



Academic Relations: The Use of Supplementary Faculty

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**With the Collaboration of the Task Force on Part-Time and
Contingent Work in the Academic Workforce**

In the late 1980s, a variety of terms, measures, and definitions emerged to capture a set of employer/employee relations that had grown over the previous two decades. The most widely used term for this relation was “contingent” work. The term refers to employment arrangements in which employees do not have an implicit or explicit contract with their employers (Cohany et al. 1998). Rather, they have part-time, temporary, and other non-standard employment arrangements (many of which involve working side-by-side with full-time, permanent employees) that entail lower pay and minimal benefits such as health care or pensions (Kalleberg et al. 1997); and experience low job security and variability in work hours (Polivka and Nardone 1989). Research suggests that the growth of this contingent labor force provides cost savings and flexibility for employers (Spalter-Roth and Hartmann 1998).

Institutions of higher education have not been exempt from the growth of this type of employer/employee relationship. The hiring of part-time, contingent, visiting and adjunct faculty to supplement full-time faculty, is now a permanent feature of academic life (Barker 1998). This ASA study examines the size, scope, and costs and benefits of those faculty members referred to as “supplementary.” The brief also examines how the use of adjuncts or supplementary faculty in sociology compares to all faculties. Finally, the brief quotes department chairs as to their views of the costs and benefits of using supplementary faculty.

SUPPLEMENTARY FACULTY

Determining the size and impact of supplementary instructional faculty is a challenge because of differing definitions of “supplementary” and options for assessing impact. For example, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) uses the term “part-time faculty” to include all *part-time* faculties but not those who are employed in full-time positions off the tenure track. According to data from NSOPF, part-time faculty has increased to 42.5 percent in 1999 from 21.9 percent in 1970 (U.S. Department of Education 2002). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) includes all non-tenure-track faculty (including full-time faculty) in its definition and estimates that nearly three out of five instructional faculty fall into this category (AAUP 2003). Most recently, using data

from the National Center for Education Statistics' Fall 2001 Survey of Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, AAUP estimated that 64 percent of faculty was not full-time tenure or tenure track (Curtis 2004).

Rather than counting the number or percent of supplementary faculty, assessing the *share of courses* taught by these faculties is an alternative way to determine the impact of supplementary faculty on academic life (Berger et al. 2001). Using this alternative definition and data from the 1998 NSOPF, Berger and her colleagues find that part-time faculty teach 29 percent of credit hours.

Despite definitional differences, there is general agreement that the growth of these positions is viewed as “de-professionalizing” academic careers, threatening academic freedom, and endangering the quality of student learning, as universities try to compensate for cutbacks in state and federal funds (Barker 1998; Benjamin 2002; Conley, Leslie, and Zimbler 2002; Slaughter and Leslie 1997). There is also general consensus that this phenomenon is growing, especially during periods of economic decline. In the context of higher education budget cutbacks, 40 percent of institutions of higher education took at least one action to decrease the number of full-time faculty between 1993 and 1998, with the highest share (22 percent) replacing full-time with part-time faculty (Berger et al. 2001).

SUPPLEMENTARY FACULTY IN SOCIOLOGY

In sociology, the number of majors is growing nationally, but the number of full-time faculty is remaining stable (Spalter-Roth 2003). As in other academic disciplines, supplementary faculty is widely used as a solution by sociology departments and programs to fill in the gap. According to the most recent ASA survey of baccalaureate and graduate programs in sociology (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2003), chairs report that 38 percent of faculty is hired in contingent or supplementary positions (see Table 1). This figure is lower than NSOPF or AAUP counts because the ASA survey did not include as supplementary either part-time faculty who were tenured (or on a tenure track) as the AAUP estimates did or full-time faculty who were not on a tenure track. The rationale for including full-time, non tenure-track faculty is that these positions are usually contractual, provide benefits, and regular full-time, not prorated, pay. However, unlike the NSOPF and the AAUP surveys, the ASA survey counts as supplementary graduate students who teach their own courses and who are hired on a course-by-course basis.

