GROWTH WITHIN THE ADJUNCT FACULTY ROLE: AN INTERACTION OF
CHALLENGE, SUPPORT, AND CONTEXT

Dissertation
Submitted to
The School of Education and Health Sciences of the
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

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Dayton, Ohio
December 2017
GROWTH WITHIN THE ADJUNCT FACULTY ROLE:
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ABSTRACT

GROWTH WITHIN THE ADJUNCT FACULTY ROLE: AN INTERACTION OF CHALLENGE, SUPPORT, AND CONTEXT

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Adjunct, part-time faculty members account for a majority of the faculty group on many campuses in the U.S.A. The hiring of adjuncts saves higher education institutions money, and it provides part-time roles for those interested. However, there is not the rigor of planning for employing adjunct faculty as exists for employing full-time faculty. As a result, adjuncts and institutions may experience confusion and fail to garner sufficient benefits from the arrangement. Adjunct faculty members can experience significant challenges as they work to fulfil the responsibilities of their role on campus. This study examined the relationship between the challenges that a group of adjuncts face and the supports that they have available to them. The culminating interaction provides insight into the potential that exists in the adjunct faculty role. A constructive developmental lens is used in this phenomenological study of the growth that participants construct about their present and past experiences in an adjunct role. Empirical materials were comprised of interviews of sixteen participants at one private institution. Findings indicate that these adjuncts struggle with challenges in the structuring of the role, in feeling neglected by the
institution, and of not having a community on campus. The supports available to address these challenges varied widely among the participants, but the implications are that solutions may already exist for the more basic challenges. For the more complex challenges, this research offers some suggestions for further investigation.
Dedicated to

The participants of this study, whose voices need to be heard.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I complete this work, it is imperative that I acknowledge those who have encouraged and inspired me throughout my dissertation process. I previously had the pleasure of working on research projects with Dr. Hart, and she quickly became an early mentor to me and remains so today. I admire her generosity; she loves to see others succeed, and she has offered me what seemed like an endless supply of cheerful encouragement.

I owe much gratitude to Dr. Watras, who stepped in as my chair after the retirement of my first. Dr. Watras became instrumental in my progress. I feel that he believed in me from the moment we first talked and that he believed in the good of the work with which I was invested. He passed away a couple of years after becoming my chair. His intelligence, wit, and ethical guidance through the world of higher education will not be forgotten. After his passing, I relied heavily on my writing group, a cohort of peers, who understand the ups and downs of writing a dissertation. Sherry, Allison, and Jason kept me focused on taking steps each month and provided me with a variety of perspectives.

I also found comfort from the sense of community fostered through Dr. Bowman’s leadership. She supported me in meeting Dr. Falk, who read and connected with my work. He agreed to serve as my chair and guide me through to the completion of
my dissertation. I very much appreciate his unique and valuable insights along with his willingness to work with me at that point in my journey.

Beyond professional mentors, I want to acknowledge my family. I am a first-generation college student who had lofty goals, and I thank my parents for offering me support thorough their love and belief in me. My husband, despite the added responsibilities bestowed upon him as a result of my endeavors, always has the confidence and determination that we will make anything work. His strength and work ethic has always inspired me. My kiddos were really glad when I finished my dissertation, but even they did not much complain about their mom’s full schedule. I love them all bunches.

Lastly, I am grateful for my friends who grounded me and gave me much needed escapes from work. I would also like to acknowledge my church community for reminding me what is really important at times when I felt that my work was all encompassing. For all of these people, and many more, this process was more bearable and more fruitful than going it alone. I am grateful.
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CHAPTER I
THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Introduction
The United States is home to some of the world’s most esteemed institutions of higher education (IHEs). Faculty members constitute a cornerstone of our well-respected universities. Great care is taken when new tenure-track professors are hired; institutions fully engage in the process to ensure quality additions to the faculty. Filling a tenure-track position “involves national searches, careful vetting processes, and rigorous peer review” (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015, p. 13). In addition to tenure-track faculty, institutions hire other types of faculty members, such as part-time faculty. However, part-time faculty members, commonly known as adjuncts, have hiring processes that look much different than their tenure-track colleagues. In this study, the term adjunct is used in part because it best depicts the population in this study. The term contingent faculty includes full-time, non-tenure track faculty, and the term part-time includes graduate assistantships (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2015). These other populations are not the focus of this study. In addition, many of the support, resources, and activism efforts, for example The Adjunct Project (June & Newman, 2013), use the term adjunct. The definition of the word is a descriptive fit in that adjuncts can be seen as supplementary to the faculty group. To examine even one obvious difference between the faculty groups, such as the hiring practices as previously described, the contrast is
notable. Adjuncts are hired “almost entirely ad hoc… (and fired) almost any old way” (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015, p. 13). The difference begs the question of why is it so different and does it ultimately matter. Perhaps a more interesting, albeit broader, conversation concerns how employing adjunct faculty fits into the culture and tradition of higher education.

