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994).

**Theoretical Framework.** SCCT provides complex and dynamic analysis for understanding the ways in which individuals determine their vocational choice and persist within that choice. As this study seeks to explore the motivations, expectations, and experiences of tenure-track faculty, this theory helps to provide contextual knowledge about the contributing factors to motivation and expectations. Additionally, the SCCT is considered to be cognitively constructive in that the theory emphasizes “cognitive feedforward (as opposed to feedback-only) mechanisms, highlighting the importance of anticipation, forethought, and active construction of meaning in interaction with environmental events” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 87). While this study did not set out to test this theory, SCCT presents several factors to evaluate when reviewing the participants’ experiences in pursuing the professoriate. Lent et al., building off three socio-cognitive mechanisms, defined three models for career development. These models helped to inform the data collection and analysis and will again be addressed in Chapter V.

### **Summary**

As indicated throughout this chapter, research has often been conducted on various aspects of faculty. The literature review primarily covered: (a) an historical context and changes to the faculty role, (b) the current academic culture particularly as it relates to research and teaching, (c) the nuances of promotion and tenure, (d) faculty motivations, (e) satisfaction, and (f) Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory. The purpose of this study was to explore the individual experiences of faculty as it relates to their motivations and actual experiences within

the professoriate. In the literature review, past research was covered to understand faculty motivations, expectations, and experiences separately for the collective group of faculty, tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenured. Missing from the research is a better understanding the communities within faculty, such as those pursuing tenure distinct from tenured or adjunct faculty. Additionally, within this area of research, this study adds to this body of knowledge by looking at twelve tenure-track faculty individually in order to understand their unique experiences entering the professoriate and their connection between motivations, expectations, and experience.

### **Chapter III: Research Methods**

The purpose of this study was to explore the individual experiences of faculty as it relates to their motivations and actual experiences within the professoriate.

Primarily, the study sought to understand the motivations and expectations of those choosing to enter the professoriate as a career, and to learn how the answers compare with the actual classroom teaching and research experiences of these individuals.

Conducted as a qualitative study, the primary form of data collection for this research was in-depth interviews, supplemented by a study of existing literature.

This chapter discusses the research methods utilized within this study by providing details and analysis of its different elements, particularly (a) research questions, (b) research design, (c) study site, (d) participants and sampling, (e) data collection, and (f) data analysis, (g) strategies to ensure protection of human participants, and (h) limitations of the study.

#### **Research Question**

This research explored the question: Why do tenure-track faculty members choose the path of the professoriate? Subsidiary questions included: (a) What do current tenure-track faculty members believe is the purpose of the professoriate? (b) What are their expectations of the work they would be doing within the professoriate? And (c) Is what they do within their work consistent with their perceived purpose of the professoriate and their expectations of the work they would be doing? In conjunction with evaluating previous literature on the subject of faculty motivations



and satisfaction, the subsidiary questions were identified to seek answers addressing congruency between faculty expectations and realities.

### **Research Methodology**

This study assumed a relativistic understanding of knowledge. Individual faculty members have, in a sense, established respective perceptions, motivations, and expectations for their role within higher education and arguably these values may not be generalized in respect to an objective truth. Each participant creates a meaningful picture in exploring this area further and will ultimately provide insight into his desired role as a professor on a college campus.

Acknowledging this relativistic understanding, this study assessed and analyzed data with a constructivist paradigm. I am primarily interested in the complex process of knowledge and purpose construction, which is suitable to the constructivist approach (Creswell, 2009). Through this approach, I assumed faculty members have constructed their reasons for entering the professoriate, the purpose they see themselves fulfilling, and whether their experience has matched their expectations, under the influence of the faculty culture in which they work and their historical and social perspectives (Creswell, 2009). Ultimately, I am interested more in the individuals' experiences as they relate to their reasons for becoming professors and the congruency of their experiences to those reasons. This rests on the individual participant and the meaning each ascribes to the experience and not facts I can pull from the stories, prompting the constructivist design (Creswell, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perspectives, as a vital community in the university setting, their motivations, expectations, and experience, and touching lightly on current predicaments the community faces. Qualitative inquiry best supports the explorative nature of the question (Silverman, 2009). As the study was to understand the individual view of the participant, qualitative inquiry emphasizes the importance of participants and their views (Creswell, 2005). The method selected can provide an understanding of the multi-faceted reasons for individuals selecting academia as a career path and exploring how their path has met their motivating reasons. Loosely informed by ethnographic and phenomenological strategies about communities and culture, the study seeks to view and explore the beliefs and experiences of individuals within a community (Creswell, 2009). The community within this design consists of faculty members within the culture of a research institution experiencing the process of tenure. However, the constructivist paradigm of the study ultimately rejects that any epistemological significance from this community can be derived and that the data is not expected to be generalizable. In considering the significance of this study, this distinction is important to note as previous studies on faculty make determinations and conclusions about faculty as a collective, not as individuals.

### **Study Site**

The site selected for this study was a large public university in the Pacific Northwest and is a land-grant institution. For the remainder of this study, the site selected will be referred to as State University (SU) for the purpose of maintaining

confidentiality. Based on the updated classification system for The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2010), State University qualifies as a Research University (very high research activity). Given the high level of research produced by SU, its land-grant status, and the large undergraduate population of students, this site was selected as it would likely provide a desired sample size of faculty participants with multiple functions (research, teaching, service, extension) outlined in their job description. Additionally, given the faculty population, this site was selected because the participants of this sample would be able to offer data rich perspectives related to the research questions.

### **Participants and Sampling**

Participants were tenure-track faculty within a cross-section of academic disciplines at a research institution. With ongoing debates over the process of promotion and tenure and the faculty culture at research institutions, this study engaged faculty involved in the process of tenure to understand and provide insight to this ongoing discussion. Additionally, as the research institution is commonly perceived to be promoting the research function of faculty before teaching, this sample presents an opportunity to access a population potentially experiencing conflicting messages about its role in higher education (Tang & Chamberlain, 1997). Along with research from Sorcinelli (1992), which largely focuses on new and junior faculty and has found that the faculty not yet tenured are experiencing more stress than their tenured colleagues, the study placed emphasis on faculty members undergoing the

tenure process as they are actively pursuing the career path of becoming a full professor.

The twelve participants in this study were recruited from a research university. Through all departmental websites at the study site, I was able to identify those faculty currently pursuing tenure, from which I compiled a list of potential participants. This list was then referenced with the university's catalog to confirm the status of the potential participants. Each faculty member remaining on the list was informed of the study through an initial email soliciting faculty interest, and was invited to indicate interest in participating (Appendix A). Due to time restrictions of the study, twelve participants were selected from the sample.

After purposeful sampling was used to determine the recruitment list, sampling for maximum variation methods was utilized to narrow down the pool. For purposeful sampling, "researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2005, p. 204). This aspect of sampling was conducive in determining a sample that would be data-rich for the qualitative nature of the study and was done through identifying and soliciting interest from the tenure-track community at the study site. However, once this list was determined, the response of interested participants yielded more than twelve individuals. Thus, sampling for maximum variation was a strategy to build complexity into the study based on set characteristics by the researcher (Creswell, 2005). Within the sample, interview participants were determined by selecting for variation in gender and academic discipline among the first respondents to the initial recruitment

communication. This form of sampling was helpful in that it allowed for some variation within the potential pool while accommodating for the individual participant, placing emphasis on the individual experience and views more so than establishing fact about the general population collected from the sample.

Follow-up email communication was sent to the selected participants to confirm their desire to participate in the study and to arrange interview times (Appendix B). The Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) and an outline of questions (Appendix D) for the semi-structured interview were included as attachments in the email so faculty could determine, based on this information, if they would prefer to continue participation in the study. Additionally, this provided space to address participant questions about the study and confidentiality before arranging and confirming interview times.

### **Data Collection**

As the study was informed by a constructivist perspective, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the twelve participants, with the participants ultimately selecting the interview location. In the case where a participant did not want to interview in his or her faculty office and did not have a desired alternative location, I conferred with the participant and arranged a mutually preferable location for the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, consisted of open-ended questions, and lasted approximately ninety minutes in length. The purpose of the interview is to explore participants' thoughts at depth (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). This format was

conducive to creating space through open-ended questions that allowed for the participant to share their experiences openly and without forced responses (Creswell, 2005). This provided space for participants to address the primary questions of the study with as much detail as desired, expressing their personal views about the process of entering the professoriate and their experiences pursuing tenure. Additionally, Creswell (2005) notes that, “one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably” (Creswell, 2005, p. 215). This format served to be a good choice for the study in that each participant engaged in the interview questions and proved their own perspective to the questions, as desired by the research design.

Before the interview began, participants were provided with two copies of the Informed Consent Form (Attachment C), one for their records and one for them to review and sign. At this time, the purpose of the study was reviewed and time was allotted for participant questions before commencing with the study. Once the interview began, I loosely followed an interview script (Appendix E) developed from the outline of questions (Appendix D) distributed to participants during the recruitment and sampling process. Acknowledging that as the researcher I have inherent biases and perceptions about the nature of faculty work, a semi-structured interview format was desirable considering two factors: (a) to allow for the questions to be reviewed by a third party prior to the interview and (b) to allow for clarifying questions and flexibility in pursuing more participant-salient topics during the interview. The question outline was designed to promote participants’ reflection on

how their original impressions of faculty work informed their motivations and how their experiences in pursuing tenure may or may not connect back to their impressions and motivations. The outline of questions for the interview process was not tested by a pilot group but were reviewed by colleagues for clarity.

In addition to the data gathered from the one-on-one interviews, notes were taken in conjunction with the recorded interview, both of which were recommended to be used in data analysis (Creswell, 2009). This allowed for me to better absorb the content of each interview by noting the comments and portions that were salient within the span of the interview. Before coding the interviews, the notes were reviewed to help inform my understanding of the interview and perceive potential themes during the initial reading of the transcripts for coding (Creswell, 2005). Additionally, this process aided the transcription process in guiding my knowledge and understanding of each interview as they were transcribed.

Each interview was audio-recorded and I transcribed the full length for all of the interviews verbatim. The process of transcribing began immediately after the first interview and I continually worked on each new transcript in conjunction with ongoing interviews. To some extent, this continually informed my understanding of the research topic with each new interview.

Finally, as a means of confirming participant responses and protecting their confidentiality, copies of the original transcripts were provided to participants for review. This process, referred to as member-checking, allows participants to check for the accuracy of the transcript (Creswell, 2005). Nine of the twelve participants

provided feedback on the transcripts, ranging from no revisions to minor edits to grammar, and to a few requests for sections to be removed out of concern for confidentiality. At the request of each participant, their changes were made to the final copy of their transcript. Additionally, I found it useful and valuable in allowing participants to strike material they felt would potentially compromise their identity in the study, as that was a paramount priority throughout the duration of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected was used to develop thematic concepts introduced by the participants during the study. Congruent with the constructivist perspective, the transcripts and notes were reviewed for participant-introduced themes, identifying common terminology and concepts independently by the participants in response to the research questions (Creswell, 2005). As mentioned previously, I began by reviewing the notes for each interview to understand the direction of the interview before reading through. It helped me to get a general sense of each transcript, as recommended by Creswell (2005). For coding, I read through and bracketed key text of the transcript and, in sticking to the constructivist paradigm, coded the bracket with language and terminology utilized by the participant. The codes were then compiled into a list, first for each participant and then as a master list to determine themes across the sample. With the master list, I began to look for related terminology in order to narrow down the codes before reducing the data into six themes. After identifying the six themes present in the twelve interviews, I revisited the list of codes of each participant. In this process, I applied their individual codes within the context of each



theme in order to understand how each participant felt about the theme independently from the other interviews.

As a result, the data of the study will be presented in two formats: (a) an overview describing general and introductory content provided by the individual during the interview and (b) discussion of the six themes in relation to each individual participant. This presentation structure provides a conclusion to the study that addresses the research questions and reflects the constructive paradigm employed in the study to understand tenure track faculty motivations, expectations, and experiences.

### **Strategies to ensure protection of human participants**

Studying faculty within higher education presented interesting questions to consider regarding the confidentiality of participants, particularly as the selected community for this study has heightened concerns with job security. Thus ensuring the protection of participants' identities was a priority throughout the duration of the study. The design of the study, including all necessary materials such as the semi-structured interview script and the Informed Consent Form were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at SU to ensure the confidentiality of each participant.

As part of the protocol approved by IRB to ensure participant confidentiality, data was collected in a location selected or confirmed by the participant. Two participants opted for semi-public spaces while the rest were in private locations. The recordings for each interview were stored in a password-protected location and were

only associated to the participant through a code given to each during the sampling process. The identity of the participant was not included in the recordings or transcripts. For member-checking, the participants were permitted to select the format in which they received a copy of the transcript; each participant requested the transcript to be sent through email. A code key was used to track which transcript and recording belonged to the different participants, and the key was kept in a separate location from the transcripts and recordings. Finally, participants were permitted to strike any material from the transcript which could compromise their identity. Even if there was a small doubt expressed by the participant about a statement, it was struck. In order to address the data in the written description of Chapter IV, the participant codes were converted to pseudonyms that were randomly assigned to each participant, reflecting only a potential reference to the participants' gender. Additionally, no inferences were made in regards to data collected specific to academic disciplines.

### **Limitations of the Study**

**Presence of the researcher.** Creswell (2005) identifies the presence of the researcher in interviews as a potential limitation to the interviewing format of qualitative research in that participants' perceived biases and expectations of the researcher may impact their responses. This may impact responses in that participants will answer questions with the answers they think the researcher is seeking or is biased towards. There was an attempt to minimize this through the structure of the interview, allowing participants to select the location and time when applicable or desired, giving them more ownership of the experience. However, as nearly every participant asked if

I wanted to be a professor at some point in either the recruitment, interview, or review process, my presence is important to identify as a potential limitation to the study.

**Generalizability.** The design and paradigm of this study makes no intention of producing an epistemological determination out of the results. As such it is important to note the lack of generalizability resulting from this study. Creswell (2005) suggests about the constructivist perspective that “any conclusions developed are suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive” (p. 402). The strength of the perspective is that it emphasizes the individuals’ values and experiences over general facts about a community. While the study may not produce generalizable results that apply to all other faculty members, the study provides insight into the individual experiences of the faculty participants, some of which may be shared by others in similar circumstances. As mentioned previously in the course of the literature review, the study captures a perspective valuable to ongoing research, informing understanding of tenure track faculty and their motivations, expectations, and experiences.

**Personal Disclosure.** As the researcher, particularly within a study built on a constructivist research perspective, I brought my own beliefs, values, and ideologies to the research process that impact the study (Creswell, 2005). In response to hearing my topic and research questions, many people have asked if I am pursuing this research for personal reasons. Or in other words, do I want to become a professor myself? I do not. I have never been a faculty member and I have no prominent interest in becoming one. As reflected in Chapter I, my interest in the study was couched more in a desire to learn more about faculty experiences.

However, I do bring a set of beliefs about higher education to this study. Primarily, my graduate program is about students and student development. I am biased towards those interests and motivations reflecting student-centered frameworks. My assumptions about the nature of faculty work are merely built on snapshots of my previous professors. I knew the work was stressful, however I assumed that teaching and research would be two mutually exclusive concepts for each faculty member and as a result of tenure, a conflict between the two would be natural. The structure of my literature review reflects an assumed tension between motivations and experience, which is an aspect not uncommon in the research but may have also limited the focus and impact of this study. Lastly, I am continually alarmed, as an individual, at how significant vocational identity is in the context of our perceptions of happiness and success. Consequently, this bias was inherently present in the course of this study.

In order to minimize researcher bias, I refrained from sharing judgment of faculty regarding their choices, if I felt judgment about a particular response. This was supported through clear explanation of the focus of the study and through minimal participation on my part during the interview process. The questions were mostly pre-developed to evaluate for clarity and purpose in order to minimize bias. Lastly, each participant was provided an opportunity to review the transcript for confidentiality as well as for clarification to ensure what was being utilized as data best reflected their responses to the research questions.

## **Chapter IV: Results**

The goal of this study was to explore and understand the relative stories of faculty members, focusing on the possible congruence and incongruence between their motivations for becoming a professor and the reality of their current experiences. Overall, the intent was to develop a greater understanding and insight into individuals comprising the faculty of higher education and to consider their stories within the context of existing literature and theory.

This study was designed as qualitative research maintaining a constructivist paradigm on knowledge and truth. Conducted at a large, public, high-volume research institution in the Pacific Northwest, twelve individuals participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews speaking about their experiences becoming and being professors. The study was not designed or intended to provide concrete generalizations about a common faculty experience but, rather, to explore the realities of twelve unique experiences that inform understanding of this community.

This research aimed to explore the following question: Why do tenure-track faculty members choose the path of the professoriate? Subsidiary questions of the study included: (a) What do current tenure track faculty members believe is the purpose of the professoriate? (b) What were their expectations of the work they would be doing within the professoriate? And (c) Is what they do within their work consistent with their perceived purpose of the professoriate and their expectations of the work they would be doing?

This chapter presents data collected from the twelve participants in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data was collected through interviews, each ranging from fifty minutes to one hundred twenty minutes in length. Analysis of the data consisted of systematically identifying salient topics of consideration for each participant. Through the interviews, six general themes arose out of the discussion that address the research questions: (a) academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate, (b) working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession, (c) performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors, (d) involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor, (e) choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity, and (f) working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession. These themes are explained within the context of each participant interview and addressed individually by shortened references: (a) academic lifestyle, (b) positive impact, (c) performance, (d) academic community, (e) job opportunity, and (f) reconciliation.

This study also assumes a relativistic understanding of knowledge. Individual faculty members have, in a sense, established respective perceptions, motivations, and expectations for their role within higher education and the study addresses these values in a capacity that is not to be generalized in respect to an objective truth. In

short, each participant's answers are unique to the participant and treated as such. While general themes of the salient issues throughout the interviews became apparent, each participant created a meaningful picture that provides insight into motivations and experiences entering the professoriate.

As such, this chapter is organized to address and explain each theme by presenting the participants and their interviews individually. Each participant is presented in distinct sections, addressing the general content of the interview and their relation to the themes. Additionally, the interviews and data are presented mainly utilizing the direct quotations of the participants. This is done within the context of the constructivist paradigm, utilizing the language of the interviewees to grasp their understanding of the questions posed in the research.

### **Participants**

There were twelve participants in this study from SU, ranging from a variety of academic disciplines. In order to protect confidentiality, the disciplines listed are not identified specific to the institution's colleges and programs but rather to the generic discipline description. As all of the participants are tenure-track faculty, they also represent a range of years of experience pursuing tenure at SU. The year included in demographic information is the year in which the participant began their role as an Assistant Professor pursuing tenure and entered the professoriate in the capacity the study sought.

