

# Communities of Practice: How They Wither and Die & What to Do About It

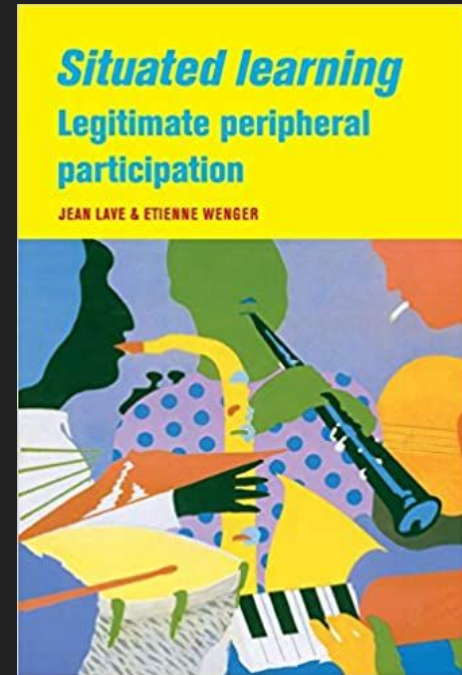
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# Introduction to Me ;-)

- Advising since 2002
- Exploratory
- Art
- Pre-Health
- Theory, Philosophy, & History
- Communities of Practice

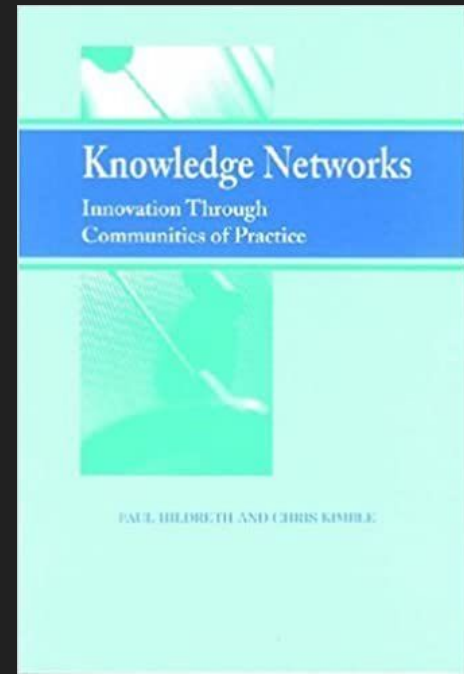
# Introduction to Communities of Practice (CoPs)

First proposed by cognitive anthropologist **Jean Lave** and educational theorist **Etienne Wenger** in their book *Situated Learning* (1991).



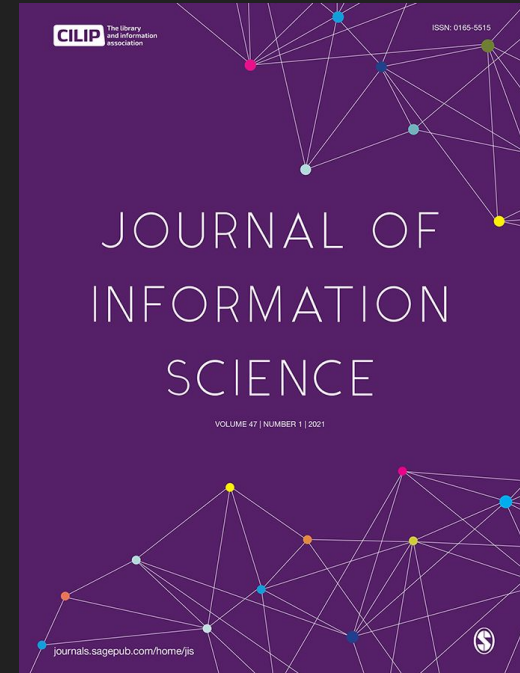
# Introduction to CoPs

Hildreth and Kimble (2004) detail how the concept changed in the decade (or so) since its introduction.



# Introduction to CoPs

Cox (2005) reviews how the concept has been adopted and interpreted over that time.



# Introduction to CoPs

“Communities of practice are *groups of people* who *share a concern or a passion* for *something they do* and *learn how to do it better* as they *interact regularly*” (Wenger-Trayner, E. & B., 2015; *emphasis added*).