Table 1. Share of All Sociology Department Faculty Who Are Supplementary (Including Adjunct and Part-Time), AY 2000/2001.

| | Number of Faculty | Percent |
|--|-------------------|---------|
| Total Number of Faculty | 8,195 | 100.0% |
| Full-Time Faculty, including Full, Associate, and Assistant Professors (% of Total Faculty) ^a | 5,070 | 61.9 |
| All Supplementary Faculty (% of Total Faculty) | 3,125 | 38.1 |
| Non-Graduate Students (% of Total Faculty) | 2,463 | 30.1 |
| Graduate Students (% of Total Faculty) | 662 | 8.1 |

Source: ASA, *Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology, 2000-2001*.

Note: Supplementary faculty are part-time, temporary, non-contract faculty paid on a per course basis. They may or may not be graduate students.

^a Labeled "FT Faculty" hereafter.

Overall, about three-quarters of sociology department chairs report that they did use supplementary faculty, although this varied by institution type (see Table 2). Departments at research institutions are most likely to employ supplementary faculty, and baccalaureate institutions are the least likely to do so. Some departments are more likely to hire a combination of both graduate and non-graduate students as supplementary faculty; these departments tend to be at Research I or Doctoral I institutions. In contrast, Master's Comprehensive institutions are less likely to hire graduate students, probably because they do not have a ready pool of advanced PhD candidates available. Bachelor's institutions are more likely to use advanced degree candidates than are Master's institutions, possibly because they hire as faculty either those who have not yet completed their doctorates or those who have abandoned their degrees before completion.

Table 2. Percentange of Sociology Departments Using Supplementary Faculty in AY 2000/2001.

| Institution Type | Not Using Any Supplemental Faculty | Using Only Non-Graduate Students | Using Only Graduate Students | Using Both Non-Graduate and Graduate Students | Total | (N) |
|-------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|------------|
| Research I | 15.7% | 31.4% | 1.4% | 51.4% | 100.0% | (70) |
| Research II | 9.7 | 35.5 | 9.7 | 45.2 | 100.0 | (31) |
| Doctoral I | 20.0 | 26.7 | 6.7 | 46.7 | 100.0 | (31) |
| Doctoral II | 24.4 | 53.7 | 0.0 | 22.0 | 100.0 | (41) |
| Masters I | 19.2 | 69.7 | 2.8 | 8.4 | 100.0 | (288) |
| Masters II | 23.5 | 72.5 | 0.0 | 3.9 | 100.0 | (51) |
| Baccalaureate I | 41.7 | 45.6 | 6.8 | 5.8 | 100.0 | (103) |
| Baccalaureate II | 32.8 | 55.7 | 4.0 | 7.5 | 100.0 | (201) |
| All Departments | 25.3 | 56.4 | 3.6 | 14.7 | 100.0 | (816) |

Source: ASA, *Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology, 2000-2001*.

Percent of Courses Taught

As noted, Berger et al. (2001) found that supplementary faculty teach an average of 29 percent of courses across all disciplines. In contrast, data from sociology departments suggest that the share of courses taught by supplementary faculty is 22 percent. The differences between these numbers may be the result of measurement differences. In sociology, there is significant variation by type of department, ranging from a low of 15 percent at Baccalaureate I institutions to a high of 38 percent at Doctoral I institutions (see Table 3).

Table 3. Mean Percentage of Courses per Sociology Department Taught by Full-Time and Supplementary Faculty, by Type of Institution, AY 2000/2001.

| Institution Type | FT Faculty | Supplementary Faculty | | | (N) |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| | | Non-Graduate Supplementary Faculty | Graduate Supplementary Faculty | All Supplementary Faculty | |
| Research I | 73.0% | 18.0% | 9.1% | 27.0% | (45) |
| Research II | 71.0 | 18.3 | 10.6 | 29.0 | (24) |
| Doctoral I | 62.0 | 26.4 | 11.7 | 38.0 | (22) |
| Doctoral II | 78.5 | 18.8 | 2.6 | 21.5 | (31) |
| Masters I | 78.5 | 19.9 | 1.6 | 21.5 | (204) |
| Masters II | 75.4 | 24.0 | 0.5 | 24.6 | (35) |
| Baccalaureate I | 85.1 | 13.1 | 1.8 | 14.9 | (66) |
| Baccalaureate II | 77.7 | 20.2 | 2.1 | 22.3 | (129) |
| All Departments | 77.5 | 19.4 | 3.1 | 22.5 | (555) |

Source: ASA, *Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology*, 2000-2001.