**A Unique and Evolving Role**

The role of adjunct faculty is fundamentally different than the role of tenured faculty; an adjunct is “usually paid per credit hour of the course taught and is not responsible for other duties traditionally associated with the professorial ranks such as participating in faculty governance or service, conducting research, or advising students” (O’Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2008, p. 58). The adjunct role is “limited to teaching” (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006, p. 35), negating the other three aspects of the professoriate that overlap and inform one another in what Boyer (1990) referred to as the scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, which are defined in the next chapter.

Adjunct positions are markedly dynamic in that adjuncts can be hired, fired, and rehired from one semester to the next, often in response to fluctuations in student enrollment or to fill in for faculty who are on sabbatical, for instance. Traditionally, adjuncts could provide an important function, benefitting the university by making it easier for it to weather enrollment storms. The role could also benefit adjuncts, giving them the option of teaching part-time while earning a supplementary income from their salaried work outside of academia. The role could even benefit students, connecting them to the world outside of education and providing them with a unique perspective for learning when adjuncts bring practical, working knowledge into the classroom. Adrianne
Kezar is an expert in higher education workforce issues; in an interview, she stated that the aforementioned connection to life outside of academia was why adjuncts were initially employed but explains that the role is now being utilized differently (as cited in Sanchez, 2014).

There are perhaps several reasons why the role has evolved. For one, there have been environmental events that have likely impacted the adjunct role. Student enrollment soared, to over 20 million in 2009, while IHEs experienced a decline in financial support by state legislators (Bérubé & Ruth 2015, p. 15). Hiring additional adjuncts is one way that an institution can reduce costs. The cost of salaries, benefits, and other funding for full-time tenured and contractual faculty comprise the majority of an institution’s instructional budget (Brown & Gamber, 2002). Institutional leaders can choose to hire adjuncts, a quick and easy process, to react to increasing enrollment, and the decision to employ adjuncts saves institutions money at the same time.

How much IHEs pay adjuncts has been widely discussed but with sparse data. The Adjunct Project, which has been since expanded upon by The Chronicle of Higher Education, began as a crowdsourcing initiative to collect data on adjunct faculty pay and working conditions (June & Newman, 2013). In 2013, adjuncts had reported an average pay of $2,987 for a three-credit course (June & Newman). From that same site, a notable difference in pay can be seen across institutions. The average pay for a three-credit hour course for an adjunct at a two-year rural IHE was $1,808; on the other end of the pay spectrum, the average pay for an adjunct teaching the same credit hours at Harvard was $11,037. Also, there was also a sizable difference in pay across disciplines; an adjunct teaching English courses could make on average $2,727, whereas the average for an
adjunct teaching engineering courses was $4,789 (June & Newman, 2013).

The financial decisions to employ adjuncts may speak to changing IHEs as they have “‘begun to adopt corporate management practices,’ Kezar says. ‘Corporations move to more contingent labor because it is a cheaper form of labor.’” (Sanchez, 2014). In 1970, seventy percent of faculty was tenured, but that number inverted by 2015 when contingent faculty members made up about 70 percent of all faculty (Bérubé & Ruth, 2015, pp.14-15). Adjuncts are one group included in that contingent faculty designation. The adjunct faculty group alone makes up more than 50% of all faculty (AAUP, 2015).