# Introduction to CoPs

“At Shell, community coordinators often conduct interviews to collect these stories and then publish them in newsletters and reports. AMS organizes a yearly competition to identify the best stories. An analysis of a sample of stories revealed that the communities had saved the company \$2 million to \$5 million and increased revenue by more than \$13 million in one year” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

# CoPs in Academic Advising

- 2016 McFarlane & Thomas: Advocating for Academic Advising (11th chapter of *Beyond Foundations: Developing as a Master Academic Advisor*)
- 2019 Pasquini & Eaton: The #AcAdv Community
- 2020 McGill, Duslak, & Puroway: Professional Socialization

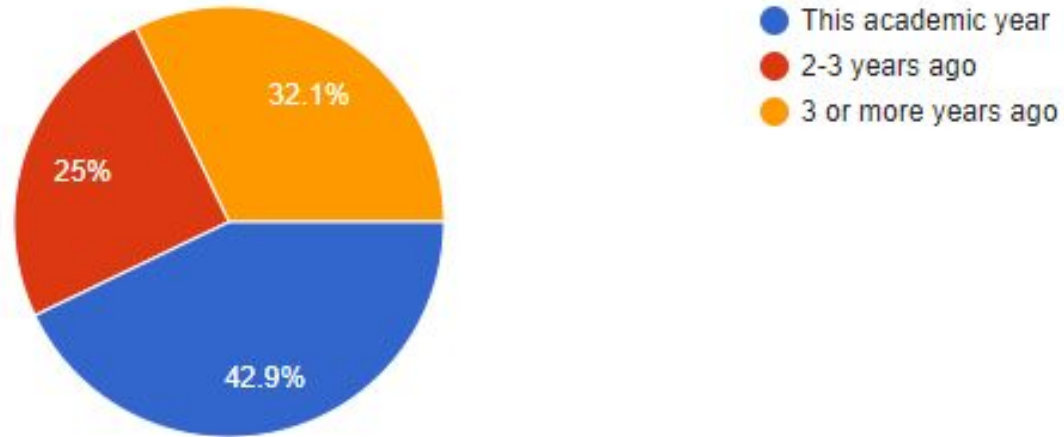


# Cox's 8 Conditions that Limit the Growth of COPs

1. Frequent Reorganization
2. People Come and Go
3. Others Define How Work is Done
4. Work is Individualized
5. Competitive Environments
6. Time-pressurized Environments
7. Work is Spatially Fragmented
8. Heavily Mediated by Technology

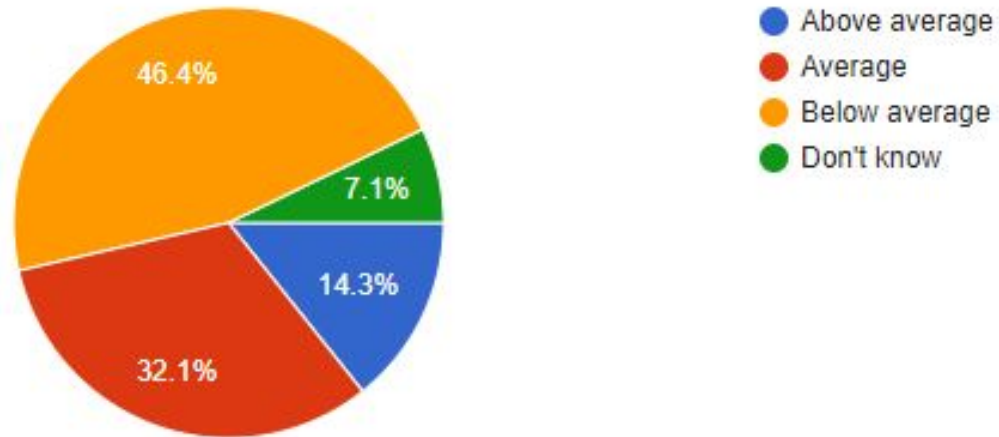
# 1. Frequent Reorganization

When was the last organizational change to advising on your campus?