Table 4. Mean Salaries and Health Care Benefits Offered to Non-Supplementary Faculty per Sociology Department, by Institution Type, AY 2000/2001.

| Institution Type | Average Salary Per Course for Non-Graduate Students | Average Salary Per Course for Graduate Students | Offers Pro-Rated Health Benefits (Percent of Departments) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Research I | \$3,796 | \$3,734 | 25.5% |
| Research II | \$3,654 | \$3,268 | 31.8% |
| Doctoral I | \$2,677 | \$2,411 | 9.1% |
| Doctoral II | \$2,619 | \$1,580 | 20.0% |
| Masters I | \$2,361 | \$1,809 | 19.9% |
| Masters II | \$2,165 | \$1,517 | 0.0% |
| Baccalaureate I | \$3,099 | \$2,179 | 15.6% |
| Baccalaureate II | \$1,978 | \$1,740 | 5.7% |
| All Departments | \$2,511 | \$2,386 | 15.8% |

Source: ASA, *Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology*, 2000-2001.

Pay and Benefits

Low pay is a key characteristic of contingent employment, along with lack of a contract, and variability in work hours. According to a recent survey of nine humanities and social science disciplines (not including sociology) by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW), the majority of those teaching on a course-by-course basis earn less than \$3,000 per course, with one-third earning less than \$2,000 (Cox 2000). Table 4 shows comparable numbers for sociology. The average per course salary for supplementary faculty who are not graduate students is \$2,511, and the average salary per course for graduate students teaching their own courses is significantly lower at \$2,386. There are significant differences in the level of pay for supplementary sociology faculty among different types of institutions with Research I institutions paying the most and Master's II and Baccalaureate II paying the least.

Lack of health insurance and other benefits is another feature of contingent work. According to a recent study of institutional policies and practices, approximately 36 percent of institutions of higher education that were surveyed claimed that part-time faculty had medical insurance or medical care (Berger et al. 2001). It is not clear in this study if these part-time faculty that were categorized as part-time employees by their institutions, and whether, for example, they included graduate students teaching their own courses. This percentage appears high when compared to the share of sociology departments that offer health benefits to supplementary faculty (see Table 4). On average, 15.8 percent of sociology departments offer supplementary faculty these benefits. Sociology departments at Research II institutions are most likely to provide benefits (31.8 percent do so). Sociology departments at the small number of departments at Master's II institutions do not offer any health benefits.

Savings per Sociology Department

The average sociology department saves an estimated 20 percent of faculty salaries by using supplementary faculty (Table 5). That is, they save about \$98,771, the equivalent of the salary for two new assistant professors. The table shows significant differences among types of departments. With the exception of sociology programs at Baccalaureate I institutions that use relatively few supplementary faculty, the remainder save between 12 and 27 percent of faculty expenditures by using adjuncts. Sociology departments at Doctoral I institutions saved the most on supplementary faculty (an average of \$300,090 per department in academic year 2000/2001) and saved the highest percent of faculty salary.

Table 5. Estimated Median Salary Savings per Sociology Department Using Supplemental Faculty, by Institution Type, AY 2000/2001.