**Table 1 – Participant Demographics**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Entrance Year</b>
<b>John</b>	Social Science	2005
<b>Evan</b>	Applied Science	2006
<b>Scott</b>	Natural Science	2009
<b>Josh</b>	Humanities	2008
<b>Alison</b>	Applied Science	2006
<b>Tim</b>	Applied Science	2007
<b>Anna</b>	Applied Science	2009
<b>Tyler</b>	Applied Science	2008
<b>Amy</b>	Applied Science	2006
<b>Marie</b>	Formal Science	2009
<b>Nicole</b>	Applied Science	2005
<b>Kate</b>	Humanities	2008

This information is provided as a reference point. Previously mentioned, this study focused primarily on the individual experiences and how the experiences related to the themes, which is discussed according to each participant.

**John.** John is an Assistant Professor in a social science field at State University (SU). He entered the professoriate at the suggestion of an advisor, after looking for job options upon completing a PhD program. Initially, John was not convinced that being a professor was right for him as he was interested in working in a corporate setting, then for a non-profit. His advisors encouraged him, though, to consider academia, thus propelling his interest in pursuing a career in the professoriate.

While he did not have many expectations of his position, other than hoping it would be a positive one, John found that being a professor has not been different from his experiences as a graduate student. He was not originally interested in teaching or researching but as he stated, “When you come out of graduate school, you don’t have



a lot of experience and you don't really have a strong core belief of what it means and why you really want to be that, at least I didn't." His experiences so far, as a tenure-track professor, have shaped his motivations for being a professor and his ongoing expectations.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

Upon suggestion from an advisor, John began to consider the lifestyle factors of working as a professor, primarily flexibility. His advisors encouraged him to pursue the professoriate as an option, describing the environment as intellectually stimulating and potential good fit for him. He knew from his PhD program that it would consist of limited structure, unlike working for a corporation, and that the profession is more result-driven. Additionally, he expected this to be the case of his position as he observed the lifestyle from his professors, noting that "you have to do more stuff but you still retain that flexibility." While initially he was not really interested in teaching or research, he has found that an enjoyable aspect of his position is the intellectual freedom and flexibility of teaching and research. "You can tinker with all these little dials." Thus, these qualities of the lifestyle associated with academic work as faculty were motivators for John in considering the professoriate as a career. As a teacher he can decide how to structure his courses and what to teach, and as a researcher he can select his topics, how to conduct his research, and the audience he can target, among other things. However, he has found, given the nature of his position, that there are challenges to this flexibility related to time and funding. Consequently, he shared that

he often prioritizes teaching over research as time cannot be recovered, indicating that students do not perceive the research demands but will recall an unavailable professor.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* During the interview, John often referenced the difference between his motivations when entering academia as a professor and his current motivations, discussing how he has grown into the role and stating that he is now “more interested in the education aspect of it.”

If I were in the corporate world and you write a paper and that’s all you do, I don’t know how much you positively contribute to society. So I think that teaching and that education component is very meaningful. That is something I wouldn’t want to miss.

The impact of the work he does, as a professor, has a tremendous impact on people, even within the University setting, such as sitting on a scholarship committee. For him, the contribution exists throughout his role, with both teaching and research.

While the contribution in teaching is immediate and directly related to the students in the classroom, the target audience for research is different and bigger in scope. “The impact is potentially much larger with research than with teaching, it’s just harder to measure.” The immediacy of the impact with teaching compared to the scope of research contributes to how he proceeds within his role as a professor.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* John indicated early in the interview that he was encouraged by advisors to pursue this career path, noting that it would be a good environment for him. In his role, comments about performance were largely apparent in his discussion of teaching. He completed a teaching certificate, along with his PhD,

and has since maintained an interest in continually developing his skills in teaching methods, sharing that the quality has improved in the classroom. Also, he shared that he is flexible with his courses, as it relates to size, but it does influence his perceptions of the easiness of his role as a teacher. For example, for larger courses, “If a student doesn’t do well, I don’t feel as bad versus in the small class where one out of twenty doesn’t do well, I feel bad.” He notes that he simply cannot do more for each student in the larger class. Additionally, another challenge to the teaching component of his position is that there is not enough time to teach the students what they really need to learn and that the university provides a lot of distracting, while worthwhile, opportunities to students beyond the classroom.

Good teaching takes a lot of time to prepare a meaningful experience for the students, make a meaningful class, meet with them in office hours, etc. That’s directly in contrast to where the University places the emphasis on your evaluation.

However, John also believes these challenges are similar for most institutions, maybe just more pronounced in one or another, and his overall experience and outlook is still positive.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* While past advisors and professors have contributed to John’s motivation and perception of his role as a professor, he addressed the impact of his current colleagues in understanding and improving his role. In explaining the support he has for the challenges of his position, John said, “I think there is always somebody you can go and talk to.” However, he also acknowledged that he holds no expectations that each person he approaches can

solve a problem about which he is concerned, but the support is there. Support from his peers in the community, such as through cross-discipline workshops at SU, has contributed to his learning and understanding of his work, and valuing input from others. “I have had evaluations here, not as much as I would like but I’ve got to realize it’s my coworkers that would do it and they are busy too.” The community is important in the extent that people can participate, and this is a support, while not often immediately provided, he seeks it out if needed.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* John described perceptions of academia compared to industry as influencing his decision to apply for tenure-track postings. He perceived that by not starting in academia, it would imply a negative connotation about his credentials for academic work. This perception partly motivated his decision to apply for tenure-track positions if possible. He said, regarding his entrance into academia, “Some people know they want to become a faculty member and other people, they are not sure. In the end they look for a job.” Also affecting his job considerations was availability, and that he did not have much opportunity to weigh types of institutions and the research/teaching split of different postings. “If you have an opportunity to apply for a tenure-track position, that’s what you do; even if the split is not a hundred percent what you want.” Ultimately, he found there were not a lot of choices for his discipline, so evaluating the institution’s mission or the distribution of work duties became a secondary consideration.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* In discussing his expectations and current experiences, John often talked about realizing the necessity of structure and order (compared to complete freedom) and how this is an influence on his current understanding of his role. He identified a challenge related to balancing expectations of teaching and research, and that to do better in one would mean less in the other and potentially losing personal time. However, he understood that the positive and negative aspects of the position are a part of the structure anticipated in his role. "In the end, you choose your role in life, your position as an educator. You recognize that structure, you recognize the structure has you work in a particular way for a particular reason." He shared that he has grown into his position and this is an emergence. Overall, it did not impact his outlook on being a professor because as he said, "you just make it work for you."

**Evan.** Evan is an Assistant Professor in an applied science at SU and is going up for tenure soon. In answering a question about why he wanted to be a professor, he said, "This is going to sound like a very bizarre answer. I never really clearly thought about that." Through his experience during undergraduate education, pursuing a Masters and then a PhD, Evan found himself drawn to the academic and intellectual questions of his field.

Throughout his interview, Evan often discussed the high-stress nature of his position as a tenure-track faculty member, causing him to think more intentionally

about his career path. With research and teaching, his role is to inspire and education future generations. In doing this, he did not have many expectations other than he would have set classes to teach and would be expected to do research and perform for the University. However, in his experience, he has encountered perceptions that tenure-track faculty need to do more work for less incentive. He expressed his incentives to do quality work largely come from ones he places on himself as the institution provides only limited incentives. “It fosters the bad parts of being driven, not necessarily the good parts” and his perception is that many conversations focus on research and budget; this can be demoralizing. However, his perception is that this it is a great profession and he needs to learn how to balance more.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

Evan explained he kind of morphed into being a professor and that it is not something he originally considered much. However, he did describe motivations for eventually choosing to enter the professoriate. “The one thing that attracted me to academia was that you don’t have to work for one particular boss, per se.” Additionally, he also liked the idea of having flexibility within the position to schedule his time, for example, if he wanted to take a vacation during the summer. In his expectations, once he was hired to the tenure-track position at SU, he knew that he would have some courses to teach and would need to conduct research. Given the expectations of his position and his work ethic, he has found his current lifestyle as a professor is not sustainable. The potential of working eighty-plus hours per week was not something he realized would be a factor of his position. “I thought there were would be a little bit more breathing

time and time for intellectual pondering and creative thought. It isn't. There is so much demand for time." Along with pressures he describes as having to do more for less, he is attempting to scale back the time committed to the position. As he initially more or less fell into the position, he stated he has thought more intentionally about his career path realizing the position is not sustainable as it stands.

He also shared that it is nice he has not been told by the university specifically what to cover in his classes or how to deliver the material, or even what to research. However, that is not to say that as a professor he feels he is completely free to conduct his work without regard for the institution. He recognizes there are some politics that influence academic freedom at a university, and that it is important to be cognizant of how choices influence tenure.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* While he did not mention making a positive impact, his focus in teaching and research comes back to education. "I believe in the land-grant mission in terms of helping governments and policy makers, in using research and generating students that can help in that arena. I believe in the overall land-grant mission." A positive contribution is made through his work at a land-grant institution that "isn't just for the ivory tower of intellectual, academic pontification." Through research and teaching, Evan's perception of his role is that he is able to facilitate change with governments and local communities, as well as to help students be prepared to work in these agencies.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* In discussing how his undergraduate experience connects to his path to the professoriate, Evan shared that initially he did not do well but this changed as he started to get more interested in his field. This interest propelled him to pursue a graduate education where he was introduced to research. During this first graduate program, he was presenting some of his research data when he saw that key faculty were interested in the work he was doing, and they invited him to work on his PhD. His early performance connected him to work that he found was similar to academic work as a professor. He explained that there has not been a big jump between the work he was doing during his PhD and the work he is doing now as a professor, which contributed to morphing into the professoriate.

As noted, he indicated throughout the interview that his current position is high-stress and not sustainable. From one stand point he finds himself worrying about perception and whether he could turn a project or task down on the tenure-track. The lack of standards or metrics for determining what constitutes distinction in the promotion and tenure process has contributed to his high levels of productivity. However, he also acknowledged that the stress is, in part, his experience because he is driven. He mentioned that people were worried he might burnout. “I inherently like what I do and I am productive with what I do, and I’ve got a lot of things going on, and that leads to high output.” High output, though, has been part of his experience in academia since his graduate programs and has persisted as a faculty member.



*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* While he was not immediately interested in becoming a professor, he was convinced by a key person in his field to continue beyond his Masters and to pursue a PhD. During his PhD, which he finished in a short time, he was able to accomplish a lot. He partly attributed this to his major advisor. However, this level of involvement from an advisor or mentor did not transfer over to his experience starting as a tenure-track professor. “The department I was hired into ... was like ‘Here’s your office and off you go.’ No mentorship at all.” This did not give him an opportunity to approach his position and work with a mentor regarding tenure decisions or to get advice from senior faculty.

Beyond the community within his department, Evan identified his colleagues within his field as helping him to understand his position as a professor. “I am comparing my own internal metrics with colleagues around the U.S. and internationally, not this university.” His perception and standards for the position are informed by his understanding of the work being done by the community of colleagues in his field on a national and international level.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* As mentioned previously, Evan felt that he fell into working as a professor. However, he did interview for several faculty positions as he was finishing up his PhD. In pursuing open positions as a professor he had a list of openings in which he was interested. “I was particularly interested in the land-grant and staying at a land-grant, simply because in my discipline, people doing what I do are typically only found at land-grant

institutions.” While Evan looked primarily at land-grant institutions for academic reasons, he also considered SU as it was regarded to be a renowned school for his field. “The balance is that academic side of it and the reputation side of it with personal issues.” Part of his job selection also looked at location in terms of being close to family and being comfortable with the West. Unlike other participants, there seems to have been more opportunity for him to consider alternative factors to a position beyond availability.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one’s motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* “It’s still a great profession because of the freedom and the lifestyle.” Evan still finds that the position is great in that he can do the research he wants and teach how he wants, and take time off if needed. However, as he is driven, this isn’t always the case. Balance for him within the role is difficult. “I run everything in crisis moment - what’s due tomorrow is what I do now; with the exception of teaching, which I do ahead of time.” He had an expectation that he would have more time to read and to critically think about ideas. Additionally, his perception of the faculty role is not often represented in the larger context of working within the department and sitting at faculty meetings, where the primary focus of conversation is research and budget. He described this aspect as demoralizing. Being in academia, for Evan, it is “a game of persistence and patience.” Essentially, he concluded that the politics of the role can diminish flexibility and academic freedom, but his perception is those qualities will come back to the position with greater balance and tenure.

**Scott.** Currently in the early part of the tenure process and his career, Scott is an Assistant Professor in a natural science discipline at SU. Driven by a passion and strong interest in his particular field, Scott saw academia as a way of exploring and answering questions within his field as well as being able to create new knowledge. He is not particularly interested in the role of professor but more so in the aspects of the role that allow him to pursue his research interests. As such, he expressed less hesitancy compared to other participants about not being successful with the pursuit of tenure.

He expects that his relationship with the university will operate like a business arrangement in that this position affords him the opportunity to do what he wants to do in trade for contributing to university needs, such as teaching and service. As such, his expectation of teaching was that there would be less. In his case, he found the demands on time to be greater than expected, whereas there are floating obligations related to teaching and service not explicitly outlined as expectations. However, he is still able to pursue his motivations for entering the professoriate, it is just a matter of increased time needing to be invested into his role.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

“I didn’t want to have a boss. I wanted to be able to work on whatever I wanted to work on; solve any problem that I wanted to solve.” For Scott, his motivations for entering the professoriate with regards to the academic lifestyle of a professor is strongly related to the notion of academic freedom, which he feels is something he has within his position. He did not bring up flexibility within the position during our

conversation; he focused instead on the freedom to do what he wants within his position. Part of the reason Scott feels he is here as a professor is his positive impression of his graduate academic experience in that it was a very intellectually stimulating place and was research oriented. Consequently, his desire and understanding of the lifestyle center around research and impacts how he approaches his work.

As mentioned earlier, Scott shared that there are time constraints to teaching beyond lectures, office hours, and a review session that impact time given to research. There is maintaining email and addressing student requests to meet when he is not available. This takes away from research, which is part of the academic freedom component that motivated him to pursue this path. However, this does not directly conflict with the lifestyle attributes he identified as desirable, such as working on the issues he wants to solve. An additional challenge he identified to these motivations is limited funding to do research and that the facilities are old, changing how things are done for research. Existing as a challenge, he still felt this did not usurp his work:

But for the most part we are doing just fine as far as research goes. There's little operational things that we do because it's [State University] and because we have to do it on a tighter budget than if you were at [another university] and if you had all this money you could just go buy new everything. You would spend money to solve problems. We don't often spend money to solve problems. We solve problems to save money.

It can be maddening to fight the nature of the position and the lack of balance. For the most part, he feels the freedom he wanted entering the professoriate but there are aspects he sees that can wear people down, which is further discussed in the Reconciliation Theme.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* Scott's draw to being a professor is being able to solve problems in research. "For me, it's working on complex [natural science] problems and solving them, creating new knowledge, training new students to work on these problems." Part of it is related to achievement in creating knowledge no one else has built, but the position provides access for him to create something measurable in research. However, when it comes to teaching, he described the purpose of his role is to "deliver knowledge not unlike a fire-hose delivers water." It is to present information directly relevant to a student's degree. "I don't think the role is to be somebody that is going to inspire people to go do things." While the idea of being a role model in the classroom and inspiring passion on a subject is a potentially nice component of the position and something he tries to do, this is not something he feels is within the realm of his official role.

Like other participants in the study, the land-grant status of the institution has become a key aspect of this theme addressing one's potential impact. The land-grant status is something that he likes in that he feels he serves a community teaching students within his field. "That's kind of important to me, to be at a place where it's a big public university serving the state." In searching for positions, Scott was largely attracted to public universities as they are spaces that are more service-focused.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* Scott described his graduate program as very research oriented. The overriding message of his program is that "one should work on hard

problems. One should do research and create new knowledge. And that's sort of the important part of what we do." Additionally, there was a focus on leadership within the field and he found that his professors were leaders in the field, contributing to a sense of seeking achievement in research. So far, he has found a few challenges to doing research but he feels that this process has been going fine. And ultimately when it comes to his interests and motivations as a professor he states, "If this doesn't work out, I don't solve any problems and they throw me out of here, there's all kinds of other stuff that I'd like doing."

This theme heavily translates into the teaching component of his position; his knowledge within his field has helped his performance in teaching and by being able to communicate this knowledge effectively to students, he finds it is an important and enjoyable factor to his role. "You sense this engagement and interest. So sometimes you get it, the interest is there. Students will tell me, 'This is my favorite class; it's also my hardest but it's my favorite class.' You get the sense that students appreciate how cool it is, and I like that." When he is able to connect with students, his outlook on this aspect of the position is more enjoyable. However, if connecting with students persists as a challenge and getting students to do work continues to be hard, this is something he perceives will negatively impact his outlook on the profession.

***Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.*** As previously mentioned, Scott came from an intellectually stimulating environment that emphasized research and being a leader in the field. As such, his standards for the community,

particularly students, are based on his experiences. However, Scott has not found the same level of standards among his students here, which is generally fine. In addressing questions about support on this matter, Scott has found the environment at SU to be a supportive one. “The support comes from certain individuals, colleagues of mine that have become friends, and that I can rely on.” He also had no formal mentor starting in the tenure-track position, however, this did not come up as an issue for him. His understanding of his position and the expectations associated with it were formulated by observing faculty in his previous institutions.

His perception is that professors are managers within the academic community, “managing what happens in the classroom, what should be taught, what the curriculum really should be, what the graduate students are learning.” Part of that role also is to be involved in the social, academic, and cultural dynamics of the institution, in a way that is accessible and active within the community. Professors are participants in the greater University community. With that said, in the institution, he also jokes that untenured faculty are at the bottom of the pile, “At the very bottom, the person that does whatever the undergrad wants for them, the person that gives the graduate students whatever they want, the people that do all the crap jobs that the other faculty don’t want to do, the workhorses.” Within the institutional community, his perception of the tenure-track position is one heavily loaded with work. This aligns with his experiences of having to invest extensive time into his position than what he originally expected, given the increased expectations of his role in the greater institutional community.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* When Scott started applying for jobs as he wrapped up his PhD, he looked for available openings and found several. However, once the interview process started up, the recent financial apocalypse had taken hold and so that many of the openings sort of vaporized. He then had one interview at a university and one offer, and that is the position he took. Working at a public university was an important quality for him but when looking at what was available for jobs the economical situation of the country made the job search process challenging. In evaluating the missions of an institution, he found it as just another aspect to the institution, part of the business arrangement a faculty makes with the institution. Lastly, there were options outside academia that he pursued minimally, but Scott knew that he wanted to be a university professor more than these options and subsequently pursued openings at colleges and universities.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* Ultimately the title associated with being a professor is not something that Scott has found to be important but rather would move on to another career if he did not achieve tenure at SU. Overall, though, he is still committed to pursuing this profession and tenure. There are challenges associated with this position, such as balancing expectations with both research and teaching, and while it is flexible, there is a significant demand on time. He does not perceive a conflict between teaching and research but shared that both functions increase the time he invests into his position. To succeed in this position, Scott suggested the important



factor was research and that wanting to teach is not sufficient as a motivator to navigate the tenure-track expectations.