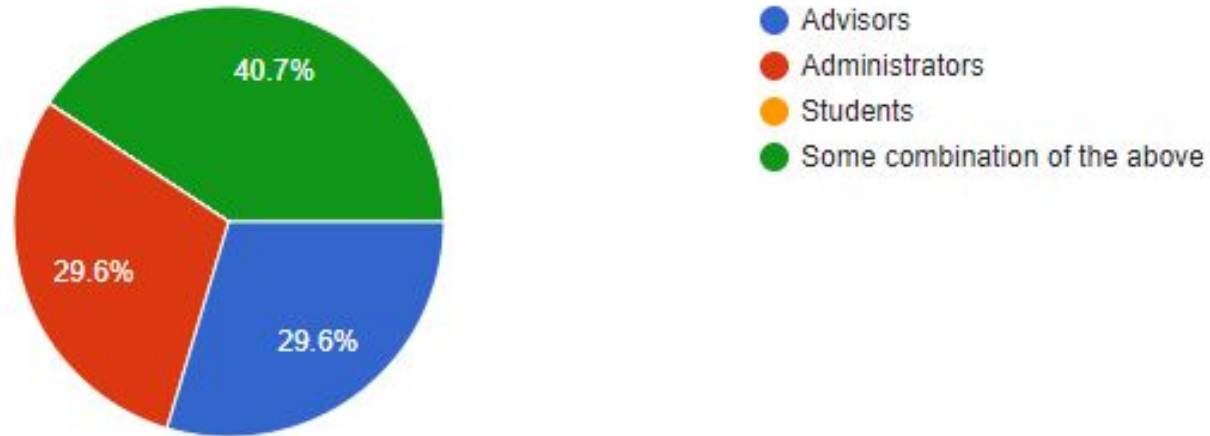
## 2. People Come and Go

How would you describe advisor turnover on your campus?



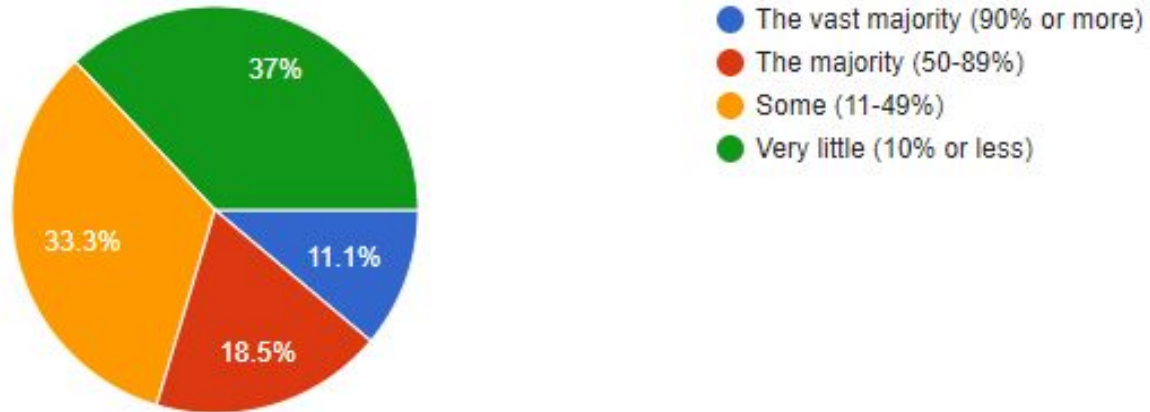
### 3. Others Define How Work is Done

Who would you say mostly defines how advising work is done on your campus?