| Institution Type | Actual Salaries per Department | | | Estimated Expenditures and Cost Savings per Department | | | (N) |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|-------|
| | Total Salary Expenditures to All Faculty (includes Supplementary Faculty) | Average Salary Expenditures to FT Faculty (excludes Supplementary Faculty) | Average Salary per Course for FT Faculty | Total Salary Expenditures if FT Faculty Taught All Courses ^a | Total Salary Savings Using Supplementary Faculty ^b | Percent Salary Expenditures Saved Using Supplementary Faculty ^c | |
| Research I | \$1,010,733 | \$980,622 | \$25,766 | \$1,266,960 | \$256,227 | 18.6% | (26) |
| Research II | \$782,666 | \$751,323 | \$23,210 | \$1,003,254 | \$220,588 | 19.0 | (18) |
| Doctoral I | \$673,017 | \$643,638 | \$24,854 | \$973,107 | \$300,090 | 27.0 | (16) |
| Doctoral II | \$469,672 | \$449,429 | \$16,332 | \$588,726 | \$119,054 | 18.2 | (27) |
| Masters I | \$341,817 | \$326,351 | \$12,881 | \$419,853 | \$78,037 | 16.1 | (162) |
| Masters II | \$196,448 | \$183,952 | \$13,083 | \$272,119 | \$75,671 | 22.0 | (30) |
| Baccalaureate I | \$231,684 | \$221,455 | \$14,449 | \$298,288 | \$66,604 | 12.0 | (32) |
| Baccalaureate II | \$123,307 | \$115,734 | \$10,655 | \$170,469 | \$47,162 | 21.6 | (95) |
| All Departments | \$354,904 | \$339,419 | \$14,472 | \$453,675 | \$98,771 | 18.4 | (406) |

Source: ASA, *Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology*, 2000-2001.

^a This is the average total salary expenditure per department if full-time faculty taught all courses and supplementary faculty taught none. The mean is calculated by multiplying the actual full-time faculty salary per course by the total number of courses taught for each department.

^b This is the average cost savings per department if supplementary faculty are employed. This estimate is calculated for each department by subtracting the actual total salary expenditure for all faculty from the estimated total salary expenditures if full-time faculty taught all courses.^a

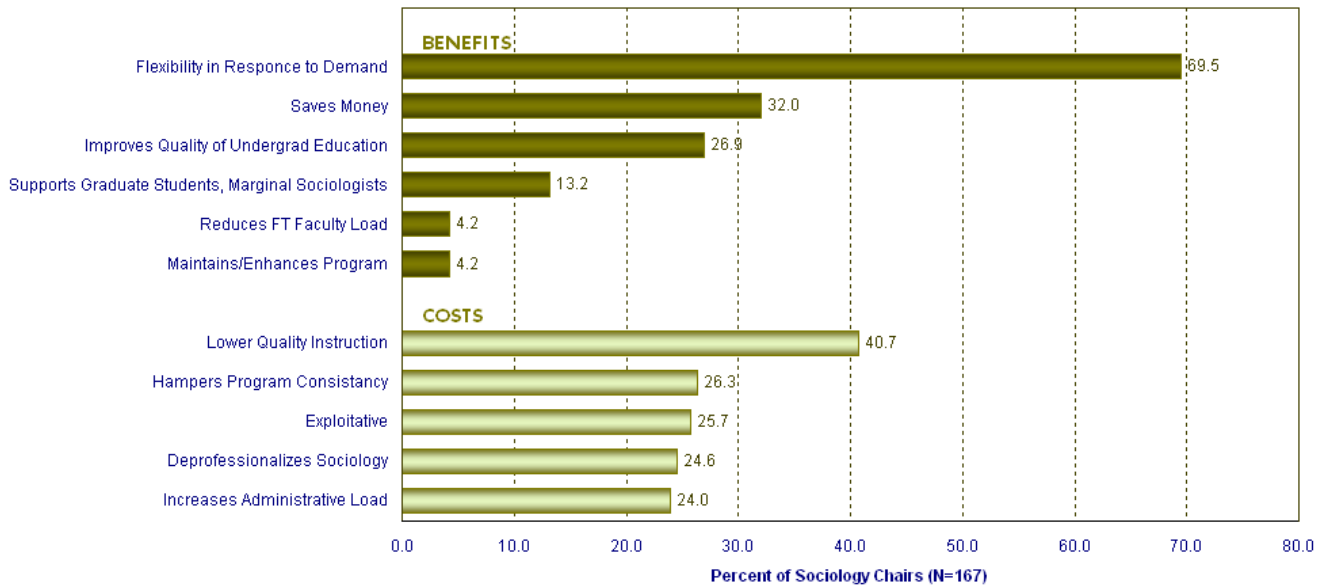
^c This is the average percentage savings per department if supplementary faculty are used. The mean is calculated by dividing the estimated salary savings if supplementary faculty are used^b by the estimated total salaries if full-time faculty taught all courses^a for each department.