**Complexity of the Role**

Adjunct faculty positions are somewhat plentiful and fairly easy to obtain; however, the many adjunct positions now available have created concerns that may not have been previously experienced to the current extent. For example, there can be detrimental effects if adjuncts mistakenly enter into arrangements, such as short-term contracts, that they presume will lead to full-time or tenure track faculty positions. The professoriate has become a multitrack career field, and the adjunct track does not progress to tenure-track positions. There is a complex case from 2013 that depicts, at least to some degree, the social justice issues that plague the use of adjunct faculty. Margaret Mary Vojtko was an adjunct faculty member who taught French for twenty-five years at Duquesne University. At the height of her adjunct career, “when she was teaching three classes a semester and two during the summer, she was not even clearing $25,000 a year, and she received absolutely no health care benefits” (Kovalik, 2013). She was diagnosed with cancer and continued to teach until she was let go by the university. She died a short time after having lived a life of poverty.
Rosemary Feal, executive director of the Modern Language Association, said in an e-mail that Vojtko's story was ‘very sad…. This faculty member experienced poverty wages, marginalization, and overall poor working conditions, and as she became ill, she still managed to keep her commitment to her students,’ Feal said. ‘If the institution for which she worked were following MLA guidelines, she would have received around $7,000 per three-credit course along with access to benefits. Perhaps cases like this one will force institutions to realize that those hired to teach college-level courses deserve to be treated as the professionals they are.’ (Flaherty, 2013)

It has become consequential to look at how the adjunct role is functioning on campuses. Employment factors, such as job security and compensation, are significant because adjuncts may be relying on their positions more heavily if they do not have an additional paycheck from another job to supplement their adjunct pay. Some adjuncts piece together a full-time job by working several part-time ones. While the role of adjunct faculty was intended to be a circumstantial one, it has evolved into a more permanent fixture at many IHEs and therefore necessitates attention.

**Statement of the Problem**

In addition to the evolving and complex role of adjunct faculty, which has resulted in compensation, benefits, and job security struggles, adjuncts are struggling in other ways as well. As a part of the faculty constituency, adjuncts can be subject to some of the same challenges that full-time faculty may face, but the two groups have different challenges as well. Whereas full-time faculty may have access to department meetings, committees, mentors, and other resources, feeling unsupported is one challenge that
adjuncts, in particular, face; adjuncts are generally not satisfied with the support that they are offered by the institution (Hoyt et al., 2008).

Besides the struggles that are more personal in nature, there are also instructional challenges that arise from employing adjunct faculty. Part-time faculty members were found to have less student interaction than full-time faculty members (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Lutovsky, 2010), which can be a disadvantage for the faculty as well as for the students. Researchers (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2012) found that engagement, specifically with significant tasks, such as working with faculty on research or service-learning, leads to a deep approach to learning. The NSSE explained deep-level learning or processing as “activities that call on students to construct, transform, and apply knowledge,” (p.5) based on Tagg’s (2003) work, discussed in more detail later in this dissertation. Therefore, a lack of student interaction and engagement with instructors is concerning, especially when considering that adjunct faculty members are the new faculty majority on many campuses. On a positive note, the potential does exist for adjuncts and full-time faculty to collaborate in the work at the institution, which would be an asset for students. When faculty members are all emphasizing deep learning and have high expectations for their students, students tend to be successful (Kuh, Nelson Laird, & Umbach, 2004).

Time for student interaction and partnerships like those just described often cannot develop because integrating adjuncts into the culture and daily happenings of an IHE is difficult. It is often perplexing for administrators to find ways of supporting that integration (Hainline, Gaines, Long Feather, Padilla, & Terry, 2010). Adjunct faculty may not spend any routine or significant amount of time on campus besides when they
are teaching. There are several reasons for why and how this can happen. Oftentimes, adjuncts are not invited to professional development, governance meetings, or campus activities. Or, even if they are invited, they are frequently not paid for those hours, and they may not be able to justify the time when considering their other roles or financial priorities. It can thus be difficult for the adjunct to maintain relationships within the institution and keep abreast of resources and policies.

Perhaps the biggest barrier to effectively utilizing the various types of faculty in a way that benefits the institution, the students, and the faculty members themselves is the lack of vision going forward. At a time when more institutions are increasing their reliance on part-time faculty, the function of the adjunct role and the shaping of a direction hold weight. While it might be logical to discuss policies to effectively employ adjunct faculty and might even make good sense to have a conversation on whether the role of adjunct faculty is benefiting all campus stakeholders, it seems difficult to make informed decisions at this point without more information or data. There is a deficit in research about the adjunct faculty group at large and has been for quite some time (Kezar, 2013; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Beyond some available demographic and job satisfaction information, it is difficult to capture the essence of this group because they are so very diverse. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) created a Task Force on Standards for Part-time, Adjunct, and Contingent Faculty, and one of AERA’s recommendations in a 2013 report titled, “Non-Tenure Track Faculty in U.S. Universities,” is to increase research.