I think that if you really don't want to create knowledge, in science at least, if you don't want to work on the hard problems, then all this stuff, then all this bad stuff that would grind you down, will become overwhelming and it will defeat you. If you're committed to research and learning new things, then I think that that can trump all the bad things.

As his primary interest is research, this has helped him to contextualize the additional expectations of his position. He has maintained a sense of realism about his job, knowing that it can make someone cynical. Instead of taking a minimalist approach and saying he is only being charged to do a certain set of tasks, his approach is that the work he does for a university allows him to do what he wants, research. If there are expectations placed on his shoulder that fall outside the realm of his position, he reconciles these expectations by simply making the most of it.

**Josh.** At SU, Josh is an Assistant Professor in a humanities discipline.

Motivated by his academic interests in his field, which he developed through professor encouragement and pursuing advanced degrees, he transitioned into the professoriate as a career. In his position research is very important, however, he also enjoys his role as a teacher, liking how the course experience and working with students can challenge and impact their minds as well as challenge the academic canon. Still trying to find the right balance of duties given time constraints and budget challenges, his overall experiences so far have been excellent and congruent with his expectations.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

In discussing motivations for entering the professoriate, certain attributes of the

lifestyle associated with being an academic arose as primary motivators for Josh, particularly independence. “I guess, first of all, this is really where I can pursue my own interests, especially in the research field, exploring things and doing things.” For him, it is the notion of being able to set his agenda and not having to be told what and how to do things. This independent style and thinking translates into his approach to course design. He develops courses in a manner to challenge the academic canon in his field while still developing the necessary skills of his students for their degree.

I have the liberty of shaping these classes anyway I want them to and that I can change things around. I don't have to really listen to someone else telling me which books to use, what to do at what point.

This level of flexibility within his courses has been an enjoyable component of his position so far. There is a balance to this, though, he addresses in that while he likes not necessarily having to have something done by a certain point in the term, there is consideration that must be given to colleagues. His colleagues will have expectations about what students learn from his courses, which is not the only issue to balance against complete freedom in the lifestyle of an academic. Another factor about which he spoke is having to balance time devoted to the multiple expectations of the position, such as teaching, advising, and service. This undercuts potential time devoted to research, limiting some of the original motivations for entering the profession. Essentially, even with the liberty and flexibility associated with the lifestyle, there are still important expectations to fulfill as he pursues tenure.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* This theme was

not prevalent during Josh's interview, however, it was addressed in his approach to course design and teaching. His expectation of his role as a professor was hoping to help students discover new things. As such, he designs his courses to be student-centered. Students, through evaluation and contribution, take ownership of the courses and sometimes make determinations on what material should be covered. Consequently, a significant reward to teaching for Josh is the long-term impact on students, seeing that students have learned and applied the material covered in his courses. The positive impact he has had as a teacher is an enjoyable aspect for Josh in reflecting on his profession.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* Josh was one of the only participants who attended a PhD program that included a training component on teaching. Whereas participants often discussed being trained to research, being taught how to teach was a helpful component of his graduate program.

I never have a problem coming up with a lesson plan or changing things on the fly because they didn't work in the classroom. I have never felt uncomfortable speaking in front of three hundred people or being asked a question that you cannot answer, things like that. I think graduate school prepared me well.

Consequently, he has a level of comfort in remaining flexible with his courses that connects to the flexibility and independence desired in pursuing this profession. This sense of confidence is also apparent in his research experience. He now feels the increased pressure to publish associated with being a professor, unlike his experience in graduate school, but this is a nice challenge in part because of advancing and growing in the profession. "The more engaged you become in your field, the more you

meet people, the better you network, the easier it becomes to do your research.” His experience with research, like teaching, has not been beyond his expectations as he feels capable and successful in conducting research, thus not negatively affecting his outlook on the position.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* Josh identified past professors as influential in understanding the role of faculty and shaping his expectations of being in the professoriate. During his Masters program, his mentor encouraged him to consider getting a PhD, something he had not previously considered. As far as looking at the professoriate as a career and what contributed to thinking of it as an option, Josh said, “It was probably the experience, the graduate school experience, and my mentors, my professors, who contributed to that. So it kind of evolved throughout the course of my graduate studies.” In general, his professors positively contributed to him moving forward with his studies in his field, leading to his career choice. It was “the personal contact to my professors, the willingness to work on my projects and my interests, just helping me to form my ideas, to develop my ideas, to put my ideas on paper, to share my ideas.” It was the openness, being flexible, and the go-to people for him during his program. Now as a professor, observation of his mentors during graduate school and seeing what his colleagues in the field are doing currently help to shape his perception on the role he has as a researcher. “They influence what I do or the way I do it, or how I decided to distinguish myself from what they do, sort of carving out your niche in your field.”

His academic community has evolved, somewhat, but there is an ongoing influence coming from other individuals within it.

As a suggestion to faculty development, Josh spoke about work his college at SU has done in better connecting junior faculty. It was something he had found helpful, exploring opportunities for research and supporting students through meeting with other junior faculty. Extending the network, or at least making it more consistent, to help junior faculty with the transition from being a graduate student to becoming a professor was a possible next step Josh identified for SU to build upon in improving faculty development.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* During the interview, Josh spoke about stiff competition for open positions in his field, stating, “In my field, basically, you have to take what you get.” He set some parameters about the type of institution at which he would work, with a goal of being employed at a research institution. Additionally, he excluded all institutions that were known in his field for lacking academic freedom. The consideration he had was that while an institution with a high-teaching concentration is an option, he knew he wanted to be in a position where there was some research. Beyond these parameters, he went for anything. Even though there was competition in pursuing job opportunities, the lack of opportunity was not as extensive, giving him more choice in the job search process. He had other offers for faculty positions and there were additional factors related to the position at SU that made it an attractive choice. In his job search process, there

was some opportunity to make a determination about motivations and fit when evaluating job opportunities.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* In his current position as an Assistant Professor, Josh does feel some pressure, such as with publishing. However, he does not feel that his role is “publish or perish.” “I never felt that way because I think if you enjoy your research then I guess, to some extent, it comes automatically.” The pressures associated with fulfilling his job functions were things he expected in the position and subsequently he does not feel a burden that may be associated with the tenure-track position. There is not a strong theme of having to reconcile incongruencies between his motivations, expectations, and experiences. He did mention, though, there is a degree of balancing the picture he has of teaching versus the realities at a university. While he has his ideal perceptions of how teaching functions, he acknowledged there are certain challenges to be expected as a professor, such as budgetary concerns, university politics, and student interest. He may construct his courses in a manner that is student-centered and owned, however he cannot be sure his students will always take him up on this process. In short, looking at his expectations and experiences for his position, Josh reconciles the enjoyable and challenging aspects. He likens this aspect of his position to working the system, something he had to figure out that is like a corporate agency in how people work their ways up ladders. And overall, Josh finds that he still likes the position.

**Alison.** Alison, an Assistant Professor in an applied science field at SU, really liked the idea of research and was primarily motivated to continue advancing in her academic studies so that she could do research. “It was a love of research and then being exposed to all these fantastic questions that led me to graduate school.” However, after becoming a tenure-track professor, Alison explained that she felt a greater sense of desperation in her position. Her area of expertise has become increasingly narrow that it seems academia is the only career option. “Before it was a lot more ideological and now it’s a lot more economical. I mean I’ve painted myself into a corner a little bit.” She also described coming to enjoy the positive reinforcement of teaching later in her career. Her approach to the interview centered on a positive, ideological basis for academic work yet affected by other overwhelming conditions. As such, there was a lot of tension and conflict present in her navigating the realities of her current position. “We are getting into something that doesn’t pay well but that you get to make a difference in the world, and you do get to shape your career, if you’re good enough.” Despite this internal conflict, Alison finds value in her work and has motivations grounded in an ideological connection to research and academia.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

Freedom was one of Alison’s reasons for entering academia as a professor. “It’s probably one of the most flexible positions to be an independent researcher. You get to call the shots. It’s very stressful and it’s all on you to make or break it; there is no safety in that.” Alison expressed that her tendency to be an independent thinker led

seamlessly to a path in research. The academic lifestyle to which she ascribes is one that is conducive to her desires and goals in research, serving as a motivator for entering the professoriate. Additionally, she expressed strong views about tenure being important to the freedom associated with the lifestyle of a professor and that tenure is necessary in ensuring the job security that inspires academic ingenuity. The challenging aspect is where she is working on some unconventional topics and does not have tenure:

I don't have tenure so I'm not particularly safe, and I was warned a little bit about going into controversial stuff before I got tenure. But then again, you are not going to get tenure if you just kind of hang back and become a wallflower.

So while the freedom and independence associated with the lifestyle motivated her to become a professor, she acknowledges a challenging tension inhibits the desired lifestyle through her experience pursuing tenure.

Also impacting her outlook on being a professor, Alison finds that instead of doing the research she wanted to do as a professor, she is doing more administering by conducting grant and personnel management than what she expected. "Now I am being pulled in 500 different directions at the same time and the thing that I tend to give up is the stuff that got me here in the first place, which is a bit ironic." This stuff, conflicting with the lifestyle she originally desired, is something she identifies as important and necessary, however, she now does not have the time to do those things she really finds fun and motivating about her position.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* During her



interview, Alison did not identify the potential of having a positive impact in her motivations for becoming a professor but the theme did arise in discussing how having an impact makes the work enjoyable. She sees that her work, with research and working with graduate students and data, has a positive impact. “And the work that we do, I think, is really important and that it contributes to the greater good. So we are putting stuff out every year that makes the world better.” Her position is not always positive or congruent with her motivations, thus the positive impact she associates with her work helps with her persistence in the profession. “You’ve got to believe in what you’re doing. You’ve got to believe you are giving to the greater good or else you will not make it.” It is not just about teaching and it is not just about research but there has to be something else. Her motivation originally was freedom associated with the lifestyle, which she feels could be found elsewhere. Through her experience, though, teaching grew as an enjoyable aspect of being in the professoriate.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* Alison’s outlook so far in the position has been largely influenced by her feelings of self-efficacy and internal perceptions of her performance as a professor in both teaching and research. For teaching, her motivator is to do it well. “Nothing motivates me in teaching a course except for to do it well and to do it to the best of my ability.” And for research, it is something she expected to be good at, to some degree, in her position.

In her experience, though, teaching has been a positive drawing aspect to the position. “Well I am good at it [teaching]. So, anytime you are good at something, you

want to incorporate in your life, in a lot of cases.” Unlike her experiences with research, which often has many rejections and negative feedback, teaching provides positive reinforcement in her career, which she finds to be nice. Teaching is also easy because, like with many academic fields in universities, she can teach to her expertise, building upon her knowledge and strengths in constructing a course. She still thinks teaching can be challenging and time-consuming, adding to her worries and stress with tenure. Thus she talked about how she does the best she can at teaching and finds herself investing a lot of time into it.

If I was smart, and I’ve been told this, I would put less time and effort in my teaching and that would give me more reserves for my research. So that’s a mistake that might probably come back to bite me in the ass.

Research, though, has been challenging. “I didn’t think it would be this hard to get grants. I thought I was better at this.” Her research focus has changed from her earlier areas but she expected and likes the changes, and finds many aspects about research great. Affecting her outlook, however, is the rejection and negative feedback associated with research.

Despite expressions related to self-efficacy, she has found the pursuit of tenure to be wrought with tension and conflict. It has built a lot of uncertainty in how she was going to do her position and uncertainty about the position, often wondering how she would finish things.

I’ve always wanted to be the best at something and I’ve always succeeded. I did great in everything I’ve done up to this point and damn it if I’m going to let this beat me; I have to win but at the same time, is that stupid? This is my life. Why should I put off having a family and doing all the things I really wanted to do to get tenure.

She came to the conclusion that she really enjoys the position most of the time. There are many aspects related to self-efficacy that are positive to counter-balance the stress of being successful in this position.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* Graduate school largely exposed Alison to the life of faculty work as that is where she got to know more faculty and it became an aspect of her motivations for entering the professoriate. “It seemed like their motivations were very similar to mine. It was the first time I had real mentors, people who thought the same way that I did. I could see how they did it and it made a lot of sense to me.” Also, her advisors, as in the case with many graduate programs, warned her about the challenges of teaching, helping her to feel prepared for the teaching expectations of her position. She has found, though, with research, the experience has been lonely in her role at SU. Describing it as a double-edge sword, wanting to be a professor to do her own thing has had a downside in her experience.

Currently, she explained that she does meet often with colleagues in her department to discuss teaching and learner outcome assessment. Support from colleagues is a quality that shapes her level of fulfillment within the position. In addressing the challenges of research, such as poor infrastructure and a lack of funding for research, Alison stated, “I do have support from my department in terms of, you know, we sit around and bitch together. It’s not like we are going to fix the problem but at least we can talk about it.” She also identified colleague teaching consultations or observations as something that would be a helpful source of support.

***Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.*** In pursuing job options, Alison applied for open tenure-track positions and even considered applying for visiting professorships.

Because the chances of getting a job are so remote, you have to apply for pretty much anything and everything. I wanted inevitably to become a tenure-track professor but my post-doc was running out and visiting professorships are actually quite nice.

If needed, a visiting professorship would have kept her employed and working in her track while applying for a more permanent position. As she is a trained researcher, though, she primarily searched for positions at a research university. There were some restrictions for her search in that she did not apply to positions that were strictly teaching. However, she did consider other options where positions at teaching colleges were research oriented. Ultimately, job opportunities were limited in her field, affecting her choices. To an extent, she was still able to evaluate desired appointment qualities during the search portion in the process of finding a job.

***Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.*** Throughout the interview, it became apparent Alison's motivations were not entirely represented in her experience, such as freedom and research. Alison explained these aspects are present but she continued to share that there are days when she wonders how she is going to get things done for her job. In talking through uncertainty about her ability and motivations for staying in the tenure-track, Alison stated, "Why the hell am I doing this? I don't know." This doubt, though, does not exist in a vacuum and her understanding of her position helps her to

reconcile the positive and negative aspects of the position in finding motivation to persist. She found, compared to doing the work she would like in the private sector, “there’s a lot of benefits to what I do and I really enjoy it most of the time.” She can set her schedule, interact with graduate students, or spend an afternoon attending a seminar from a visiting scholar. For Alison it is just a matter of being overwhelmed and feeling buried. “To some level, you take that, you accept it, and you give thanks for what you got and just deal with the rest of it.” Speaking to the challenges of academia, such as with conducting research and teaching, reconciling incongruencies within the position is something one has to accept and deal with as the positive enjoyment of the position is paramount.

**Tim.** For Tim’s position as an Assistant Professor at SU in an applied science field, he has a four-way split appointment in a science-related field. Unlike many of the other participants, Tim’s position includes an extensive extension appointment. Consequently, his perceptions about the nature of faculty work diverge from a more conventional research and teaching split. However, these are still components of his job.

Coming into the professoriate was something that just worked out for Tim. His field did not have many places for him to work once he completed his undergraduate education so he found himself moving forward with his education. Consequently, his position was not one he actively set out to achieve. However, he finds his position to be mostly positive and even with the negative aspects those are to be expected with work in general.

***Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.***

Tim's motivations for entering the professoriate were not as specific as other participants in that he saw his path to this profession as something he wandered into doing. As a Masters student, "I had what I thought was an idea of what a faculty member does but I really, at that point in time, had no real understanding. I just saw that it looked like a pretty attractive thing to do and so I went after it." He knew faculty did research and taught but the position did not seem like it was all that much work, or at least comparable to the work levels of graduate education. In his experience, he has come to realize that being a faculty member is a lot of work, particularly as his position is split four ways. He has found the lifestyle fun and likes the opportunities in his position.

I really like the lifestyle of being a faculty member. I like working with students, even though that's a pretty small part of my job. I like being able to work with industry people, which is a big part of my job. I love being able to travel and do international things; it's not really part of my job but I make it part of my job.

The idea of the lifestyle as a positive motivator was not a strong theme found within his motivations but has since become an enjoyable aspect of his position since working as a professor.

***Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.*** The potential to make a positive impact on students was a motivation for Tim in considering the role of a professor. It is not something he believes he has yet to be able to do in his position given the nature of his appointment, but it is something he is still looking forward to

being a part of his position. This motivation, he described, is representative of his general demeanor and outlook.

I like to try and do things that make the world a better place, which sounds a bit idealistic, but that's kind of the way I approach things. I want to try and have an impact on students, and help prepare them for their career and teach them things that they can use immediately when they start their first job.

In his research role, this translates into the ways he can help students finish their

Master's degrees, which is enjoyable to him to watch them grow in that process.

Seeing students engaged in the material and learning something is an enjoyable aspect for him in his position.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* During his PhD program, Tim's advisor often put him into situations that helped him with career prospects, such as organizing a long-term project for the program. "It was an opportunity that most graduate students don't get and it turned out to be a really positive thing for my career." It was an aspect of his graduate education that helped to connect him to the profession and partly contribute to his success in it.

Tim shared some of his expectations about teaching that were shaped by past experiences, such as the time he was a teaching assistant for a course and shortly before his first class, the professor asked him to do the lecture on his own. "I had nothing, nothing prepared so I just had to make my way through class with nothing." While the students seemed happy with his lecture, he learned to be better prepared for teaching during his time as a Master's student. This was not an aspect of his graduate education that was addressed so he has limited training and experience in writing a

syllabus or developing learning objectives for a course. However, without this skill set, he believes it has not impacted his self-efficacy for teaching. A current and fun challenge he is undertaking is creating a new course and curriculum for his program. That said, even without training in teaching, he is not without a background skill in addressing this challenge.

I try to structure my research so that it feeds into my teaching. That's one of the reasons I wanted to teach the course that I'm going to be teaching because I do research in that area, so it makes sense that I would teach that course.

Where his performance may not be as well received is when students are not listening or engaged as he is lecturing. This is something he identified as a frustrating component in his experience. It is a frustration that seems to be a common one impacting the participants' outlook on teaching.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* For Tim, advisors in his graduate programs were central to informing his perceptions of the functions of a professor and pushing him into the path of the professoriate. With his Master's advisor, Tim said:

There was a definite distinction there that he was the boss and I was the student. So, I didn't really get a good feel for what his job was like. I would see him in his office doing things and I had no clue what he was doing but I knew he was doing something.