The Chair's View of Benefits and Costs

Organizations such as AAUP and CAW have called for limitations on the use of supplementary faculty, better salaries and benefits, improved workplace conditions, and on-going studies of costs to students and faculty of the increasing use of non-tenured faculty. As part of its effort to study the phenomenon, the ASA conducted a brief online, open-ended survey of 350 chairs of ASA-affiliated sociology departments, in order to obtain chairs' views of both the benefits and the costs of employing supplementary faculty. Of the 167 chairs (48 percent) that responded to this survey, about the same number listed *benefits* to using supplementary faculty as listed *costs* to using supplementary faculty (148 versus 145, respectively) with more than 8 out of 10 listing both costs and benefits. Slightly more specific costs were listed than were specific benefits-with chairs listing an average of 1.9 costs per person compared to 1.6 benefits.

Benefits. Saving money, even during periods of economic shortages, is not the primary reason given for hiring supplementary faculty. (See Figure 1 for the top five benefits and costs listed by chairs.) One-third of the responding chairs saw saving money as a benefit. Chairs probably did not perceive savings as a benefit because, in 9 out of 10 cases, sociology departments did not get to keep the money saved by using lower-paid supplementary faculty. Instead, savings accrued to the budgets of deans or provosts.

Figure 1. Top-Five Benefits and Costs of Using Adjunct Faculty, April 2004



Source: ASA, Research and Development Department, Research Program on the Profession and the Discipline, *Contingent Employment in Sociology Departments*, April 2004.

The most widely reported reason for hiring supplementary faculty is “flexibility.” In other words, these hires provide department chairs with the ability to respond quickly to shifting demands for numbers or types of courses. In addition, the use of supplementary faculty allows departments to maintain or enhance their programs when there is no money for a full-time replacement or a new hire. As one responding chair wrote:

Hiring adjuncts allows us to increase our offerings beyond what our limited number of full-time faculty can offer; offer courses outside the expertise of full-time faculty; replace faculty on leave or who have a course reduction; and occasionally, but not typically, find an additional colleague who participates in the life of the department.

According to chairs, the most valuable supplementary faculty are those who are sociology specialists employed outside the university. For example, one chair responded as follows:

We have two types of adjuncts. First, a small cadre of three criminal justice professionals who...enable us to offer specialized professionally oriented courses to our criminal justice majors. Second we have adjunct faculty who teach for us on an “as needed” basis....

Finally, about one-quarter of chairs stated that supplementary faculty increased the quality of undergraduate teaching by giving students access to “fresh,” “up-to-date,” and “applied” approaches.

Costs. Although one-quarter of all responding chairs wrote that supplementary faculty increased the quality of undergraduate education (especially when these faculty were

specialists who had long-term relations with the department), a greater share (about two-fifths) expressed an opposing point of view that the quality of undergraduate education was affected negatively by the use of supplementary faculty. These chairs noted the relative lack of supplementary faculty's accessibility to students because of the lack of office space and office hours. They also questioned the breadth and depth of knowledge presented in courses taught by supplementary faculty who were not PhDs. They were concerned that supplementary faculty developed a set of course materials but did not receive sufficient pay to spend the time to update them regularly. In addition, a number of chairs replied that supplementary faculty lowered the quality of undergraduate education by "inflating grades" in order to cover their "shortcomings in teaching."

Other types of costs are seen to occur at three levels: the individual, the departmental, and the professional. About one-quarter of respondents listed each of these types of costs. Costs to the individual are thought of in terms of direct costs to the individual adjunct. Chairs voiced deep unease about the exploitation of adjunct faculty who could teach as many as six courses per year and still make substantially less than \$20,000 (in some cases, substantially under \$10,000). As one chair stated,

Adjuncts are generally well-trained professionals who have put as much time and money into their graduate degrees as has those of us lucky ones who do have a full-time position. They have to piece together a substandard existence at low pay and no benefits by teaching in several institutions, often doing more courses than a regular faculty member. As a result these nomad-professionals are treated as outcasts with no office (often), no job security and no opportunity to do research. Further, university lore has it in some circles that you don't hire full-time faculty from among part-time faculty. This type of exploited labor should be regulated and remunerated fairly; somewhat closer to prorated full-time pay.