**Purpose and Questions**

Supports, formal or informal, available at IHEs, can assist adjuncts in navigating
through the challenges that they face, but often those supports are missing or misconstrued. Institutional support, however, is not the only aspect in need of study. Adjuncts many times have significant roles outside of higher education, such as additional career or family responsibilities, which warrant exploration. The contexts in which adjunct faculty members live and work outside of academia are diverse and significant, given the amount of time that they spend off campus. Kezar (2013) stated that both organizational features and individual conditions can shape the way they construct support.

The ways in which the various environmental contexts influence how adjunct faculty members might overcome challenges and whether there are specific structures in place that support adjuncts are complex yet important items to research. The information gleaned from such research may hold valuable insight into the potential that exists within the adjunct role. Adjunct faculty members’ experiences, both within and outside of the institutional context, impact the work that they do at IHEs. Their diverse experiences could potentially enhance their engagement with students, faculty, and other IHE stakeholders in a positive and unique way if there exists an opportunity to extend beyond their part-time limitations.

There are lofty aspirations and assumptions that overarch, invigorate, and guide my work to explore the function of the adjunct faculty role, specifically concerning how it can provide opportunities for adjunct to reach their potential and grow within the role. It is foundational to highlight and gain perspective of the meaningful work that exists within the adjunct faculty position, including how adjunct faculty members make sense of their role. It is also important to understand how to support adjunct faculty members in
their work and how IHEs can realize and utilize their strengths in order to enhance the adjunct faculty experience for all IHE stakeholders. The following research questions endeavored to uncover insights:

**What is the experience of growth for adjunct faculty at one private university in the Midwestern United States?** The following sub-questions, that address both challenge and support, were also explored:

- What challenges conflicted with adjuncts’ world view?
- What elements of adjunct experience served as supports, and how did they use such supports for successful navigation of challenges?
- In what ways did the environment play a role in adjunct experience?

**Theoretical Framework**

Having holes or lapses in the research about adjunct faculty is troubling because there are not clear best practices for employing adjunct faculty on campuses. Recognizing that adjuncts are becoming a more visible fixture in IHEs, it is important to explore the impact of the adjunct faculty role as it is currently being implemented and how it actually functions in higher education. In an effort to further understand the adjunct faculty group and how the position can benefit institutional stakeholders, this qualitative research study was designed to begin the inductive act of building theory as opposed to testing theory.

To begin to unpack the role, it is important to note again that adjuncts often face many challenges as they carry out their responsibilities on campus; however, many continue in their role and continue to seek out these positions. It is of interest to investigate the motivation for continuing as adjunct faculty, despite the challenges.
Theories of motivation can provide a place to begin in understanding the spectrum of what drives adjuncts to choose this role. Content Theories of Motivation “suggest that we are energized and driven by deficits we feel in basic needs…and learned needs (e.g. ambition, social relations, competition, intellectual stimulation)” (Hanson, 2003, p. 212). Process Theories of Motivation suggest that motivation is a rational cognitive process in that choices are made because they “energize, direct, sustain, or terminate their behavior” (Hanson, 2003, p. 212).

In addition to understanding what draws adjuncts to the role and what sustains their choice, another significant line of inquiry then begs attention. When adjuncts are functioning in their role, is it a positive experience for them and for IHE stakeholders, and if not, can it be? Certainly, there are challenges that threaten to impede the work that adjuncts do, so it is important to understand what guides them through their times of difficulty. When challenges are met with appropriate support, the interaction has the potential of promoting growth.