However, his PhD advisor helped to give him a much better understanding of what a faculty member did while also adding to his development and training within his PhD program. "There was still a boss-student relationship but it was much more of a team activity. And so, I got a really good insight into what he was doing." The contrast



between the two advisors became an aspect of his academic experience that helped him to have an understanding of what faculty work consists of in the professoriate. Beyond his advisors, though, Tim described his colleagues in the community as a helpful and positive factor within his current experiences. “I have colleagues who I can glean experience from and they are really helpful.” They help to shape and support his fulfillment currently.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* In varying capacities, Tim’s career choices were influenced by job opportunity. Mentioned previously, Tim shared that he somewhat wandered into the field and found the opportunities that led him to his current position. As such, being a professor was not something he actively sought. First, the job market and lack of job opportunity was a contributing factor to his pursuit of graduate education. “There were not jobs when I finished and kind of working on a Master’s fell into my lap in an area that I was pretty interested in, and so I started that.” Unlike other participants, he worked on his PhD at SU before applying and getting a faculty position at the institution. Originally, though, he did not think he had a chance of getting a job at SU. In his field, there are only a handful of people that work in his area and the appointments for which he interviewed were split appointments, which did not appear to be a significant factor in his consideration. He interviewed at a few other places, one position simply did not fit so he declined. When he came back from another interview, his department head offered him a job at State University.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* Compared to the other participants of the study, Tim's position includes four appointments serving a suite of roles for the university. When this topic came up in the interview he found that the land-grant mission of the institution, as his position includes an extensive extension appointment, drives a lot of his work. Additionally, Tim discussed how the variety of roles impacts his motivations for being a professor in that it tells him what he has to do, essentially remaining flexible with the reality of the position instead of molding it to his interests.

You have to be [flexible], otherwise you won't be successful. This is all a big game that we are playing right, getting tenure. You play the game so that you get tenure. Then once you are tenure, you do whatever the heck you want to do.

When he fell into his role, he mentioned he had no idea that the position would consist of a lot of other work, such as filling out timesheets and finding money for graduate students in a tight economy. "I just do what I think needs to be done until someone yells loud enough and then I do what they need me to do. I try to find some balance that works." With the challenges of the position, it becomes of game of ensuring he has the right numbers to move forward. In this capacity, he has to reconcile challenges and frustrations with a motivation to keep moving forward and to achieve tenure.

**Anna.** Anna was one of the few participants that knew she wanted to be a professor before starting graduate education. She is now an Assistant Professor in an applied science field for SU. She was originally interested in and studied an entirely different subject than her current field but was still motivated to become a professor.

However, after realizing she did not like the research component in her undergraduate field and perceived it to be a heavy component for many professors, she went in another career direction for several years before coming back to academia. She later returned to academia to become a professor. For her, the professoriate is largely about attaining a lifestyle and being in an environment she enjoys. Consequently, she has found her experiences to largely match her expectations. She is also only in her second year at SU and as she has not yet had a performance review, she has yet to receive negative feedback regarding her progress towards tenure and feels her work within the professoriate is going well.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

The lifestyle associated with academia was an important consideration for Anna when entering the professoriate. She had desires to be a professor before she entered higher education, however she did not immediately follow those plans. After her undergraduate education and discovering she did not want to work as a professor in her undergraduate discipline, Anna started working in the corporate world. However, after eight years in the corporate world she still wanted to go into academia and that was motivated by lifestyle. “I was sort of sick of the like eight to five standard corporate life and I really wanted a change of pace and schedule.” She described the monotony associated with her work in the corporate world as something that “was going to drag me into my grave.” The flexibility and autonomy associated with being a professor were qualities that became really desirable to her. “The flexibility and the autonomy of just really being able to pursue my own interests, instead of doing what I

know I have to do in reaction to something that somebody else did, is appealing.” Both in research and teaching, she perceived there would be high levels of autonomy, with the key challenge being self-discipline. She expected, within the academic lifestyle, that if there are other pressing needs, there are always opportunities to get things done. So the challenge of self-discipline is outweighed by the positive qualities of the lifestyle.

She did express that there is a time conflict between research and teaching and how she believes she will be rewarded in the promotion and tenure process, but she has yet to let that affect the lifestyle she desired with the profession. However, Anna also shared that it might not have impacted her level of fulfillment yet because she has not been formally reviewed.

Ask me again after a year and a half and after I’ve had my first review, and maybe I’ll be singing a new tune. I mean right now it’s all kittens and rainbows, you know, because whatever I’m doing that I feel good about is good.

In addition to earning a good living, at least within her discipline, it has been a position that fits her motivations and suits her practically so in that regard she describes being a professor as an awesome career.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* The ability to have a positive impact in her work was not something Anna described as a motivation for being a professor, but it was addressed indirectly in the interview as something she tries to do and finds enjoyable about her position. Intrinsic-based values were present regarding her perception of the role of the professor with education.

I want to have as many of my students go out into the world with a happy, positive attitude and feel like they can change things and that things will be alright and that they can work together. And you know, I want them to go out there and make the world a better place and if everybody just took that positive attitude, the world would be a better place.

Through her role as a teacher, she expressed that she feels she can impact the world and her students by incorporating a sense of optimism into her courses. After observing how influential attitude was in the workplace during her time working in the corporate world, addressing attitude became an important aspect of her work as a professor. When students do not care, though, she identified that as a challenge and one that impacts how she feels about the work. It is an aspect, she feels, that could make it easy to become cynical as a professor.

In regards to research, she does not seem to perceive her work as researcher to be a strong motivation for entering the professoriate nor an enjoyable aspect because its potential to positively impact the world. That said, she does find research to be fun and enjoyable so far in her position. Research, in her perspective, acts as a mechanism to bring funding to the University and adds to the prominence of an institution that she likens to building sand castles. Occasionally, research coming out of academia will serve a greater purpose but primarily her perception is that it is fun.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* In her experience, Anna has yet to be told she is appropriating her time ineffectively or not fulfilling her position, so her perception currently is that things are going well. Originally, she was a little scared at the level of research expected in her position at State University and that there would be too much

emphasis on research, however she found that she was actually glad when she was able to focus an entire academic term on research. After doing more research in her position and not encountering any real barriers with it, she is enjoying research more in addition to teaching. She also knew from training experiences in the corporate world that she would enjoy the teaching component of her job, which was a primary interest for her as she entered the professoriate. Anna feels very comfortable in front of large audiences partly because of her confidence in her skills and talking in front of a large group of people seemed like an easy thing for her to do. “I think I’m really good either in front of an audience or one-on-one in my office and my skills aren’t as good in a classroom of thirty-five people and we’re trying to moderate a discussion.” Her ability to do both of these key functions of her job have created a positive outlook on her role in the experience she has had thus far.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* This was an extensive theme during Anna’s interview as she often talked about academia being a community that contributes to her motivation, perceptions, and enjoyment of being a professor. More so than the other participants, this theme emerged in a variety of contexts, such as in regards to family, graduate school, the intellectual nature of people in academia, and colleagues. Early on, reflecting back on her perceptions of universities growing up in a small town, Anna was drawn to being in academia.

The whole idea of being at a university sounded really... from the small town I was from, it sounded really sophisticated and, you know, alluring in that sense because I’d come from this really small place. And I thought – well if I go to a university, there will be all these cool experiences and interesting people, and

I'll have chances to travel and do things that were not a part of the country that I came from.

This partly contributes to the qualities she evaluated in determining where she would later want to work, faculty chemistry. Also, the academic community was reinforced to her through her experience in the corporate world. She sensed strong differences in the types of intellectual conversations she had in the corporate world compared to the academic world. Being in a community that was more intellectually stimulating with regards to her interest was an important motivation for her in entering academia.

Through her PhD program, the message that one really needs to go to a research-oriented school was reinforced as something necessary to be successful in academia. As a result, the emphasis of the program was on research and there was no training for teaching, despite having to teach courses during the program. She treated the PhD, though, as a mechanism for becoming a professor as she always knew she wanted to be in the university environment. However, it was a professor who is a family member of hers that also shaped her perspective on the type of work she would like to be doing in academia.

She probably did influence my desire to have more of a balance between research and teaching because she went to a really research-oriented university that was kind of a pressure cooker of publish or perish. It just left a really bad taste in her mouth and that's why she got off the tenure-track. So hearing the cons that she had to say about that type of environment really, I think, confirmed my feeling that I wanted to go somewhere where I would have more teaching and not as much research.

From her experience with the PhD program and the involvement of her family member, the balance of research and teaching became an important factor she considered when looking at available job postings.

Lastly, ongoing informal camaraderie has been a source of support for her during her experience, shaping her perspective on her level of fulfillment in the position. Being able to work with colleagues in her community to address challenges, such as navigating IRB and talking out frustrations with students has been helpful. She did express, though, that this support may also make it easier to become more cynical. Regardless, increased opportunity for cross-talk on issues facing faculty would be good, she feels. “One thing I can probably think of that is lacking is there’s not a formal way for faculty to share what they’re doing in the classroom.” There is currently not a good way for faculty to share good ideas, which is something she would like to see potentially change.

***Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.*** Not common within this theme for the other participants, Anna found that during her job search process, she actually had a lot of options to weigh in making a choice about her career. “It was teaching-research balance first, and would I like the people and would I like to live in that actual town and that area of the country.” Chemistry with faculty, as well as the living environment and lifestyle of the area were big things she considered in the job search process. More so than other participants, job opportunities allowed Anna to make a determination about which position to take based on factors strongly related to her motivations.

***Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one’s motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.*** As many participants have employed a



metaphor to discuss the good and bad aspects expected and found within their positions, one of Anna's metaphors was the idea of faculty playing in a sand-box. Mentioned briefly earlier, the metaphor describes the sand as money brought in by tuition from students that funds faculty research. Despite being primarily interested in teaching, teaching essentially pays for the sand so that faculty can play with research. Overall, the experience of research and teaching has been similar to her expectations. There is a time disconnect between the time required to do things and the reward structure of the institution, which is often identified by participants. She perceives that research is primarily what she will be evaluated on in considering tenure, while teaching takes up more time.

So the challenge that arises then, of course, is why would I actually spend forty-five percent of my time teaching? Why wouldn't I just totally slide by on teaching and just devoted all of my time and energy to research?

For her, as she has yet to be reviewed, she is doing what she feels good about.

Research is fun and enjoyable but it does not have the impact of teaching and she likes teaching.

**Tyler.** Tyler is an Assistant Professor in an applied science field at SU.

Coming from a family with professors for parents, he had some familiarity with the profession growing up. However, he came to the professoriate largely out of a motivation to pursue a desired framework for researching his academic interests. Becoming a professor was not something he originally planned to do. Given the attractive lifestyle aspects to the profession and an identifiable need and desire for job security, Tyler pursued tenure-track positions as a career option.

His experiences mostly match the expectations he had for working in the professoriate. He did not, though, anticipate the many challenges associated with raising part of his salary and managing the financial aspects of his research program. These factors did not seem to be conducive to the pure research lifestyle he was predominantly interested in pursuing. As the position pays the bills, he is now finding ways to better do what he wants in the position because he does find the kind of work associated with the professoriate to be enjoyable.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

For his motivations, Tyler knew he wanted to work in his field in some capacity and in that regards he saw that there were not many career models supporting the kind of research work he wanted to do in his field. Thus, the professoriate seemed liked the best-fitting model. After his dissertation, he had a project in mind he wanted to research that would take him to another country for several months. So, he applied for some funding and did it. This was indicative of the framework he desired that could be found within academia.

I like the idea of academic freedom. I like the idea of being able to say what you want to say without having somebody higher up in your agency quash it. I like the idea of being able to dream up these crazy projects all over the world and go and do them.

The perception of freedom within the academic lifestyle was a motivator for entering the professoriate in that it would allow him to research. In his experience though, the reality of this motivation is less prevalent. He spends more time administering grants and research programs than being in the field and conducting research, taking him away from his motivations for entering the professoriate. Also, with additional

responsibilities outside of academia, such as supporting a family, he no longer sees himself as a “complete free-agent,” questioning if this is what he wants to be doing. At this point, achieving tenure has become a significant motivator for staying.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* Tyler did not speak much about the positive impact of his role, at least not in regards to it being a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being a professor. He shared that he finds it enjoyable to see his students get excited about the same things he is excited about, or when they think of something interesting about which he had not thought previously. He also enjoys mentoring graduate students, inspiring them and learning from them. However, he extensively discussed the ways faculty work serves the university. In terms of dollars, his research brings in money for the school and provides for upkeep. In times of financial struggles, this seems to be a frustrating aspect of his position but one that is to be expected to an extent.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* This theme arose in his interview in understanding why he cares to invest extensive time into parts of his job not related to research. His motivation to enter the professoriate is rooted in a desire to research in his field, however a larger percentage of his position involves teaching, which is also something that he likes. “I knew I liked actually instructing and teaching in the small amounts that I’d done in the past and that I was reasonably good at it, but I can’t say that I was dying to teach.” Adding to his perception of teaching is the energy needed to be

invested into it. “I hate that I have to put that much energy into teaching and still raise all this money, run six projects at the same time, etc.” Like many other participants have noted, teaching requires a significant amount of time which conflicts with research. Regardless, Tyler talked about putting a lot into his courses.

I care a lot about students. I have a persistent horror of standing up in front of sixty people and looking like an idiot, which is always a powerful motivating factor. I also remember very well what it’s like to be a student and to have your time wasted by a professor who didn’t care.

Teaching was also something he expected he would be good at doing. As a result, he likes teaching and invests time into doing it well despite it taking away from the time he would like to spend researching and perceiving that it is not something that will get him tenure.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* Tyler knew of the profession because he is the child of professors, however being a professor was not something about which he was thinking when he started college. His parents introduced him to the profession and he was able to watch how they approached their jobs. However, their approach, he shared, is different than how he has approached his position. “I was probably more motivated by what my peers were doing.” His peers included friends from college that went on to be professors too, as well as colleagues in his programs. As he was figuring out what he wanted to do after his undergraduate degree, his friends getting into graduate school compared to the work he was doing in construction was an influence on his heading in a similar direction.

Tyler did talk about professors he had in his educational background that informed his perceptions of academia, but this theme emerged primarily out of his discussion of the role colleagues have in his current experience and on his overall outlook on the profession.

I'm constantly having these conversations with myself and with others about the appropriate balance of research and teaching within our roles in the University and all that stuff. So it's just matured it, rounded it out, and made me aware of a lot of these issues.

He spends a lot of time talking with his colleagues about balance, which he has found to be helpful.

***Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.*** In talking about how he found himself at SU, Tyler brought up job security. He applied for a few jobs while working on his dissertation but nothing came through. Then, as he was working on his dream post-doc, he applied for his current position and jumped on the job offer upon considering personal reasons involving family and evaluating a need for greater job security. That said:

When I interviewed here, I really liked the feel of it, and it's got a reputation for my field in the country. So it's not like I felt like I was settling. It was very much the sort of job I was aiming for.

He was able, though, to be selective in the institutions he applied to during the job search process, looking at location and whether the institution did research or not. He was not at a stage where he was going after any job opportunity.

***Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.*** Mentioned in earlier themes, Tyler has

encountered challenges that are incongruent with his motivations for entering the profession but to some degree, these challenges are to be expected and addressed within the system.

I mean if I could dream up anything in the world I could go and do, it might actually be different than what I end up doing because it's so hard to get projects funded. So the game is to find funding opportunities and mash them into opportunities to do what you want to do, so that's what I've been trying to do.

In his role as a professor, primarily with conducting research with time constraints and limited funding, he approaches these challenges as something he just has to resolve. "I want to be able to do research, so I just have to make the best of the opportunities I have. I mean, I don't think I ever expected anybody to hand me blank checks to do research."

However, he mentioned early in the interview that he still questions if being a professor is the career that he wants and he is not yet sure how satisfying the career will be for him. "Mostly I like what I do and I've got to pay the bills." I mean, I'm certainly not ready to walk away from this but I'm always questioning." He does not think his reasons for being in the professor have changed. Now, he shared there are additional motivators coming back to needing job security but he does not feel trapped. "I feel extremely fortunate to have a job and I feel extremely fortunate to have this job." Throughout his career, he has reconciled the challenges associated to his work in favor of being able to do research and to have this position.

**Amy.** Amy, an Assistant Professor at SU in applied sciences, thoroughly enjoys teaching and sees it as a vital component to higher education. It is the backbone

that is the purpose for universities, even in the research that an institution develops. Her interest in her field had been developing since she was a child, so for a long time she knew she wanted to be in her field. However, it was during advanced education in her field she realized the impact of teaching and the enjoyment she got out of it. Thus, her motivations and expectations for entering the professoriate focus on teaching being the central component.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

As part of a program at another school a lot of Amy's work was teaching senior-level students in her field, which is something she found that she really enjoyed.

Consequently, that became a motivator for her in entering the professoriate. Unlike many of the other participants, Amy hardly discussed the flexibility, autonomy, and freedom often associated with being faculty. Her main motivation, once she realized she enjoyed it, was to teach in her field. As her specific discipline is more commonly found in higher education, she then connected the desire to teach with seeking out a faculty role, as opposed to other teaching roles. Part of what motivates her desire to teach includes wanting to share knowledge and correct misinformation in society about topics in her field, which she has found the lifestyle and structure of an academic position to be conducive in achieving her goals. "I think it gives me more access to more audiences than if I wasn't at this university. And you have a certain flexibility because that's all considered teaching, even though you are at a different college." The lifestyle expectations found to be a motivator for many of the participants were not prevalent in Amy's reasons for becoming a professor, however

they have partly contributed to a level of flexibility that permits her to teach and address the material she wants to in her role.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* As mentioned in the discussion of lifestyle, Amy was motivated to become a professor because of teaching and because teaching has a positive impact on students and a positive impact on society. This theme was directly addressed in her motivations for becoming a professor. “I thought I would have a much bigger impact through training new students. You can train students, then get those students to work out in the field, and it’s kind of like... it just propagates exponentially.” Through her role as a professor, she perceives it as one that connects with several people by teaching. This impact was an attractive quality of teaching. Additionally, she perceives a positive impact through her desire to correct misinformation in the field and the exponential impact of teaching expands that impact. “To me it’s a way of reaching out to be able to get things that are part of [my field]: get those things out, get the message out to people, that right now the media is just flat-out lying.” She realized when she began to have more teaching experience that it was the best way of positively impacting society, and thus made teaching a desirable aspect of being a professor.

This theme is also evident in how she addresses research within a university. To some degree she finds research enjoyable. However, she does not want to be forced to do research, which becomes a frustrating aspect of her position. “You need to publish if you have something interesting to contribute, not for the sake of publishing.



I think that's a major flaw of most major universities – publishing for the sake of publishing.” This sort of research drive is not rooted in creating a positive impact but for its own purposes. “Publishing for the sake of publishing” was not an uncommon sentiment felt by the participants but Amy explicitly sees this attitude by the institution as a negative influence one's potential to positively impact society through research.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* Through successful experiences in teaching, she was motivated to consider faculty work as a career route. Originally, she grew up thinking she did not want to teach but found it, during additional educational experiences, to be challenging and in that regards interesting.

It was actually very interesting because you need to keep on your toes the whole time. You never know what the students are going to come up with, what questions are going to come up. It makes you keep current on all the information that is out there.

When she was pursuing advanced education in her field, she did not realize that teaching would be an aspect of her program but thought that she would just be working on a specialization. Teaching this specialization, something she has realized she is quite good at doing, was something she expected to be doing in her position but has not yet happened. In addressing the aspects that motivated her to enter the professoriate and the qualities she enjoys in her experiences as a professor, the challenge and ability of teaching has contributed to a positive outlook for her about teaching.

The self-efficacy expressed in teaching is not something she feels translates into her experience with research. “My biggest pressure that I feel in the tenure

process is it's ill-defined. The objectives are very ill-defined." She describes a portion of her appointment, the one related to research and scholarly activity as vague and a challenge.