Another chair summed this situation up as follows: "Frankly, we exploit adjuncts. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth as department chair."

The second set of costs is related to the department curriculum and its mission. Chairs commented that if departments were increasingly to become dependent on supplementary faculty for teaching basic or specialty courses, then the quality of the sociology program would decline. In such a situation, the lack of continuity and the high turnover would make it difficult for a department to develop long-term curriculum plans and for supplementary faculty to know of these plans and other university initiatives. The final outcome, in chairs' views, would be lower standards and a consequent loss of sociology majors.

According to these chairs, the use of supplementary faculty increases the department-level workload for permanent faculty including the chairs themselves. Since adjuncts cannot be held accountable for advising, mentoring, or service, a disproportionate share of these tasks falls to permanent faculty. Chairs characterize their own increased work load as composed of "endless paperwork" and the "major headaches of constant recruitment, hiring, supervising, and evaluating."

Finally, one-quarter of responding chairs were concerned that increases in the use of supplementary faculty would result in the de-professionalization of sociology by creating a two-tier caste system, limiting collegiality, lowering standards, and decreasing the pool of active scholars. As one chair stated:

The increasing use of adjuncts is basically part of a process of de-professionalizing the discipline. It reflects just one way regular faculty lose influence, have the quality of their professional lives undercut and ultimately cheapen the product we offer our students.

Summary and Conclusions

Data show that the use of supplementary faculty is increasing overall, with non-permanent faculty constituting between about 40 to 60 percent of all faculties and teaching about 20 to 30 percent of all classes, depending on how the term is defined. The reason for this growth is that in periods of economic constraints on higher education, many institutions are experiencing cutbacks in positions for full-time tenure track faculty and replacing them with adjunct faculty in order to save money. Sociology departments save an average of 20 percent of faculty costs by using supplementary faculty. But cost savings and budget constraints are not the only reason for the growth in this form of employer/employee relationship. For sociology department chairs, hiring flexibility, specialization, and avoidance of hiring freezes are potential benefits. Nonetheless, many permanent faculty are alarmed at the growth of this employer/employee relation, the exploitation of these faculty members, and the concomitant decline in the share of tenured or tenure-track faculty (Benjamin 2002; Conley et al. 2002). As one sociology chair, who responded to the department affiliate survey, stated:

Professional associations should take up the issue of exploitation of fellow professionals even if (or precisely because) these can't afford membership dues.

A number of professional associations are working to raise the public's consciousness about the consequences, measured and perceived, of a growing adjunct faculty. But, the use of adjuncts is not a simple issue. As noted above, 8 out of 10 of the sociology chairs described both costs and benefits to the use of adjunct faculty. They are aware that the other side of flexibility is lack of continuity. The other side of cost savings is exploitation, and that the other side of providing students with additional specialties is more non-classroom work for the chair and the permanent faculty.

From the viewpoint of supplementary faculty, a recent survey suggests that the majority of adjunct faculty respond that they are satisfied with their jobs, although not with their pay scales, benefits, or opportunities for advancement. According to the study authors, this response suggests strong intrinsic rewards for teaching at the college or the university level (Conley et al. 2002). If these findings are valid, then supplementary as well as permanent faculty see the contradictions and feel the conflicts to this type of employee/employer relation.

Future ASA surveys of sociology departments will determine if there are increases in the share of supplementary faculty and the percent of courses that they teach. Over time, we anticipate these surveys will help us understand whether the adjunct phenomenon is a result of cutbacks in state and federal higher education dollars or is an indicator of a more permanent restructuring of employment relationships in academe. They may also help us raise potentially useful ideas about ways to improve the negative side of using supplementary faculty, for example, ways to increase the availability of health and pension benefits and to increase their portability, ways to better integrate supplementary faculty into the life of departments without simply adding to their workload, and methods for disciplinary societies to subsidize the scholarly activities of adjunct faculty.

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