To examine those interactions, a Constructive Developmental lens is useful in uncovering the increasing complexity of how adjuncts make meaning. There are three premises, or assumptions, in Constructive Developmental Theory; one is that constructivism is the use of cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities to construct and make meaning from experience. The second concept, developmentalism, is based on the premise that, with the appropriate opportunities and challenges, the means through which adults construct and make meaning can change over the life course. Third is subject-object balance. (Mahler, 2011, p. 203)
Subject-object balance was a focus of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) orders of consciousness, accounting for a person’s increasing complexity. His fourth order (1994) was of interest for this study because it includes *self-authorship*, psychological independence. Kegan (1994) and Garvey Berger (2012) connected and applied this type of theory to a variety of life, education, and work contexts. Baris Gunersel, Barnett, and Etienne (2013) conducted a study on how a newly implemented faculty development program affected self-authorship, and the researchers found that the program “influenced instructors' perceptions regarding themselves as educators, their teaching practices, their own feelings and thoughts, and the nature of knowledge” (p. 35). Perhaps just as significant, research “highlights the importance of interacting with colleagues who are different in age, background, and discipline for the exercise of self-authorship. In fact, merely providing space and time for peers and diverse groups to interact may be greatly beneficial” (Baris Gunersel et al., 2013, p. 35). These are examples of relatively easy ways to implement support, and they warrant further discussion and research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of relevant literature is deductive in structure, continuing from the previous chapter’s broad concern for the role of adjunct faculty in higher education. First, the review depicts the general challenges faced by the professoriate, and second, it concentrates on the more specific challenges that adjunct faculty members face in their endeavors. Third, the review explains the theoretical constructs that can be used to view and to unpack opportunities for employing adjunct faculty. Finally, the literature review makes a connection to the research question, “What is the experience of growth for adjunct faculty at one private university in the Midwestern United States?”

Faculty Challenges

The role and responsibilities of faculty members on campuses in the United States have changed throughout history. The context and environment in which they complete the tasks associated with their roles have also changed. As a result, faculty members of all types have faced new challenges.

History of the faculty role. In the first half of the 1800s, tutors taught college courses as a preliminary occupation before entering ministry careers. These tutors spent the majority of their time, including outside of classrooms and class hours, with their students because their teaching role was not only to be responsible for the academic lives
of their students but also to be responsible for their students’ moral and spiritual
development (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). By the second half of the nineteenth
century, many campuses saw the addition of permanent faculty members who were
specialized and had more experience than the tutors did. For this group of faculty though,
teaching was not typically their only career (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006); therefore,
they had less interaction with students than did the tutors. Similarly, faculty members
today are specialized and do not have a significant in loco parentis role, a legal and Latin
phrase meaning that an individual acts in the place of a parent. There is an additional
comparison made between a particular group of faculty members today and those of the
late nineteenth century. Some of the ever-increasing number of part-time faculty are
employed in a role separate from, and in addition to, their academic teaching role
(Lechuga, 2006).

The next significant historical change for faculty came with the formation of
academic ranks. The professionalization of faculty gained momentum. In 1915, the
American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was founded, and the seeds were
planted for tenure and for the shift to faculty taking more of a role in campus governance;
the concept of tenure was described fully in the 1940 Statement of Principles on
Academic Freedom and Tenure (AAUP, 1970). It highlighted the purpose of tenure as an
academic freedom and retention strategy for quality professors. Currently, tenure is being
widely debated and in decline in recent years, falling steadily from 29% of instructional
staff in 1975 to approximately 16.7% in 2011 (AAUP, 2013).

By the early twentieth century, professors had the broad responsibilities of
teaching, research, and service. IHEs can be classified as Elites, Pluralists, or
Communitarians (Hermanowicz, 2005), which each give a different order of importance to the three roles. The Elite institutions primarily value research; the Communitarians emphasize teaching and service, and the Pluralists balance all three.

**Diversity, economics, and change.** The middle of the twentieth century saw much diversification in faculty, partly due to increased student enrollment and the proportional need for additional faculty members. The rise of adjunct faculty occurred in the 1970s (Sanchez, 2014). Diversity, in general, remains important in today’s IHEs, as 54% of the population are expected to be from minority groups in 2050 (Hainline et al., 2010). The campuses of the twenty-first century have seen additional, notable changes. For example, there has been a technology boom since the turn of the century, which has made technology an integral part of daily educational life. IHEs and faculty members have had to decide when and how to incorporate technology into their teaching. Many of the changes that have been seen throughout history as well as on campuses today are often driven by external forces.