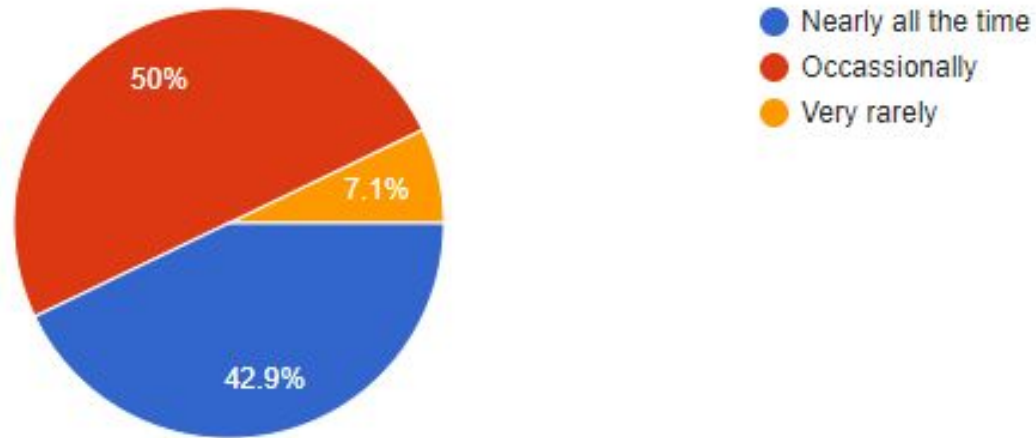
## 4. Work is Individualized

How much advising work on your campus would you say is done in offices with only one advisor?



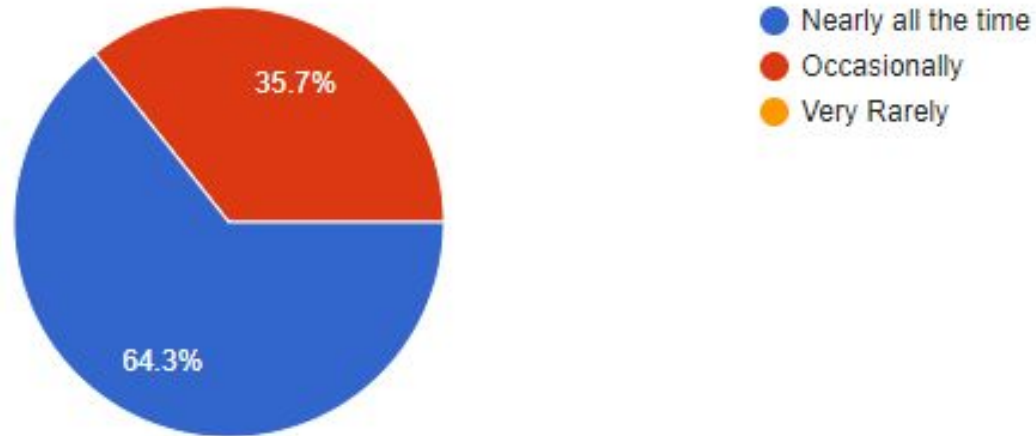
## 5. Competitive Environments

How much does it seem like resources are scarce and competed for on your campus?



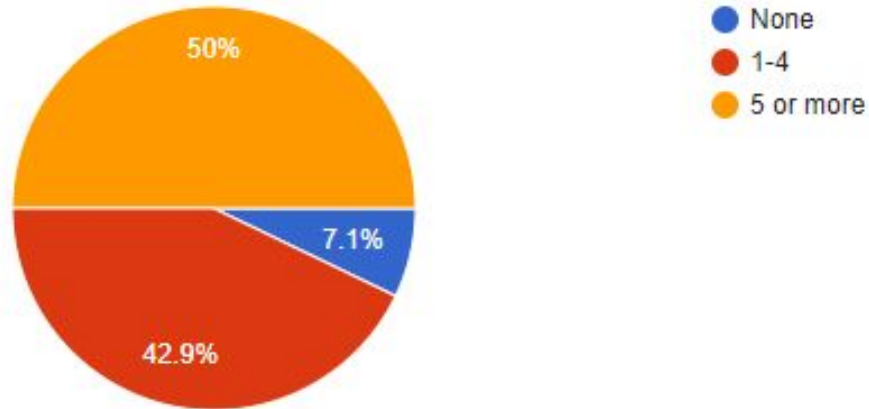
## 6. Time-pressurized Environments

How much does it seem like advising work is done under time pressures on your campus?