There's no way you can feel, ever, positive about your tenure process and I think that maybe part of that is so that it gives you, not you but them, certain leeway to say, 'No you didn't reach it.' That's just very strenuous for the person going through it because it's a moveable target. You never know where the target is. You don't know how big it is. You don't know where it's located. So how do you prepare for something like that? You can't.

The lack of clearly defined objectives for producing research and scholarly activity can undermine her level of confidence in her work towards tenure. She knows that she is doing her job but she cannot be sure it is enough. Combined with the institutional emphasis on research and bringing in money, something she does not need to do to do her research, this has become a significant issue and challenge for her in staying so she can fulfill her motivations in teaching.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* In explaining her perspective on her role as a teacher, Amy spoke about how a previous mentor impacted her definition of teaching. The mentor impacted her conception of her work as a professor by imparting knowledge and allowing her to go in any direction she could go with the information. However, as she transitioned into her current role she did not have a mentor to guide her through a new position. At SU, she found no guidance for feedback or a mentor in navigating the political situations she did not expect within academia. She described it as being tossed in to the mix when she started her position at State University. For addressing ongoing challenges, she has

understanding from some faculty but feels support does not happen as that would mean there's an actual solution to those ongoing challenges. "Guidance within here? No. I bring experience from other places. But there's been no guidance for anything here. You have to look for everything." Her perception of her role currently has been shaped by a lack of guidance in her immediate academic community.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* Amy's choice to enter the professoriate is influenced by the opportunity to fulfill her motivations of teaching. To teach, at least to do so within her field and to do so for an audience she thought would actually gain from teaching, the professoriate was the likely direction for her to choose. In conjunction, she was under the impression she needed a PhD to teach and do the work she wanted to do. She now finds herself doing similar work with different pressures than people in her department without a PhD and not on the tenure-track.

In conducting a search for open positions, she was limited in her options given her field, however there were other factors that narrowed her search more such as location. There were a couple of positions for which she interviewed but she liked SU best. The offering had the work breakdown she wanted, however research was not originally part of her position; it has since been added into her contract. She pointed at in this case that it becomes an awkward predicament to sign or not sign the new contract. While her choice to be at SU was not solely made because it was the only opportunity to do the work she wanted, additional components are influencing the experience she has with the position.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* For Amy the work she does now for her position aligns with the expectations she had entering the professoriate. She stated that she made sure her expectations were appropriate and works to make sure they are her experience. However, the growing aspect of research in her contract and the institutional emphasis on research when she is primarily motivated by teaching is something with which she has to deal given the context of her position. For example, she finds that advancement is based on research grants, which is not something she wants to do. It negatively impacts her outlook on her job.

That's kind of the thing I'm waiting now to see [how the tenure process goes]. I've got really good evaluations from the students ... I am producing scholarly activity. I am producing papers. But I am not bringing in any money, so we'll see if it's about the money or if it's about teaching.

She balances this dynamic by not closely connecting life and work, stating that her work is not her life and if work increasingly becomes something she does not want, she will leave. "If they pull the strings any tighter, I'm gone. I don't need this. I'm here because I want to be, I don't need it." Right now, teaching is her primary motivation and she is happy with where it is at. She acknowledged that while there is still a lot of red tape with which to deal in her position, she still finds it fulfilling.

**Marie.** Marie is an Assistant Professor at SU in a formal science discipline and comes from a family where one of her parents is a professor, contributing to an academic atmosphere during her childhood.

In our family it was sort of a given that you would go to grad school, as opposed to in some families where it is a given you would go to university. We were sort of one step further. I guess I always knew that I would end up doing grad work.

Additionally, she shared that to an extent, she had the intention of becoming a professor at some point in her career. She had an understanding of academic work that helped shape her expectations in that she was motivated by the lifestyle, as well as a desire to do both research and teaching as a professor. However, she has found with the challenges associated with balancing research and teaching, and teaching having a positive association and reward, teaching has becoming a significant aspect in her position.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

Marie was significantly motivated to enter the professoriate by a perception of freedom and flexibility associated with the lifestyle.

I guess it's like the ivory tower; you have all this freedom... At the time it was like, 'You get to work on whatever you want to work on.' I think at the time that must have been my belief that you have this really flexible lifestyle.

In thinking about her approach to work, she realized that she does not like being told what to do and was interested in having a position where she had control over her projects, not a corporation or office. It is an aspect of the position she believes is important, especially with research. As research can be directed by a corporation, it is important for professors to have flexibility and responsibility in directing their research and developing their research programs. For teaching, she has found that she has a lot of flexibility in her courses and that she can change them so long as the course learning objectives are being met. Her general opinion of being a faculty

member and the lifestyle is that it is amazing work and that it is really flexible, albeit stressful. “Even knowing the tenure clock is ticking and knowing that I have certain things I have to do if I still want to make that, I still have quite a bit of flexibility, so that’s still really nice.” She feels a level of congruency between the expectations and experiences she had in wanting the flexibility of the academic lifestyle.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* This theme became a salient point in the interview in discussing the idea of working at a public institution and teaching, but also in how having a positive impact in her research is not a part of her experience in the professoriate. “My research is not applied at all, it’s very theoretical. And I don’t feel like I’m saving the world or anything.” Changing her research to be more applied and beneficial is something she would like to consider but fears it would be too risky to change now as she is pursuing tenure. Thus, Marie does not view her research as connected to the land-grant mission of the institution and that she constantly has to justify why she spends her time on it. Consequently, she feels she gets less satisfaction out of her research because it is so theoretical and lacks the positive impact compared to other parts of her job.

Teaching is an enjoyable aspect of her job because she knows she can feel good about the work she does teaching. To Marie, it is important. She would prefer her job was something where she felt like she was doing something important. Part of what she finds enjoyable about the impact she has as a teacher is that she is a professor in state education, something in which she really believes.

I am much happier being in a public school than I could imagine being at a private school, and I did my PhD at a private university.... I think it's important to have institutions like this that are intended to provide education for the masses.

In the capacity that she has to potentially create a positive impact, Marie feels good about her role as a professor.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* As she knew teaching was important to her and something that would be part of her career plans upon receiving a PhD, Marie worked on a teaching certificate in her graduate program. "I spent the time to do that even though I was advised not to and that it was a waste of time." Research, as many participants indicated, is prioritized by departments and the institution and thus teaching is not as supported. It is an aspect of her position about which she really cares, partly due to motivations but also the difference in enjoyment and success levels between research and teaching for her. She enjoys both but "if anything gets me down first, it is the research. It's the most volatile part of my career. I am very very rarely depressed about teaching." The rejection within research can be tumultuous, especially as her research is theoretical. While her research is not productive like she would have thought it would be and even now desires, she has a knack for it and finds it to be fun. And with all research, there is a sense of accomplishment. "It's amazing to create something and it is really amazing when you can solve a problem that you know other people worked on and couldn't solve it and you managed to solve it." Research and teaching are both enjoyable aspects of her position. However, her outlook can be positively and negatively influenced by her perception of performance in both areas.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* Her previous experiences in the communities of her educational background have created a tension for her about the role she has as a professor, particularly in balancing research and teaching. In her undergraduate experience and despite her institution being rather large, her academic program was tiny and she felt the investment of professors in her individual education. “I saw that the professors really cared about my education and really cared about me, they still keep in touch with me, and ask me how I’m doing. And if ever I am back in that town, I go and say hi to them. I would like to feel that way about my students.” However, the message in graduate school was on research and that “focusing on teaching is not something you should do.” These separate influences have helped to shape her understanding of the conflict between research and teaching prevalent in faculty roles, however, they have also contributed to her perception of the expectations she has for herself in academic work. She now sees the heavy research mentality playing out in committee work currently, an aspect she finds depressing. The reality though is that the PhD, a common criteria for becoming a professor, is generally awarded for research. As Marie stated:

And it’s the equivalent of natural selection in this artificial world that the better dissertations are going to be produced by people who do better research and whose emphasis is on research. So you get these people who are very very narrow-minded and focus down on their research.

Her academic department, as an ongoing influence in her current experiences, has continued this tension towards research in how research expectations conflicts with teaching and her other motivations for entering the professoriate.



However, she enjoys research, in part because of her research community outside the university. “I love going to my conferences and I always feel energized when I go to them. I enjoy collaborating with my various research collaborators across the country, visiting with them and working on problems.” The experiences she has with collaborators in her field have helped to shape research into a positive and energizing experience, something that is not prevalent in her department by default. She is the only one in her department that does her kind of research and thus feels a bit isolated from the community. “It’s a little tough being isolated as far as research area goes being here. So I have to work a little harder on reaching out to people at other Universities to make sure I keep in touch with them.” Her expectations of research and being a professor included more collaboration within her community at her university, though she acknowledges this is simply an inherent difficulty related to her work.

That said, Marie has still found her colleagues to be helpful in her department, especially administrative staff. The challenge is that they are understaffed and overwhelmed, so she does not want to add to anyone else’s workload. She partly felt this struggle initially when she started her position at SU. “There was no orientation when I arrived here. It was just trying to figure out who to ask and apologizing a lot for asking the wrong person.” It was not something that has significantly impacted her outlook and fulfillment as a professor, but she feels like it would have been helpful to have a mentor, officially, to address some transitional challenges in adjusting to a new community.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* The job market was terrible when Marie accepted her position at SU in 2009. In her search process, location was a small consideration but one of the only ones she could make given the limited opportunities she found available. As some institutions' job searches were canceled due to the job market, SU ended up being her only job offer during her search. The job opportunity significantly influenced her career choice. With that said, however, she was happy with the position. She liked the area and the department. "And even though it wasn't an ideal match as far as research goes and sort of quality of research in my area for my track record, it's better than being unemployed." She was not able to match her desired interests but it was a suitable opportunity for her to take.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* In discussing her current experiences, Marie expressed that she likes her position, she likes the location of SU, and she knows that she will have to focus on research in order to get tenure. However, she seemed okay with the idea of not getting tenure if it did not work out; her priority is to be enjoying her work and work towards tenure as much as possible.

I also know that if I don't, I'll probably be as happy, or if not happier, somewhere else. Maybe there's a department out there whose goals are more in line with mine or reasons are.... So I think my goals, right now, are to enjoy my life as much as possible right now but to also survive until the time where I will have more control over what I teach, and how much time and effort I can spend on research, which I would still want to continue doing.

Tenure establishes guidelines, though, for her work and what she is expected to do. Sometimes it is enjoyable and some things she may not altogether enjoy, but she tries her best to focus on doing her work and as well as other enjoyable activities. “Then hopefully, tenure will come.” To some degree, she stated that her position and experience could be changed for the better, but she is willing to be patient with the negative aspects because she is quite happy with the job.

**Nicole.** Nicole came into the professoriate with a strong connection to her academic field. As an Assistant Professor at SU in an applied science discipline, she was driven to the field by childhood dreams to work within it. She describes herself as being very academically driven and wanting to be the best in her field, so becoming a professor and advancing her knowledge further seemed like a positive step. Her experience, though, paints a challenging picture in meeting these motivations. Seemingly more so than the other candidates, Nicole’s experience in the professoriate is strongly disconnected from the motivations she had for becoming a professor, and the impact has been negative. She does enjoy working as a professor but there has been a lot that has been a struggle.

*Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.*

Nicole’s connection to this theme is more about the academic environment she has enjoyed in her educational experiences and that plays a significant role in her motivations related to academic lifestyle. As opposed to the idea of freedom and autonomy addressed in other participant interviews, she spoke about wanting to be a part of the academic environment. “I was always very academically driven at school. I

liked studying. I liked examinations. I really felt comfortable in that environment.”

She was really motivated by a desire to be in the academic environment and to be one of the best in her field. “I realized that I wanted to advance my knowledge beyond the level of the general practitioner, that I enjoyed being taught, I enjoyed watching the teachers teach. So I was interested in pursuing an academic career.” The components that comprised her conception of the academic lifestyle are, in that regard, much different than the others. However, the advancement of knowledge and drive associated with the environment was her significant motivator for entering the professoriate.

*Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.* Discussing the professoriate as that which has the potential to make a positive impact was not something Nicole addressed extensively. She does feel valued when she is able to contribute to her field, which she identifies as a big reward. Mostly, her understanding of her impact as a professor is tied to her perceptions on the purpose of the professor as an instructor and how her research involves students. She sees her role as having the purpose to guide students into understanding what is important their field.

However, she does not perceive that students are readily receptive to her approach in sharing knowledge, diminishing the perception she has of her potential impact. “We have to go through this whole pattern before [the students] finally understand that I was trying to give them relevant information.” She perceives a lag between the time she teaches material to when she can see students apply it. She still believes there is a

reward in helping students in their own careers. With the involvement of students in her research, she sees this more readily than teaching. Making a positive impact is not something she expressed a desire in doing when entering the professoriate but there are aspects of it that she feels are enjoyable parts of her career.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* For being motivated by drive and accomplishment, Nicole discussed at length the challenges associated with her position and feeling as though she is not doing her job as well as she could. “It’s a far more challenging job that I ever realized it would be and that mostly has come about in the last few years, I’ve realized what a struggle it is.” This is conflicting with her perceptions of faculty work in observing a former professor walk out the door every day at five. Along with the budget crisis, the position has become even more challenging. “So lately, definitely, I feel my motivations have flagged a lot. I’m sick of working this hard. I’m sick of sleepless nights. I’m sick of stress.” In the interview, she described essentially having three jobs and feeling as though she cannot do all of them well. “I’m constantly worried about a paper or a grant, or how many things you haven’t quite done. So that’s the thing, I think, that really makes me feel stressed and overwhelmed because, really, we’re doing three jobs.”

In research, she finds that she is good at writing, so writing grants is not challenging in that regard. She also feels that, to some degree, publishing is a sense of accomplishment. So far her marks and reviews of her research and scholarly activity

have been good but she still feels like she has been underachieving, which she referred to as “Imposter Syndrome.”

I think with Imposter Syndrome, probably with the higher levels you achieve, the more likely you are to feel you shouldn't have achieved them.... I've always been driven academically but now I'm getting to a stage where I'm getting a bit tired and worn out, realizing I can't keep up this level of effort for much longer.... But definitely you get to a point where you feel like you're floundering and that you're not succeeding at the things that you've surrounded yourself with.... And sometimes just the immensity of the task overwhelms you, you become paralyzed with it and you don't start. And if you actually start, you realize you can get through it and you can do it. But it's a constant environment of stress and fatigue and concern, and that's not healthy.

Her sense of self-efficacy in accomplishing the immense amount of work related to the three functions of her position is negatively impacting her level of stress and outlook on her position.

In conjunction with research, Nicole is also finding teaching, which she used to enjoy, to be frustrating. When she is teaching, particularly in the lecture format, she perceives that her students are not listening, that they are on facebook or email.

And that forces me to just not feel very enthusiastic about lecturing to them. If I can tell that they are more entertained by whatever they've got on their desk, I don't know how to face that situation very well.

She is much more willing to extend herself when she knows it is going to be well-received and that students are more enthusiastic and willing to listen. She now describes lecturing as “pretty miserable” given a perceived lack of success in this aspect of her position.

Nicole admits that she has not adapted to the new distractions of today with her lecturing technique, which is partly the problem. As students have to invest a lot of money and energy to go to school, “I feel a strong sense of obligation to them ... I do

feel like I should do a good job at it and I do want to, I just am frustrated by this change in interaction that this generation of students has.” She has a desire to change and improve in order to do her job better but she is struggling to find the time or the knowledge of how or what to effectively change. Overall, she feels an interested audience is enjoyable, one that cares about the information. As she cares that students learn and she is struggling to engage them in the lecture format, she feels frustrated.

She has since considered other careers that would keep her in the same field but would prefer to address this lack of self-efficacy and performance she feels currently. The impact is that she has lost the strength of her desire of having to achieve and to learn, significant motivators for her entering academia. She is also worried she is starting to fall behind in her own knowledge and continual development.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* Involvement of former professors and current colleagues have helped to shape Nicole’s perception about her role as a professor, partly contributing to her desire to enter the professoriate. For example, the academic community of her educational background helped her realize her interest in being a professor.

I think it was probably just aspiring to the people that were training me, the professors that I had in school. I really liked them. I had a great respect for their knowledge. I think I probably just wanted to emulate them to some degree.

Additional professors later in her academic career shaped her perspective on research and what it entailed.

I did my PhD so that was one form of exposure with an absolutely fantastic advisor. And then I went to a two-year post-doc with an advisor who wasn't so good. And the difficulties that I had in that position and being able to contrast them with the position I just left, it was very valuable. It kind of helped me to figure out how I would or would not manage my own graduate students, things like that.

Her involvement and work with these professors contributed to her expectations of what her graduate lab and interactions with her students would be like during her career.

Currently, as she manages ongoing stress and frustration she is experiencing with her position, the role of colleagues can be source of support and continual motivation in staying in the professoriate and finding fulfillment in her job. At SU, "I've had to learn how to find collaborators that can help me. And that's been great, working with collaborators." That support, however, is limited. "You really feel like you're on your own, a little bit, as faculty." In research, she is taking on more responsibility than she did in her previous experience, such as managing graduate students and helping them succeed. "So you feel this incredible sense of responsibility and obligation. That's really quite stressful in itself." Consequently, she explained she gets tired and depressed, particularly as she feels a complete lack of support when positions in her department are left empty adversely impacting the work load. She expressed towards the end of the interview that if this position was done in isolation, it would be really hard, emotionally. Speaking about a close colleague that left, she said, "Knowing there is someone else alongside me in the same position who could be a source of support could be very important. I do think that when she left, my sense of happiness went down a long long way." The sense of support derived from colleagues



in the academic community can be helpful in shaping one's level of fulfillment in their position.

*Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.* After post-doctoral work, Nicole applied for an open position at SU because she was interested in pursuing an academic career as a faculty member. Due to her field, Nicole's options were somewhat limited in regards to where she could be a professor. However, she still had other things she considered in making a choice based on opportunity. She was also specific in what she was pursuing for her job in terms of the type of school and her desired appointment. Additionally, the location of SU was a positive attribute that Nicole considered in applying to the job as it was close to family. These factors made her opportunities limited which influence her career choice, but she still made an active choice to apply to the open position at SU as it matched the traits she was looking for in a position.

*Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.* There were several factors Nicole brought up affecting her outlook on her position, in how she perceived it going into the tenure-track and now as she is almost done. Largely, she expresses a sense of feeling overwhelmed and tired. The faculty position, she has found, is not a nine-to-five position like she observed a former professor being able to do.

I think it's been great so far overall. It's been a rewarding experience overall. Right now after being through five and a half years of it, I would say if it's going to continue this way, I'm really not sure I could do it. I'm not sure I could keep it up. So things need to change.

Deeply impacted by losing a close colleague, she has found the last two years a struggle without that source of support and enjoyment in the position. So, in remaining in the professoriate, Nicole has relied on other considerations beyond the scope of her original motivations in order to reconcile the incongruencies of her expectations and experiences.

