



PART-TIME FACULTY  
IN RURAL APPALACHIA:  
NOT WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK

Ruby Robinson, Ph.D.  
Ivy Tech Community College

March 19, 2016  
Appalachian Studies Association  
Shepherdstown, West Virginia



# Purpose of Research

## Research Question

What are the perceptions of the professional roles and relationships of English part-time faculty at rural Appalachian community colleges?

# Introduction

- Community colleges are important, especially in the rural Appalachian region.
- Community college faculty are primarily part-time.
- Part-time faculty play important roles students, departments, college, community

# Literature Review

- 70% of community college faculty are part-time
- Largest # - English/Literature & primarily female
- Teach introductory courses
- Teach for various reasons

# Definition: Rural Appalachian Community Colleges

- 60% of all community colleges are located in rural areas
- Rural towns or open country of <2,500 in population

# Rural Appalachian Community Colleges

## Disadvantages

- Rural setting
- Financial
- Cultural
- Social
- Hard to attract faculty
- Lower educational levels
- High illiteracy rates
- High unemployment
- High poverty rates

## Advantages

- Rural setting
- Financial
- Cultural
- Social
- Lower crime
- Laid back lifestyle
- Outdoor recreation
- Pride of ownership

# Research Method

- Organizational Role Theory
- Qualitative study – semi-structured interviews
- Emailed community college Presidents
- Interviewed 9 English/Literature part-time faculty
- Five community colleges
- Rural Appalachia



# Theoretical Framework

- Organizational Role Theory - behaviors, obligations, and privileges attached to a position a person occupies
  - roles (behaviors, obligations, and privileges) are pre-planned, task-oriented, and hierarchical
  - employee must accept the roles an organization confers upon them
  - creates functional organization
  - Wickham, M. and Parker, M. (2007)

# Data Analysis

- Rural Appalachia Community college
- Interviewed 9 part-time English/Literature faculty (self-selected)
- Taught 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> yr. introductory English/Literature courses
- All graduated with MS or PhD
- Employed 1-25 yrs. at the comm. college
- Taught 3-18 credit hrs. per semester
- Primarily taught in the classroom
- 3 wanted to be full-time faculty
- Primary job = teaching

# Data Analysis

Part-time faculty and community colleges participating in study

Participant (pseudonym)	Community College (pseudonym)	Student Enrollment	Area Population
Emma, Jane, John	River	2,900	34,900
Marilyn	Mountain	2,300	54,200
Callie	Stream	1,800	45,100
Michael	Creek	1,700	54,200
Mary, Sophia, Anne	Lake	2,100	29,200

# Data Analysis

Economic status of communities of colleges participating in study

Community Colleges	Three-Year Average Unemployment Rate (%) 2008-2010	Per Capita Income 2009	County Poverty Rate (%) 2006-2010
River	9.0	\$23,000	14.7
Mountain	12.8	\$19,500	18.1
Stream	6.3	\$21,800	16.9
Creek	7.7	\$24,000	16.8
Lake	8.6	\$20,000	15.5
United States	8.2	\$32,700	13.8
Appalachian Region	8.4	\$24,500	15.6

# Participants' Demographics

- Interviewed 9 English/Literature Part-time Faculty
- 2 males and 7 females
- Age range – 41 yrs.-75 yrs.
- 5 retired public school teachers
- All Caucasian
- HH income ranging <\$25,000-\$100,000
- 6 born & raised in rural Appalachia

# Participants

## Content/Happy

- Retired teacher
- Former teacher
- Ph.D. student

## Not Content/Unhappy

- Mom
- Ph.D.
- Teaching at community college (permanent pt.)

# Findings

- Reason teaching part-time
- Teaching only
- Departmental culture
- Lack of curriculum decisions
- Short-term contracts
- Number of courses
- Low salary
- Lack of job security
- Facilities

# Happy vs unhappy

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Number in study group</b>
<b>Retired from primary job Not seeking full-time Not dependent on income</b>	6
<b>Second career Seeking full-time Dependent on income</b>	3





# Conclusions

## Roles and Relations

### Thematic Role

- **Teacher**
  - Difference maker
  - Course developer
- **Advisor / Mentor**
- **Institutional Insider**
  - Academic integration
  - Social integration
- **Community player**
- **Income provider**
- **Appalachian citizen**

# Study Recommendations

- College Administration
  - Recruit
  - Job security
  - Higher salary & compensation
  - Professional development
  - Role ambiguity
  - Orientation
  - Course development
  - Faculty governance
  - Committee service
- Academic advising
- Sense of belonging
- Recognition of work
- Upward mobility
- Departmental culture
- Recognition programs
- Directory listing
- Facility
- Community Insider / Outsider

# Study Limitations

- Small sample size
- Location
- Self-selection
- Community College
- Academic Department
- Faculty demographics

# Further Study

- Students
- Administrators
- Full-time faculty
- Roles - academic integration, teaching, academic advising, and curriculum decisions
- Happy part-time faculty
- Salary issues
- Job security
- Sense of belonging
- Recognition of work
- Departmental culture
- Community Insider / Outsider
- Longitudinal study



**Thank You !!!**