## 7. Work is Spatially Fragmented

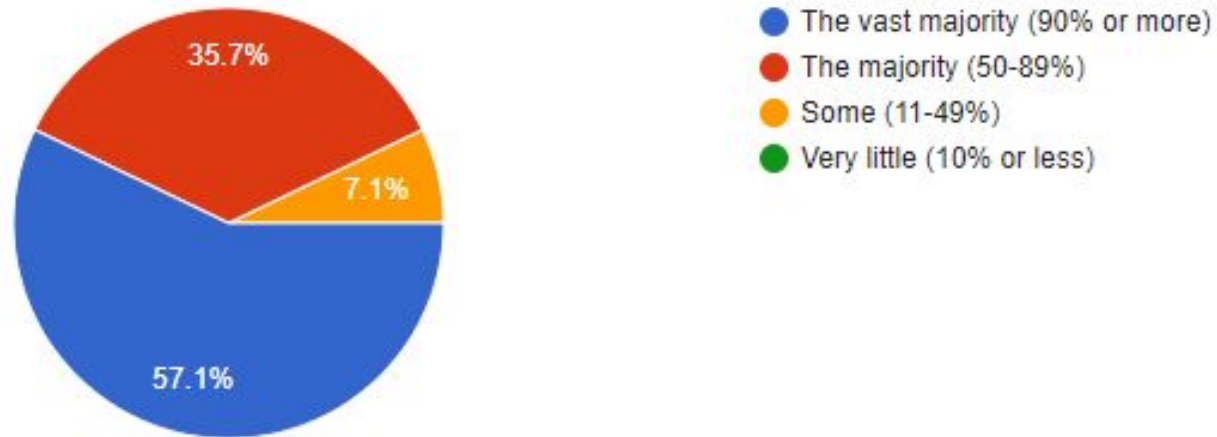
How many other advisors are in your immediate vicinity and are easily accessible to speak with about your work?





## 8. Heavily Mediated by Technology

How much advising work on your campus would you say is conducted using a computer?



# 1. Frequent Reorganization

- Individuals
  - Use Maps
  - Find the People
- Administrators
  - Reconnect the Disconnected
  - Focus on Alignment
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Characterize the Range of Change
  - Broaden Theoretical Fields

## 2. People Come and Go

- Individuals
  - Prioritize Self Care
  - Be an Includer
- Administrators
  - Measure Percent Full-Staff
  - Optimize Onboarding
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Stop Dropping Hints
  - Examine Longevity

# 3. Others Define How Work is Done

- Individuals
  - Practice Collegiality
  - Advise Up
- Administrators
  - Work with Killjoys
  - Build Coalitions for Consensus
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Ask Better Questions
  - Promote Best Practices

## 4. Work is Individualized

- Individuals
  - Don't Be a Stranger
  - Involve Stakeholders in Your Practice
- Administrators
  - Make Mentoring Meaningful
  - Conduct Direct Assessment
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Present AT&D in Many Modalities
  - Inquire about Isolation

# 5. Competitive Environments

- Individuals
  - Choose Wisely
  - It is Dangerous to Go Alone
- Administrators
  - Know Your Price Points
  - Develop Winning Strategies
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Communicate the Costs of Competition
  - Practice Appropriate Partnership

# 6. Time-pressurized Environments

- Individuals
  - Understand Temporal Styles
  - Get Big Picture
- Administrators
  - Determine Seasons of the Semester
  - Prioritize Return on (time) Investment
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Investigate Time Anomalies
  - Challenge the Culture of Immediacy

# 7. Work is Spatially Fragmented

- Individuals
  - Be a Good Neighbor
  - Water Coolers Aren't Just Clichés
- Administrators
  - Plan to Be Social
  - Plan to Give Ground
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Mind the Gaps
  - Exchange, Apprenticeship, & Situate Learning



# 8. Heavily Mediated by Technology

- Individuals
  - Make Time for Analog
  - Be an Early Adopter
- Administrators
  - Secure a Seat
  - Push for Meaningful Metrics
- Scholar Practitioners
  - Explore the Effects
  - Advocate for Us Cyborgs

# Conclusions

1. “Conditions of much, perhaps most twenty-first-century work inhibit sustained collective sense making” (Cox, 2005, p. 533), and, thus, communities of practice.
2. Academic advising practitioners who want to leverage the benefits of communities of practice must contend with the conditions that work against their development.
3. As academic advising scholars consider the efficacy of the concept of communities of practice for the field, they must also address its ambiguity and limitations.

# References

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# Thank You!

Questions?