In the end, it just becomes a sense of overwhelming responsibility to many different things and obligation to a lot of different people. The emotional impact of that is huge and that's probably the hardest thing, I think, about the whole job. If we were just robots, it would be easy.

Her experience has been hard and she has struggled with several aspects of her job. She also expressed that she is partly balancing her own sanity to the happiness of those relying on her to stay in the position. Working as a professor has involved her reconciling the loss of the reasons that motivated her to become a professor.

**Kate.** Kate is an Assistant Professor in humanities at SU. In pursuing the professoriate, Kate originally wanted to be a scholar and found that the role of the professor was conducive to achieve this goal. Knowing that it was challenging to become a professor, considering how many individuals graduate with doctorates, Kate just pushed as far as she could in graduate school and rode the wave to her position at SU.

As a professor, she has a passion for her field and enjoys that teaching and research encompasses that passion. It took a while for her to transition into the position and to understand the demands of tenure but the mutual relationship between

teaching and research has been balancing for her. Overall, she has found her experience so far to be better than the expectations she had entering the professoriate.

***Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.***

For Kate, the academic lifestyle was something that was representative of a lifestyle different from her family or background; it was something she thought was glamorous. To some degree, that mentality influenced her desire to be in academia and to do scholarly work. She pursued graduate school because she knew she wanted to pursue research in her field and it was in her graduate work that she discovered she also loved teaching. She realized that teaching and being a professor seemed like a good job for her to match her scholarly interests. “It seemed like a good schedule, a nice combination of interacting with students one-on-one and then in class, and being able to feed off student enthusiasm a little bit.” She did not address autonomy or freedom to do research in regards to motivators for entering the professoriate. Her motivation consisted of matching mutual interests in teaching and research found almost distinctly in the professoriate.

***Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.*** “I feel like I have one of the most important jobs in the world.” This theme was a common point as she discussed her desire to teach.

I work very hard to help my students think critically and to consider perspectives that they might now initially consider. I just feel like those are skills that more people need to practice. So I really see myself as contributing in ways that go beyond just teaching about things within my particular subject.

Having a positive impact is an aspect of her position that is enjoyable to her.

Combined with teaching at a land-grant university, she brought up that it is very rewarding to her and something that she really likes about her position. A positive impact she sees herself having in her role, that she did not expect, is helping students as a mentor beyond the classroom. She has found she is often helping students beyond academic questions by connecting them to needed resources on campus.

It does tie into my motivations to being a professor because I do see my role as someone who helps my students. I mean I teach them things but I also try to help them, which is funny. I never really thought about it that way but I think it's true.

Overall, the teaching aspect of her position has become a fulfilling and enjoyable part of being in the professoriate as she feels she can make a positive impact on her students and through public education.

With regards to her research, it is something at SU Kate does not perceive as understood or appreciated; it does not have quite the same immediate impact in regards to her community as teaching. While doing really well within her field, she has to spend a lot of time making her research feel relevant.

I was taught that if you have an interesting question, a question that's interesting enough that it transcends disciplines, that that's what's important. I found that here, it's not just about having an interesting question, it's about actually explaining to people why that question is relevant to them.

Being at a research university with a land-grant mission, the positive impact of her role takes on a different shape. For the institution, where it may not be a necessary component to her research, research is generally about relevant impact. Her experience with research is primarily about the scholarship, which is a motivation for her.

*Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.* With her role as a professor, a sense of successful performance has contributed to her outlook on her position. For example, Kate described liking research for a variety of reasons but also because she is good at it. She has not achieved what she expected she would with research and publishing so far in her career but she indicated that may be a case of having unrealistic expectations about faculty work coming out of graduate school. Teaching is an aspect of her position, too, that gives her a good feeling. “I’ve just really appreciated the fact that every day when I go into the classroom, I know I’m going to have fun and feel good about where I am.” Consequently, being a good teacher is a priority for her, despite reminders from departmental colleagues of a perceived emphasis in tenure that focuses on producing research.

During her undergraduate experience, she did not necessarily feel like she was especially good within in her field. She took a year off to decide what she wanted to do and observed some peers transition into graduate school simply because they did well in the subject in college. As a result, they realized it wasn’t something they really wanted. Being in the profession now, she feels really proud to be a professor.

*Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.* As part of an academic community, connection to others has helped shape Kate’s motivations and experiences within the professoriate. Primarily, Kate identified a strong connection to scholars in her field as a motivation and enjoyable aspect to her work.

I feel like I'm constantly making discoveries. It makes me feel really connected to people who lived hundreds of years ago, and it helps me think about my own historical moment... And I also love feeling like I'm in conversation with people, some of whom are dead, but other scholars, like I like that while I can be along in the library reading, it doesn't feel like I'm alone; it feels like I'm talking to a bunch of people who have also cared deeply about the things I care about.

From an academic and scholarly standpoint, connecting to the greater community of her field, historically and otherwise, she experiences a sense of fulfillment in her career.

In addition to her scholarly work, Kate finds her colleagues to be helpful and thinks they add to an enjoyable experience in the professoriate. "I team-taught recently and that's been a really good experience. Teaching with someone else helps you rethink a lot of your own pedagogical strategies and gives you new ideas." This is something she would like to do more but has to seek it out independently. Her institution did not provide many opportunities to connect with colleagues across discipline or to observe others teaching. To do so independently, she perceives would be a little weird. She has really encouraging colleagues, though who often encourage her to focus more on her research and make time for her own work over investing more time in teaching. She also felt supported by the department early on in her transition to her position because the senior faculty members protected her from a lot of difficult responsibilities. Even with the competitiveness of release time and funding she discussed with the challenges of research, she still feels a supportive atmosphere by the colleagues in her department.

***Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.*** Kate's job search process, in looking for open positions in the professoriate, was fairly balanced and did not limit her career choice based solely on opportunity. Initially, when considering the career path she wanted to take she was not sure if there were many options that matched her various academic interests. This was more the case particularly as she discovered that she loved teaching in addition to wanting to be a scholar. When she began searching for openings, she found many and applied for several of them, had several interviews, and a couple of job offers. In this process, she applied for jobs with a variety of splits between research and teaching, "but I did notice I only got interviews from research schools. I think that's because as a job candidate I was very strong in research and publications." Ultimately, she had a choice in selecting SU during her job search process and over her other job offer.

***Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.*** Tenure, though, is incredibly important to Kate.

I recently went to a meeting where they were talking about the tenure process and someone said, "You have to remember that if you don't get tenure, you're not going to curl up and die." But actually, I feel like I would. I don't want to do anything else.

She described her motivations for working as a professor being stronger than ever. She does not know how much work will satisfy tenure requirements, however, in order to be sure she will achieve tenure, adding to the stress of her position. "I don't actually know what's enough now, so you end up doing it all. You don't know if you have to

have a book or the equivalent in articles, so you end up doing both.” She feels generally positive though about her prospects as she has been able to do good work thus far at SU. Also, she shared that she loves both parts of her job and finds that they are not actually mutually exclusive, but that the audiences and expectations are different, with different challenges. So both aspects, even in adding potential stress to her position, are positive aspects. The classroom, for Kate, really balances the research; she also finds that being a good teacher energizes her. In regards to feeling supported in her research, she has never felt that the institution has been in the way. “I have just been sort of quietly doing my thing, and quietly going to my conferences and doing my stuff, and that’s okay.” Tenure and working as a professor to her is important, so the theme of reconciliation is apparent in her moving forward and doing good work despite not having more answers or support. She also called attention to the ongoing challenges SU is facing, realizing that her struggles and frustrations with the position may be related more to topical and larger issues impacting education in general.

### **Conclusion**

The research aimed to explore the following question: Why do tenure-track faculty members choose the path of the professoriate? Subsidiary questions of the study included: (a) What do current tenure track faculty members believe is the purpose of the professoriate? (b) What are their expectations of the work they would be doing within the professoriate? And (c) Is what they do within their work consistent with their reasons for becoming a professor and their perceptions of the faculty role?



As such, the common themes prevalent in each of the twelve interviews are related to motivations, expectations, and experience.

This chapter presented information and themes collected from the twelve participants in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Organized by each participant, six general themes were explored in the context of each participant and their individual responses to the research questions: (a) academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate, (b) working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the professoriate, (c) previous and ongoing achievement as well as self-efficacy contribute to the outlook one has on their role as a professor, (d) involvement of those within an academic community help shape one's perception about their purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor, (e) choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity, and (f) working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.

The results of the research explored several aspects of the motivations, expectations, and experiences of tenure-track faculty members. Not aiming to present conclusive answers that would be generalized for each faculty member, especially as it was apparent that the experiences for each participant were individually unique, the results discussed in this chapter better inform understanding of the tenure-track faculty experience. The next chapter will discuss these results in the context of previous

literature reviewed on faculty motivations, as well as identify the limitations to the study apparent in the results.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

This study sought to understand the motivations and expectations of those choosing to enter the professoriate, and to learn how the answers compare with the actual classroom teaching and research experiences of these individuals. Through an exploration of twelve tenure-track faculty, six themes were identified, highlighting the complex connection between motivation, expectation and experience. This chapter will discuss the relation of these themes to previous literature collected on the professoriate in order to better understand the context and implications for the data collected in this study. First, the chapter will cover a summary of the study before revisiting the themes introduced in Chapter IV. The chapter will then discuss the study's findings in relation to the theoretical framework, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994) and the research questions before addressing the limitations to the study and implications for further research.

### **Summary of Study**

Looking at faculty perspectives, the purpose of this study was to explore the individual experiences of faculty as it relates to their motivations, expectations, and experiences as tenure track faculty. Assuming a relativistic understanding of knowledge, the study was designed utilizing a constructivist paradigm to gather and analyze the data. As such, it was assumed individual faculty members would have established perceptions about their experiences entering the professoriate, which is supported by a constructivist paradigm. The themes synthesized the data to address the research questions: (a) academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the

professoriate, (b) working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession, (c) performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors, (d) involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor, (e) choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity, and (f) working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.

### **Discussion of Results**

Building on the literature regarding faculty in higher education, the results of this study provide a deeper understanding of tenure-track faculty and their experiences entering and within the professoriate. Past research has largely focused on faculty as a collective, speaking to the motivations of faculty for entering the professoriate and their satisfaction within their roles as a group. Some previous research also identified a need to look at tenure track and younger faculty distinctly. The results in Chapter IV speak to the experiences of individual faculty participants, discussing each theme separately. This section will review the themes and provide a general discussion regarding their relation to the literature and other themes.

**Academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate.** In defining reasons for entering the professoriate, many of the participants identified a perceived lifestyle associated with academia as a desirable

quality of this career path. Throughout each of the twelve interviews, there were different words associated to academic lifestyle respective to the perceptions of the participants interviewed. For some, flexibility of the position was essential, while others associated the lifestyle with freedom, or autonomy. Essentially, this theme represents the desire to work in a manner of one's choosing, with limited external control. As such, the professoriate was identified by the participants as a key career option to having a high level of autonomy while pursuing their academic interests through teaching, research, or both. For example, Josh shared that he saw the professoriate as an option to pursue his interests in a way he wanted, in both his research interests and approach to teaching.

Previous research supports this theme with independence and autonomy of faculty work identified as key motivators for individuals in their decisions to enter the professoriate. A key motivation Lindholm (2004) found emerging in her study on faculty pathways to the professoriate was a need for autonomy, independence, and individual expression. McInnis (2010) later found that a distinctive characteristic of faculty is the autonomy and expectation of freedom to decide their research programs, course material and teaching methods.

While this research identified autonomy, flexibility, and freedom as factors associated with a lifestyle serving as motivation for the participants, several of the participants also shared the realities of this lifestyle as they have been in the profession. Generally speaking, participants found that there is a degree of flexibility within the professoriate and it is an enjoyable aspect of their position. John, expecting

some differences from the professors he observed as a student informing his perceptions of the lifestyle, noted that, “you would have to do more stuff but you still retain that flexibility.” Other participants spoke of the flexibility found within teaching, such as determining course reading materials, as an ongoing enjoyable aspect of the position. In compiling the literature review, this theme was an anticipated result of the data. Freedom, autonomy, and flexibility appeared to be common values for faculty in previous studies (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Lindholm, 2004; McInnis, 2010). However, the degree to which this theme was present for each participant was varied. In some cases, such as with Amy or Nicole, the lifestyle as identified by other participants is hardly mentioned.

Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed the variance to which they felt the lifestyle they desired was what they experienced in the professoriate. Participants have found a flexible lifestyle in their experiences within the professoriate but the reality is that the flexibility and autonomy associated with the lifestyle is not always the case. Freedom does not exist in a vacuum, per se. The participants acknowledged challenges inherent to the faculty role that compromised the lifestyle desired in their motivations. The professoriate, particularly for those in tenure track positions, places a high level of demand on time. Some of the participants, like Evan, did not account for the time he would need to invest to achieve the flexibility desired. Evan shared that he often works eighty hours per week, investing significant amounts of time in order to ensure the expectations of his work are thoroughly met. A negative impact he felt was a loss of time for personal space and creative thought.

Essentially, a salient challenge regarding this motivation within the professoriate is adequately supporting a high demand on faculty members' time. The concern for some of the participants associated with this theme is the consequences of exercising a higher degree of autonomy in their role. So by turning down a project request in order to focus more time on research, one would feel or perceive a negative step towards desirable goals such as promotion and tenure. Consequently, the flexibility or freedom associated with the academic lifestyle is not fully what is expected for some of the participants.

While many of the themes are interrelated and are such in different ways, this theme is strongly connected to the issues addressed in the themes looking at job opportunity and reconciliation. Academic lifestyle was often a considered motivation for these individuals in entering the professoriate; there were also varying levels to which someone could select their position based on other factors aside from need and opportunity. For some participants, such as with Josh, they made academic freedom a priority in the job search process, thus eliminating all potential jobs they identified as conflicting with their goals related to lifestyle. However, others took their position based on availability. As mentioned earlier in this section, the notion of an academically free and autonomous lifestyle as a tenure-track faculty member is complicated. The lack of autonomy and flexibility due to tenure demands was seen as a downside to the professoriate but often a necessary one. The AAUP (2003) explains that tenure is perceived to be a vital element in ensuring a higher degree of academic freedom by providing job security. Thus, many of the participants reconciled the

negative aspects associated with the time demands of tenure affecting the lifestyle as temporary and were willing to weigh more heavily the current and expected positive aspects of long-term employment in the professoriate.

**Working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession.** The ability to make a positive impact, whether that is on a student, within the community, or for society was identified in participant interviews as a developing motivation for being in the professoriate. This was not a motivation explicitly identified by many participants as a reason for entering the professoriate, as academic lifestyle was a more significant motivation. However, several participants across disciplines connected the potential to make a positive impact as an enjoyable aspect they currently experience in their position, thus adding to their persistence within the professoriate.

The potential to create a positive impact was identified with both teaching and research functions throughout the interviews, however teaching emerged as a more immediate and recognizable impact for many of the participants. Amy's primary motivation for entering the professoriate, not commonly shared with the other participants, was to teach and to have a positive impact on society. She specifically became a professor knowing through teaching she could have a much bigger impact in her discipline as the knowledge shared theoretically propagates exponentially. For many of the participants, such as John and Kate, there was an immediate and tangible realization in how their teaching impacted students, contributing to a continual motivation in their positions. Marie identified teaching as a positive source of



reinforcement in the profession related to this theme, which is in contrast to the lack of impact she felt with her research. “My research is not applied at all, it’s very theoretical. And I don’t feel like I’m saving the world or anything.” Consequently, Marie’s research does not serve as a motivation in the same capacity she feels towards her teaching.

Interestingly, many participants discussed the positive quality of working in public education. The idea of a land-grant institution and public education provides a service to local and state communities, creating educational opportunities for a wider range of students. With State University (SU) being a land-grant institution, the participants connected this mission of the institution as an enjoyable aspect of working at SU. While the participants often did not express or feel a strong connection to the institution’s full mission, they cited that their work, either in research, teaching, and/or extension, has a positive impact in connection to the land-grant status of SU.

Comparable to the results of this study, creating a positive impact is considered as a motivation for some faculty in their reasons for entering the professoriate. Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) found in their research on faculty motivations that there is a desire for some faculty to pass on knowledge to future generations and to inspire excitement among students about learning. Earlier, Eckert and Williams (1972) also saw that faculty were interested in working with college-age students and this was one of the motivations for entering the professoriate. However, in both studies, this was not a significant motivation compared to academic lifestyle. Within this research,

this trend continues in that the potential to create a positive impact was realized more fully later.

The connection this theme primarily shares with other themes found in this study is how it relates to performance. Teaching was commonly identified as a way faculty felt they are able to create a positive impact on students. In many cases, this aspect of teaching positively contributed to the participants' internal perception of their performance. In Nicole's experience, where she felt she did not connect with students and could not create this impact, her perception of her performance was negatively influenced. She shared that she is more willing to invest time into teaching when she knows her work will be met by students engaged in the lecture.

**Performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors.** Participants' perceptions of their performance often contributed to their outlook through either creating a positive or negative sentiment towards certain aspects of their role, or by contributing to their understanding and expectations of their work. Essentially, those tasks participants found they performed successfully, or anticipated successful performance in their expectations of faculty work, were viewed more positively by the participant. In the case a participant felt or perceived they were not successful in their work, there was greater frustration directed at that aspect of their position.

Successful performance during graduate school was addressed by a few participants as an aspect that contributed to their consideration of academia as a career. In Tim's experience, he identified his work on department projects in his

doctoral program as helping him to understand the nature of faculty work and to transition between his role as a graduate student to his role as a professor. For Anna, successful performance became a significant factor in explaining her experience thus far in the professoriate, which she has described as generally positive. Initially, she entered her position knowing she enjoys public speaking and that teaching came naturally to her, thus she wanted primarily to teach in her role. As she gained more experience researching as a faculty member, she became more comfortable with her performance, contributing to more positive sentiments towards research. Also a contributing factor, she has not yet received negative feedback about her work thus far and feels more confident in her performance.

Participants also discussed aspects of their position they felt they were not successfully doing, or were unsure of their ability to perform their duty. In many cases, participants did not feel positive about their ability to manage the multiple functions expected from the positions. However, there were two particularly harrowing conversations in the interview process that developed a clear picture for the significance of performance on outlook. Nicole has found several challenges with teaching, explicitly more so than the other participants, which has negatively impacted her outlook on her teaching role in the classroom. Additionally, she spoke of feelings related to high stress given extensive demands for her time and uncertainty in performing all aspects of her job well. "I feel my motivations have flagged a lot. I'm sick of working this hard. I'm sick of sleepless nights. I'm sick of stress." Alison also shared negative associations with parts of her job due to concerns with performance.

She originally expected research to be an easier component of her work as a professor but is now feeling levels of uncertainty about how she will successfully finish her work. As a result, she has experienced concerns with her motivations for pursuing tenure.

In addition to building positive and negative sentiments towards their profession, participants also shared that self-efficacy and accomplishment shapes their experience in how they perform their job. For example, many participants noted teaching requires a significant amount of time, which conflicts with research, and that research is perceived to be valued more in the promotion and tenure process. Tyler, though, identified a fear of “looking like an idiot” while teaching as a motivating factor to invest time and energy into his courses. Alison found that a desire to teach well and to the best of her ability was her motivation for investing time in teaching, similar to Tyler’s interview. With the immediate interaction and feedback found in teaching for the participants, their performance in that capacity becomes more salient, necessitating greater effort.

In the literature, the research culture prevalent in academia promotes success and performance in research, primarily through research development in graduate programs and socialization as faculty (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Tierney, 1997). This is also supplemented by ongoing perceptions that research is weighed more favorably during the promotion and tenure process. The participants for this study echoed this literature throughout their interviews. Through socialization, faculty internalize an understanding of what it means to be a good faculty member,

compelling expectations driven by more extrinsic values and motivations (Tierney, 1997). Participants found these aspects of the academic culture to be true of their experiences in the professoriate, and not necessarily in a negative capacity. The experiences and training as they advanced in their discipline and conducting research are connected to their motivations for entering the professoriate. To a degree, success in their work serves as a means to achieve promotion and tenure as well as facilitates positive associations within the position. While several participants were drawn to their work in academia through research in their discipline, a common aspect of the faculty experience for these participants was the immediate reinforcement teaching has in their work. A few participants noted feeling a greater pressure for success in research with a high rejection rate for grants and publication. This contrasted with the perceptions of greater success in teaching despite more training in research.

Stress arose as an issue challenging the participants' perceptions of their performance. Combining self-imposed expectations with muddy departmental standards, the literature has identified the nature and culture of academia as challenging in itself for faculty to navigate and understand their role (Sorcinelli, 1994). There is a potential for faculty to not have a clear conception of what is expected in their role, thus their performance in the position becomes complicated. Some of the participants discussed a pressure to over-perform in their position, primarily as they did not know what would be enough to secure tenure or there was a lack of feedback and recognition. The participants, in a variety of disciplines, noted unclear criteria and standards as a challenge impacting their approach to their work. In

her work, Sorcinelli (1994) saw this as an ongoing source of stress, particularly in new and junior faculty.

During her interview, Alison expressed significant concern and uncertainty about her ability and motivations for staying in the tenure track. Ultimately, with frustration related to her performance with research and struggles with balance, she felt doubt about why she was a professor. Reconciling positive aspects of her position with the negative associations grown out of doubt and self-efficacy concerns, Alison identified continuing motivation. It is a matter of accepting and dealing with the challenges. Concerns with performance may negatively impact participants' outlook on their role but they weighed the positive aspects of the position over this concern. Tenure in that capacity became, for several participants, a goal to address stress related to performance.

**Involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor.** In developing their understanding and expectations of working as a professor, and often serving as a catalyst for entering the professoriate, participants identified individuals within their communities that have been a part of their experience. There are four different areas within this theme that participants largely connected to their development: (a) mentors/advisors, (b) academic discipline, (c) institutional community, and (d) the general professoriate. Each participant identified a combination of these communities as significant in shaping their perceptions of the faculty role.

Several participants identified previous mentors or academic advisors in their educational experiences, undergraduate or graduate, as helpful in shaping their perceptions of faculty work. Amy found a mentor's style to be similar to one she employs today in working with students, while other participants noted that observation of their advisors informed their understanding of what a professor does. For Josh, the ongoing personal contact with his professors showed him the openness and flexibility of working as a professor. Although in some cases, participants, such as Nicole, realized their observation did not include the full picture of faculty work. Additionally, mentors and advisors were identified by several participants as sources of encouragement for pursuing work in the professoriate. In John's experience, he had not considered employment in academia until his advisor suggested it would be a good fit for him. For many participants, it was their advisor or mentor recommending academia as a career option during their doctoral programs.

Some participants discussed their involvement with this academic discipline as providing increased understanding of what they should be doing in their role. Evan stated that he bases his performance level according to what his colleagues in his discipline are doing around the nation. In this capacity, involvement of those in the participants' academic discipline helped inform the perception they have of their role as a professor, and act as a source of ongoing support in work. Given the more isolated nature of Marie's research, she has found support and camaraderie for her research in her discipline that she cannot find immediately in her department.

The institutional community, for a few participants, played an interesting role in both motivation and experience. Scott saw the greater community of SU as one in which he plays a key part, providing a service to the institution. However, his perception was that as untenured faculty, his role is primarily defined by the roles of others within the institution, essentially serving the students and administration, as well as doing “all the crap jobs that the other faculty don’t want to do.” From a more positive standpoint, the concept of an institutional community was an aspect that drew Anna into academia. She spoke about the intellectual nature of colleges and universities as appealing to her interests growing up, consequently being a driving aspect for her entering the professoriate.

Several participants also spoke of the general professoriate within the institutional community as important in their experience. Sorcinelli (1994) in her research on new and junior faculty saw a concern among first-year faculty was a lack of support from senior faculty, leading to a less collegial environment than desired. A common aspect found in this theme was a desire from the participants to have more opportunities to interact with other professors throughout campus, socially and professionally. John discussed how interactions with other faculty helped to better inform his teaching practices, and like many of the participants, saw cross-discipline interaction as a potentially valuable resource not often utilized at SU. The challenge, identified by the participants, was a lack of time to participate in such an activity.

In the literature review, culture is a mechanism by which one can understand the nature of faculty work and academic identities (Henkel, 2010). Through different



interpretations, the process for understanding and influencing culture can be varied, from understanding success and failure based on observation to building personal values into the culture's development (Tierney, 1997). There were varying beliefs among the participants as to the extent the institutional culture played in shaping their specific role. Individuals in their academic communities have more to do in shaping their understanding of the faculty role, while the culture of the institution impacts the execution of the role, such as through promotion and tenure standards. To a degree, departmental and college missions were identified as influential in their work but mostly in the greater context of the university, their research and teaching remained largely autonomous from the university primarily in regards to content. This reflects both modern and postmodern perspectives on cultural development and influence (Tierney, 1997).

The participants' understanding and expectations of faculty work were largely shaped by their observations of those in their academic communities: mentors and advisors, colleagues, and in some cases the institution itself. Within an institution, formal and informal processes exist to introduce new members to the culture of the academy, such as faculty orientation or mentoring programs (Mendoza, 2008). Before joining the professoriate at SU, many participants' expectations of the faculty role were influenced by past mentors and advisors in Master's and PhD programs. Similar to McInnis' (2010) findings, interest in a discipline was generally fostered through undergraduate experience with the socialization process for the participants largely occurring in their graduate programs. A component of this socialization, the emphasis

on research, was not continued into their professorial work for some of the participants. The emphasis is still perceived to be a reality of faculty work but many of the participants value both research and teaching in their roles.

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that qualities of the academic lifestyle for professors, such as freedom, flexibility, and autonomy, were drawing aspects for the participants in entering the professoriate. The participants often connected this motivation and expectation of faculty work as related to observations of those within the professoriate and the community of an institution. In the socialization process of undergraduate and particularly graduate education, many of the participants perceived the lifestyle of a professor to contain those qualities. Some participants noted that their observations were not exactly congruent with their ongoing experiences but the flexible and autonomous lifestyle is still a socialized ideal associated with achieving tenure.

**Choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity.** The issue of job availability and a tight job market was not something readily present in the research conducted on faculty motivations for becoming professors. In the course of this study, each participant walked through the process they took in acquiring their current position with several challenges related to a tight job market limited their choices. For faculty there is more to their career choice than simply choosing the profession, as is the likely case with many professions. One's available opportunities became an interesting element considering past research and other themes. Some participants felt they had a greater range of choices so they could be more selective in

weighing level of academic freedom for one option, job location in another, and the appointment split between teaching and research. Others found, due to timing and their respective discipline, that their choices were limited.

In his job search process, Josh was able to set some parameters about the type of institution where he wanted to work, such as specifically excluding institutions known for lacking in academic freedom. For Tyler, a key consideration was location. Josh and Tyler's experiences in the job search process were similar to many of the participants; opportunities were limited and there was a sense of taking what was available within reason. However, it was not as though they were settling in taking on a position at SU. On the other side of the spectrum, Anna found that during her job search process, she actually had a lot of options to weigh in making a choice about her career. Evaluating the available appointment, chemistry with other faculty in the department, and location were all considered during her job search process, allowing her to explore a position fit that was more suited to her motivations.

This concept has not been addressed in much detail in previous research and it connects more to the extrinsic realities of employment. The newer faculty generally found recent economic problems to be a factor affecting their job search, except for Anna. So it simply may not have been an issue in previous studies looking at motivations (Blackburn and Lawrence, 1995; Eckert and Williams, 1972; Lindholm, 2004). It did arise as a prevalent concern and reality of career selection; motivations to enter into a particular position may have to be balanced against realistic expectations of employment.

All interviews began with questions focusing on how each participant became a professor, as such the job search process was a key point in each person's answer. However, in the coding process this arose as a theme in observing the motivations of faculty in achieving a certain lifestyle and how those motivations were supported or not met in their positions. There appeared to be not one causing attribute to limiting job opportunity across the participants in this theme but it was interesting to listen to participants discuss the tough competition for faculty positions. The reality for some of the participants in looking at other themes is that the availability of a position could override other factors for entering the professoriate. In Tyler's case, while he did not feel accepting his position at SU was settling, the appointment was not what he was hoping for in becoming a professor. The practicality of the position, though, became a significant consideration for him. This created a balancing act for some of the participants where the reconciliation theme, just dealing with the challenges in favor of the positive qualities, began to emerge in the research.

**Working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession.** Many participants spoke of their work as a professor as operating similarly to a game or navigating a system. Overall, they seemed content with their positions; the stress and frustration associated with their work is largely related to time demands and concerns with performance. There are aspects about their work they find positive and some they find negative, but the focus

towards the end of their interviews shifted on accepting the positive and negative aspects of the system inherent in the faculty role.

The literature gathered for this research often focused on research and teaching conflicts, treating them as two distinct functions of faculty work. Boyer (1990) developed a more integrated interpretation of scholarship in academia where teaching and research were not mutually exclusive. The participants' approach to the different aspects of their work as professors reflected Boyer's interpretation of scholarship. Mostly, there was no conflict for the participants between research and teaching. In many ways, the two support the development of the other. However, a challenge many of the participants identified was the increased time expected to do their work, and to do it well. In that sense, teaching and research only take time away from each other, developing stress in their positions. It is this stress that can be challenging for faculty but the participants indicated that they generally accept the conflict and subsequent in favor of the long-term benefits and positive qualities associated with achieving term.

Given the added stress and pressure associated with the faculty work-load, some of the participants discussed whether they continue to "fit" with their profession. Evan immediately acknowledged his initial approach to his tenure track position is not one he could sustain in his career; the stress was ultimately negative for his health. Like Evan, Nicole also shared her struggles with the demands of the position and her uncertainty with staying in the professoriate. She acknowledged the rewarding components of her experience thus far but did not feel like her input was something she could continue doing past tenure.

In balancing the stress of faculty work against the motivations and expectations one originally had entering the professoriate, tenure was discussed as a benchmark where faculty could reassess their motivations. The importance of tenure was different for each of the participants. Kate described tenure as incredibly important to her and shared that her motivations for being in the professoriate were stronger than ever. Tenure, for many faculty, provides job security that ensures a higher degree of academic freedom (AAUP, 2003). In that regards, tenure often served as an ongoing goal for the several of the participants. Then for the process of achieving tenure, faculty members engage in a game of sorts in order to achieve that desired outcome. The incongruencies between motivations, expectations, and experiences was not prevalent concern for the participants. As Tyler stated, "I want to be able to do research, so I just have to make the best of the opportunities I have." The incongruencies, in navigating the tenure process are more accepted as inherent aspects of the position.

Over time, faculty roles have become more involved (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Dee & Daly, 2009). As such, there are greater expectations placed on the professoriate, "no longer does a quick reference to teaching, research, and service suffice to explain the work of the faculty member" (Dee & Daly, 2009, p. 2). This places faculty in an interesting position. Given previous studies' analyses of research and teaching tensions within higher education, this was addressed in relation to the congruence of faculty motivations and experiences. When asked if the participants saw or experienced a conflict between research and teaching, the participants indicated

that the conflict or tension was primarily due to trying to do a lot of work with limited time, and that they perceived research would be acknowledged more than teaching. In order to move forward and not become cynical with the demands, the participants developed perspectives that balanced their growing roles.

Instead of the significant autonomy associated with the lifestyle many expected in their roles, there is ultimately still a system which they have to navigate. The literature review briefly introduced a debate about the benefits and challenges in current tenure practices for colleges and universities (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Dee & Daly, 2009; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Sorcinelli, 1992, 1994, 2007). Overall, the participants found they felt autonomy in their research programs. In some cases, their research did not seem to be influential, well received, or supported but it was still their determination as to what they do in their research. The freedom is diminished by an expectation that faculty produce research, or “publishing for the sake of publishing.” Some were bothered by this and others were not. There was significant frustration, though, expressed over a perceived lack of recognition for teaching efforts in the tenure process, especially with the demands associated with teaching compared to research. This was largely reconciled as a fact of the tenure process and not necessarily diminishing from the flexibility and autonomy desired

This theme, more so than others, builds in the interaction of data collected through this research. It looks at how the motivations and expectations of the participants are reflected in their experiences after they have entered the professoriate. The other themes, such as academic lifestyle and positive impact, contribute to an

understanding of what motivated these participants to become professors; they build the positive and negative experiences the participants reconcile in asking themselves if they are satisfied with their experience as a professor.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results of this research yielded six broad themes related to motivations, expectations, and experiences of tenure-track faculty entering the professoriate: (a) academic lifestyle is a significant motivation for entering the professoriate, (b) working within the professoriate has a potential to make a positive impact, which is a desirable and enjoyable aspect of being in the profession, (c) performance within academia contributes to the outlook participants have on their roles as professors, (d) involvement of those within an academic community help shape perception about purpose, expectations, and fulfillment as a professor, (e) choices within the career are influenced by job opportunity, and (f) working as a professor involves reconciling incongruent qualities between one's motivations and expectations of faculty work with the positive and negative aspects experienced in the profession. These themes address the complex process of career development and persistence, presenting a snapshot of the dynamic process for twelve different participants. In this section, to understand the significance of these themes in a greater context, a brief review of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent et al. (1994) will be utilized to explore the connection of these themes to the research questions.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory.** This theory (Lent et al., 1994) was originally selected as the theoretical framework of this study given its complex and



dynamic nature of explaining career-entry points and encompasses both academic and career interests. It acknowledges the involvement of multiple, dynamic factors in influencing the interests and choices of individuals. Overall, the theory helps to explain one's interests and choices, and level of persistence in those choices. Building off of tenets of Bandura's (1986, 1989) Social Cognitive Theory, the theory uses different social cognitive mechanisms to explain three models of career choice and persistence. The first social cognitive mechanism is self-efficacy, which is described as judgment of one's ability to perform a task or do something (Bandura, 1986). The next mechanism, outcome expectations, postulates that individuals will act depending on the desirability of the anticipated outcome (Lent et al. 1994). The final mechanisms used in SCCT is personal goals, describing one's determination to participate in a certain activity or to achieve a desired outcome (Lent et al. 1994). These mechanisms interact in various ways in each model to describe one's interests and choices in a career. These models provided the primary framework for analyzing the themes found in this study.

***Model of Interest Development.*** In this model, an individual's interest in a career is developed through self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). Essentially, an individual will be interested in a vocation in which they perceive they have the ability to perform in that vocation. Additionally, for individuals to develop interest for that career, they would expect it will yield desired outcomes. The participants in this study reflected this model in their approach to entering the professoriate. While their discipline-related interests were not covered in this study,

the anticipated academic lifestyle shaped by their communities and experience in graduate school, and perceived potential success in the position, contributed to their moving forward in this career direction. Most of the participants did not have an explicit career interest in being a professor until these pieces came together during their graduate education.

***Model of Career Choice.*** This model in the context of SCCT focuses more on one's goals. Based on interest development, the individual develops personal goals and takes action to achieve that goal. Through this action, the pattern of performance achieved by the individual will help to determine future career behavior (Lent et al., 1994). For the participants, their goals were connected to being faculty and achieving tenure to have the academic freedom motivating their interest in the position. Through the connection of their perceptions about their performance and their ability to reconcile the challenges and opportunities they experienced in the professoriate, several of the participants continued to evaluate their career choice as they advance in their positions.

***Model of Performance.*** The final model looks at the three social cognitive mechanisms and how they inform performance attainment and overall persistence for the individual. Essentially, the model postulates that successful performers will persist and that "successful performance will tend to enhance self and outcome perceptions, thereby strengthening one's interests and goals" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 98). The model, in this regard, is cyclical. So in the context of the findings, faculty perceptions of performance are shaped by their motivations and outcome expectations. Congruent

with what was observed with the performance theme, faculty perceptions of their performance in turn contributes to how they view their role and questions of persistence in the professoriate.

**Research questions.** The research questions developed for this study were largely used to guide an exploration of tenure-track faculty experiences. They grew out of my desire to understand what faculty want, expect, and experience when they enter the professoriate. Additionally, as the study was designed with relativistic assumptions about potential faculty responses, there is not really a generalizable response to address each of the research questions. However, the themes and theoretical framework were able to provide a deeper insight into these questions, developing an understanding of faculty motivations and expectations of their work and their perceptions of their experience.

The primary question was specific to motivations: Why do tenure track faculty members choose the path of the professoriate? In summation, the study primarily saw lifestyle traits associated with academia and faculty work as a key motivator for faculty in choosing this profession. Once in their positions, participants also saw having a positive impact as a valuable aspect of being a professor, impacting their outlook on their work. While not often explicitly addressed in the research, through the Model of Interest Development of the SCCT (Lent et al., 1994), it is apparent that perceptions of performance also play a role in the participants' interest developing in choosing the professoriate as a career.

The subsidiary questions of the study addressed additional factors shaping motivations, such as expectations: (a) What do current tenure track faculty members believe is the purpose of the professoriate? (b) What were their expectations of the work they would be doing within the professoriate? And (c) Is what they do within their work consistent with their perceived purpose of the professoriate and their expectations of the work they would be doing? The participants' perceptions of the purpose of faculty in an institution depended significantly on their interests in faculty work, though it is generally connected to education and knowledge. Through their involvement with different academic communities, their expectations of academic work grew out of their observation and socialization to academic culture; for example, many anticipated it would be challenging but not as challenging as they actually came to experience. A common expectation, though, was that they would have autonomy and flexibility in their position. The final question was related to the congruency between motivations, expectations, and experience. It was an interesting question to explore in the interviews, giving the participants the space to internally evaluate their experience thus far in relation to the reasons they identified as becoming professors. As there were different responses for the participants about their experiences as faculty members, there is a degree in which congruency can be found but each participant did have some aspects that were not consistent. It is apparent, particularly in the performance and reconciliation themes, that in those aspects lacking consistency between motivations and experience were sources of stress or frustration for the participants. Overall, the lack of consistency was not so overwhelming to outweigh the

positive aspects the participants saw in their positions and the possibilities tenure is perceived to bring.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study as it relates to its design and analysis that are important to note in the context of the research results. Given the structure of the design and data analysis, the limitations were largely related to the time constraints of the study and the research design.

The length of time allotted for conducting research in completion of a Master's of Science in College Student Services Administration is limited. Consequently, the scope of the research had to be tailored to meet these time constraints. In that regards, the selection of the study site, the sample size, and potential demographical considerations necessitated a research design to match the time constraints. The study site, while selected given its potential to produce a data rich sample that met the criteria for the study, was selected partly as a matter of convenience. The sample could likely prove to be more rich by considering variance in institutions, such as faculty working in community colleges or private institutions. However, it was ultimately determined to limit the study to one site in order to meet the time constraints for the thesis.

In addition to limiting the study site, the sample size was limited to only twelve participants and the specific study site was not utilized to increase in analysis of any demographical differences, such as developing a sample with content where differences across discipline could have been better measured. The ability to measure

the data in this capacity was not part of the original intent to the research design. Given a longer timeline to design and conduct this research, greater variance in the sample could have been more purposeful.

In conjunction with limitations based on time constraints, the design and paradigm to this study made no intention of producing an epistemological determination of the results. The intent of the research was to explore individual faculty experiences and to establish greater insight about faculty motivations, expectations and experiences. The decision to move forward with interviews in a semi-structured format was conducive in providing participants opportunity to share their experiences, it was found to limit specificity that could be drawn from the data. As such, the study produced broad results that are not necessarily generalizable. The study provides insight into the individual experiences of the faculty participants, some of which may be shared by others in similar circumstances.

Considering the research paradigm, sample population, data analysis, and a lack of specificity in the research, another limitation to the study was the population itself. In order to ensure confidentiality of the participants, demographic data of the participants was generally not brought into the study. Instead of drawing on comparisons found between specific disciplines, undergraduate/graduate background experiences, gender, or race, the study focused on exploring the individual's story. While this process proved to provide some insight into the research questions, it limited the ability to draw further conclusions about the findings.

### **Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Further Research**

The goal of this study was to explore and understand the relative stories of faculty members, focusing on the possible congruence and incongruence between their motivations for becoming a professor and the reality of their current experiences. Overall, the intent was to develop a greater understanding and insight into individuals comprising the faculty of higher education and to consider their stories within the context of existing literature and theory. Through this process, six themes emerged describing the participants motivations, expectations, and experiences entering the professoriate. These themes are broad, capturing the varying experiences for faculty. This aspect of the research was anticipated and as such, the design of this study was to reflect the unique perspectives of each participant in relation to each other. In doing so, the study provides valuable information into the experiences of tenure-track faculty that has practical implications along with the theoretical components already discussed.

First and foremost, it was apparent throughout the course of this study that faculty are dynamic and the information collected in this study presents a small snapshot of the changes influencing higher education and faculty roles. Additionally, the comparison of similarities and differences did not often have consistency in the two demographical areas mainly tangentially considered in the data analysis, discipline and year hired. This may be inherent in the design of the study and presentation of the data, but it is important to note the distinct combination of motivations, expectations, and experiences faculty members bring to higher education.

The general motivations for faculty considering the professoriate beyond understanding their interest in their specific discipline is often connected to a desire to have academic freedom, autonomy and flexibility in their working dynamic. In many cases, this reflects the academic interests in research and teaching of the faculty member. In conjunction with academic lifestyle, faculty enjoy their ability to positively impact their students, community, and society. This may be an element that motivates someone to consider working as a faculty member but primarily it is something that sustains motivation. However, the participants identified ways in which these aspects are not found in their experiences in the professoriate. Moving forward with this data, this information can be helpful in understanding how to support the academic lifestyle individuals are pursuing in the professoriate as well as to provide development opportunities that will faculty achieve the impact they see as positive components of their work.

The participants in this study identified academic communities as shaping their expectations of faculty work and their perceptions of purpose, particularly mentors and advisors, departmental colleagues as well as colleagues in their field, and the greater institutional community. Beginning mostly in graduate programs, faculty are socialized to a culture of academia that shapes what they hope will be their experience as a professor. Consequently, it is important that graduate programs consider the opportunity to share more information about the professoriate. Several of the participants later noted that while their perceptions of faculty work were similar to what they observed in graduate school, there were still misconceptions. Additionally,



if an institution is wanting to consider the work its faculty produces, the institution will have to look at the way faculty roles are culturally built. If an institution is placing extensive pressure to perform in time-conflicting roles, this may have a negative impact on faculty productivity and motivation.

Shaping expectations and impacting motivations for individuals entering the professoriate is not just a matter of one indicating a desire to be a professor. The competition for tenure track positions is tough. Many of the participants found their job opportunities were quite limited when they finished the doctoral programs and began a job search. Selecting institutional fit becomes less of a priority when one has to also consider the practical implications of employment.

There are also cognitive implications to the consistency between faculty motivations, expectations, and experiences. The performance and reconciliation themes strongly connect to the SCCT developed by Lent et al. (1994). Regardless of how debates over promotion and tenure and the conflict between research and teaching settle for academia, professors need to feel competent in what they are doing. This contributes to motivation levels, goal development, and persistence in their positions. The aspects that were challenging for the participants, or not congruent with their expectations, often elicited higher stress and uncertainty about working in the professoriate. In turn, those participants either overwork themselves or turn to components of their positions that are reinforcing, or they do both.

Through this study, several additional questions arose in understanding different facets of the professoriate and faculty experiences in higher education. The following questions are recommended questions for further research on this subject:

- What are the motivations, expectations, and experiences of faculty from underrepresented populations? This particular study presented the experiences of twelve faculty members without attempting to draw conclusions regarding smaller subsets of the population. However, this is an area that can be further developed in research in identifying specific means to support specific populations of faculty members.
- To what degree do faculty feel they are able to successfully perform their job? How does this vary within the different ranks and disciplines in the professoriate? Performance arose as a complex theme in this study that could be further explored in relation to more demographical data. This may help to identify challenges and opportunities within the different subsets of the faculty community.
- What sources of support systems would be beneficial for faculty in the university community? Knowing the results of this study and literature previously compiled about faculty motivations and job satisfaction, the question still remains as to what faculty would find useful. The challenge in developing tools for faculty is additionally finding time for faculty to utilize those tools. As a result, research in this area would help to be more strategic in adding more to an increasingly complex role in academia.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

I set out to conduct this study to understand a former professor and my curiosity as to what compelled her to deal with and manage an unresponsive, and sometimes negative, classroom environment. I wondered if I would have been able to go home in night feeling positive about my work and the role I had within the university. Through this study, the intent was to explore individual faculty experiences, ultimately addressing what faculty members want, expect, and consequently experience when they enter the professoriate. There are many combinations to answer this question and in doing so, provides insight into how an institution can better support the development and life balance of its faculty members. But it is heavily apparent that despite not coming to a concise answer, the question and discussion are important, if only to provide credence to the challenges and opportunities facing individual faculty members.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Email Text for Recruiting Participants

Dear (name of faculty member),

My name is Heather S. Pearson and I am a current graduate student in the College Student Services Administration program at Oregon State University. I am conducting a study to better understand the faculty role in the teaching and research functions of higher education. The study is seeking to compare motivations and expectations of those choosing to enter the professoriate with the actual classroom and research experience of these individuals. Intending to continue a discourse on faculty experiences, the information collected from this study will aid in further understanding of faculty and faculty development for institutions, administrators, staff, students, and the faculty community.

The study will focus on faculty members currently working toward tenure in the university setting. I am writing to you to solicit potential interest to be a study participant as a tenure-track faculty member.

I intend to gather a diverse range of thoughtful responses in a semi-structured interview discussing one's motivations to become a professor and current experiences with teaching and research that may or may not coincide with these motivations. You need not be in a particular academic discipline to participate, the goal is to identify participants who are diverse with respect to gender, race, discipline, and progress toward tenure. **If you are currently in the process of pursuing tenure and would like to participate in this study, I invite you to contact me by (insert date two weeks from the email date) to indicate your interest.**

Given the sensitive nature of this topic, I will be employing practices to ensure participant confidentiality throughout this research. If you initially communicate interest in participating but change your mind later in the process, your name and email communication will promptly be deleted. Additionally, steps will be taken to keep separate personal identities from interview responses in the research protocol.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me through email or by phone.

Thank you for your time and take care.

Heather S. Pearson  
Graduate Student, College Student Services Administration  
Oregon State University  
815.631.4602  
heather.pearson@oregonstate.edu

Jessica White  
Assistant Professor, College Student Services Administration  
Oregon State University  
541.737.8576  
[jessica.white@oregonstate.edu](mailto:jessica.white@oregonstate.edu)

## Appendix B: Follow-Up Email Script to Interested Faculty

Dear (name of faculty member),

Thank you for expressing interest in the research study on tenure-track faculty motivations and experiences in teaching and research. As the purpose of the study is to learn more about faculty perspectives regarding their role in the classroom and university setting and why they are pursuing this path, your time and participation is appreciated. The study is anticipated to help faculty staff, administrators, and students support the faculty role.

I have attached the Informed Consent Form and an outline of the interview questions. The Informed Consent Form discusses the study protocol, primarily providing information about the semi-structured interviews to be conducted with individual faculty members. If you are still interested in participating in this study, please read the attached documents. I will give you time to review both documents and will contact you within the week to arrange an interview time and location. If you are no longer interested in being a participant in this study, please let me know.

If you have any questions regarding the study or attached documents, feel free to contact me through email or by phone with your questions.

Thank you and take care,

Heather S. Pearson  
Graduate Student, College Student Services Administration  
Oregon State University  
815.631.4602  
heather.pearson@oregonstate.edu

Jessica White  
Assistant Professor, College Student Services Administration  
Oregon State University  
541.737.8576  
jessica.white@oregonstate.edu

### Appendix C: Interview Questions Provided to Participants

1. What were your primary reasons for entering the academic field as a professor?
2. In higher education, what do you believe is the role of the professor in the college classroom?
3. How would you describe your teaching experiences so far at college and university institutions?
4. Have you received guidance or instruction in teaching processes, either as a graduate student or currently through faculty development programs?
5. In higher education, what do you think the role is of the professor in the university setting?
6. How would you describe your experience in conducting research at college and university institutions?
7. If there is a conflict between the professor role in the college classroom and the university setting, how has it impacted your experience thus far in pursuing this career path?
8. What would you say to current students that express interest to you in becoming a professor?

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form



College Student Services Administration  
 Oregon State University, Waldo Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331  
 Tel 541-737-8576 | College Student Services Administration

**Project Title:** I Want to Be a Professor: Exploring Motivations and Expectations of the Tenure Track Professor  
**Principal Investigator:** Jessica White  
**Student Researcher:** Heather S. Pearson  
**Version Date:** October 8, 2010

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### 1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

### 2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study is to understand the faculty role in the teaching and research functions of higher education. The study seeks to explore the motivations and expectations of those choosing to enter the professoriate, and to understand how their answers compare with the actual classroom and research experiences of these individuals. Intending to continue a discourse on faculty purpose, the information collected from this study will aid in further understanding of faculty and faculty development for institutions, administrators, staff, students, and the faculty community.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student for the completion of a thesis that satisfies requirements for a Masters of Science in College Student Services Administration.

Up to twelve will be invited to take part in this study.

### 3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a current tenure track faculty member at [REDACTED]. This study seeks to explore the perspectives of the faculty members pursuing tenure. As the tenure process requires extensive time committed to the profession and institution, including work in both

teaching and research, the study is researching the motivations and expectations of this specific population in a university setting.

#### **4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

Conducted as a qualitative study, if you consent to take part in this study, you will be participating through an interview process. We anticipate your involvement in the research to take no longer than 3 hours of time. This includes: reading and signing the Informed Consent Form, participating in a 90-minute semi-structured interview, and reviewing the interview transcript. If you agree to participate in this study, we will arrange a time and location for the interview.

The semi-structured interview will be audio-recorded and we will confidentially deliver a typed, hard copy of the transcript to you for your review. If you do not wish to be recorded, we suggest that you do not participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be audio recorded.

*Initials*

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to be audio recorded.

*Initials*

#### **5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?**

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with being in the study include: concern and/or discomfort about job security and career advancement. There is a possibility that you may disclose your current progress in achieving tenure, including successes and frustrations.

In order to minimize the risks associated with this study, you will be permitted to decline answering any question or to discontinue discussion on the topic without reason. Additionally, the research study will utilize interviewee codes, locked storage, and password protected computer files to avoid linking participant responses and direct identifiers.

An additional risk to the study is with communication shared through email in the recruitment and selection process. The security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses.

#### **6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

We do not know if or how you will directly benefit from being in this study. However, you may receive an indirect benefit in sharing and exploring your current experiences in teaching and research. Additionally, this may contribute to a growing collection of knowledge focused on supporting faculty in higher education.

#### **7. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

#### **9. WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the [REDACTED] Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

Access to audio recordings will only be granted to the Principle Investigator and Student Researcher. The recordings will only be used for the completion of the study and will be erased upon study completion or no later than one year after the interview.

To help ensure confidentiality, we will conduct your interview in a private location, separate from your office and academic department. We will store the audio recording and any electronic copies of the transcript on a password protected hard drive. Printed transcripts will be stored in a confidential location. Using a code key, we will only identify you by a code number referencing your academic department. We will store the code key in a password protected hard drive separate from the one storing the recording and transcripts. All records will be erased or deleted after the study is completed or no later than one year after the interview.

#### **9. WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

#### **10. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**



If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Jessica White, Adult Education and Higher Education Leadership, 541.737.8576, [jessica.white@oregonstate.edu](mailto:jessica.white@oregonstate.edu) or Heather S. Pearson, 815.631.4602, [heather.pearson@oregonstate.edu](mailto:heather.pearson@oregonstate.edu).

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the [REDACTED] Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at [REDACTED] or by email at [IRB@\[REDACTED\].edu](mailto:IRB@[REDACTED].edu)

## **12. WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?**

Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## Appendix E: Interview Protocol and Questions

9. Interview Information
  - a. Date and Time:
  - b. Interviewee Identification Code:
  - c. Department:
10. Informed Consent Form
  - a. Review of Form
  - b. Signature Obtained
11. Begin Audio-Recording
12. Interview Questions
  - a. Introduction
    - i. Could you tell me a little bit about how you became a tenure track professor at [REDACTED]?
      1. Did you actively choose to come to a research university over other options?
        - a. Why?
        - b. Why not (if no)?
  - b. Research Questions
    - i. What were your primary reasons for entering the academic field as a professor?
      1. Could you tell me what motivated these reasons?
      2. Did your undergraduate or graduate education experience play into your current career?
        - a. How so?
        - b. How has it not (yes or no)?
      3. Have your reasons changed since entering the profession?
        - a. How?
        - b. What do you think has primarily causes changes in your perspective?
        - c. Why do you think not (if no)?
      4. Do you feel your motivation for being a professor impacts the way you teach a course?
        - a. How?
        - b. Why?
        - c. Why do you think not (if no)?
      5. Do you think your motivations are similar to your colleagues?
        - a. How so?
        - b. How do you think are not similar (yes or no)?
    - ii. In higher education, what do you believe is the role of the professor in the college classroom?

1. Do you think this varies for discipline? Type and level of course?
  - a. How so?
  - b. Why?
  - c. Why might there not be a variance based on discipline (yes or no)?
2. Do you think the mission of the institution is important in constructing the syllabus and curricula for your courses?
  - a. If you have experience teaching within the [REDACTED], does this vary between courses taught in the [REDACTED] and specifically for your academic department?
  - b. Why?
  - c. Could you provide some examples?
  - d. Why not (if no)?
  - e. Do you think the mission of the institution is a significant factor in your perspective on the role of the professor in the college classroom?
    - i. How?
    - ii. Why?
    - iii. Why do you think not (if no)?
  - f. What were your expectations about the kind of work you would be doing with regards to teaching in a college classroom? What factors formulated these expectations?
- iii. How would you describe your teaching experiences so far at college and university institutions?
  1. What have been the enjoyable factors of teaching for you?
    - a. How do these factors correlate with your original motivations in becoming a professor?
  2. What do you think are the challenges facing a teaching professor today?
    - a. Why?
    - b. How do you feel support is provided to address these challenges?
      - i. How not (if disagree)?
  3. Have your experiences teaching been what you expected in becoming an academic professor?
    - a. What is similar to what you expected?
    - b. What is different?

- c. Has this changed your outlook on being a professor?
      - i. How?
      - ii. How not (if no)?
- iv. Have you received guidance or instruction in teaching processes, either as a graduate student or currently through faculty development programs?
  - 1. Has it been helpful in teaching your courses?
  - 2. What do you feel could be helpful in contributing to the development of your teaching style?
  - 3. Considering your motivations, do you feel improvement in teaching is important to you as a professor?
    - a. Why?
- v. In higher education, what do you think the role is of the professor in the university setting?
  - 1. Does this vary when considering research and teaching?
    - a. Why?
    - b. Do you think there is an important distinction between research and teaching in the role of the professor in the university setting?
  - 2. Do you think this varies for discipline? Type and level of course?
    - a. How so?
    - b. Why?
    - c. Why might there not be a variance based on discipline (yes or no)?
  - 3. Do you think the mission of the institution is important in understanding your role as a researcher and beyond teaching?
    - a. Why?
    - b. Do you think the mission of the institution is a significant factor in your perspective on the role of the professor in the university setting?
      - i. How?
      - ii. Why?
      - iii. Why do you think not (if no)?
  - 4. How have your experiences teaching in the [REDACTED], if you have taught within the [REDACTED], contributed to your perspective on the role of the professor in the university setting?
  - 5. What has contributed to your perspective on the role of the professor in the university setting?

6. How do you feel your expectations of becoming a professor are similar to what you have experienced so far?
  - vi. How would you describe your experience in conducting research at college and university institutions?
    1. What have been the enjoyable factors of research for you?
      - a. How do these factors correlate with your original motivations in becoming a professor?
    2. What do you think are the challenges facing the research function of your job duties?
      - a. Why?
      - b. How do you feel support is provided to address these challenges?
        - i. How not (if disagree)?
    3. What were your expectations with regards to the kind of work you would be doing with research?
      - a. What factors developed these expectations?
    4. Have your experiences conducting research been what you expected in becoming an academic professor?
      - a. What is similar to what you expected?
      - b. What is different?
      - c. Has this changed your outlook on being a professor?
        - i. How?
        - ii. How not (if no)?
  - vii. If there is a conflict between the professor role in the college classroom and the university setting, how has it impacted your experience thus far in pursuing this career path?
    1. Have your motivations changed?
    2. How?
    3. What else has impacted your perspective on the role you serve as a professor?
  - viii. What would you say to current students that express interest to you in becoming a professor?
    1. Why?
  - c. Wrapping Up
    - i. Do you have anything else you would like to discuss or include?
13. End Recording
14. Thank you