Economic factors are increasingly making change necessary within higher education. Institutions are being forced to try new ways of restructuring (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Blaming financial challenges, some leaders of IHEs have made decisions out of necessity and not out of current theory and best practices. IHEs often apply scientific management philosophy to save money (Louder et al., 2011), a practice that can challenge foundations such as tenure. Tenure is considered a fixed cost in IHEs budgets which does not make it easy for an institution to downsize when necessary, whereas a corporation can make those adjustments (Brown & Gamber, 2002). However, as previously noted, tenure can be seen as an investment in that it is a way to retain
quality professors by offering them academic freedom and economic security (AAUP, 2014). IHEs attempt to counteract the fact that professors may be able to find more lucrative positions in the business sector.

Besides having an effect on faculty decisions, economic conditions have encouraged corporatization. Outsourcing has been “embraced on many college campuses as the use of outside vendors allows for savings in personnel costs, service delivery, and equipment” (Brown & Gamber, 2002, p. 95). Many new for-profit IHEs have seen even more corporate influences. For example, they are utilizing traditional business strategies of focusing on their product, in this case the transfer of practical skills, instead of creating and sharing knowledge (Lechuga, 2006). This philosophy puts instructors in a different position of providing a service to their customers, who are the students.

**Increased responsibilities.** Both historically and looking forward, change is inevitable, and how the field of higher education reacts can be novel or it can be cyclical in nature. The focus of education has flip-flopped from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach. The teacher-centered approach aligns to a transfer of knowledge model of education. The emphasis of pedagogy is now on promoting deep, high-order, integrated learning (Nelson Laird, Shoup, Kuh & Schwarz, 2008). In response to environmental or philosophical changes already discussed, faculty roles have had to slowly evolve. Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen, and Van Der Vleuten (2004) developed a framework for teaching competencies, and it illustrated a response to a learner-centered approach. Their study used a Delphi method and higher education experts as subjects in the study. The researchers uncovered valued competencies including ones that are learner-centered such as faculty members who respect all students, place the student in
the center of course design, re-adjust teaching based on evaluations, and lead students towards being self-directed. These competencies have certainly not always been evident at IHEs. They are holistic in nature, requiring much thought and effort to practice. The researchers also found competencies that connect with a faculty member’s lifelong learning and scholarship. In this domain, competencies such as reflecting on performance and being open to change are valued. These two competencies were significant in the current study because time for reflection is an integral component in the growth process, and change can ignite the beginning of the growth process.

Beyond meeting the demands of teaching, faculty members have other responsibilities, and balancing these roles can be quite complex and time-consuming. As previously noted, tenured faculty members are formally responsible for three different and often separated triumvirate tasks of teaching, research, and service. Informally, some also feel charged with Boyer’s (1990) four types of scholarship. The scholarship of discovery is concerned with research; integration refers to making connections between ideas and disciplines; application can be viewed as service, and teaching expands upon knowledge. Tenured faculty members are feeling “overcommitted” (O’Meara & Rice, 2005, p. 306). Focusing on three professional roles or identities could easily lead tenure-track faculty members to think that one or even two of the three is being neglected, and for tenure, they may even be instructed to neglect two roles in favor of research. As previously noted, expectations of some institutions prioritize research, thus teaching and service become secondary (Hermanowicz, 2005). In addition to expanding professoriate roles, Eddy and Garza Mitchel (2012) succinctly list other major challenges for full-time faculty from the previous decade due in part to changes in teaching practices, disciplinary
norms, and globalization: an increase in hours worked, fewer resources, and increased accountability (p. 284). This list is supplementary to the other, previously mentioned, factors such as quickly changing technology and diverse student populations.

**Faculty Opportunities**

Besides the challenges that can arise, there are incredible benefits to IHE stakeholders and society from such an inclusive and comprehensive view of the professoriate. Tenure-track faculty members have a long history of tackling some of society’s complex problems; as an example, faculty from Western Carolina University have been successful with using all four of Boyer’s (1990) scholarship typology in their work to further understand mosquito-borne illness and decrease the incidence of La Crosse encephalitis (Tate, 2010).

There are several options for enhancing this kind of faculty engagement and helping faculty to react to change that they experience. Traditional ways of accomplishing professional development are workshops, meetings, or readings. To view the professoriate and IHEs in a deeper way, a more holistic approach may be necessary to make a shift from an *instructional paradigm* to a *learning paradigm* in which institutions value intrinsic learning goals, authentic performance, consistent and interactive feedback, learning in a long-term horizon, communities of practice, and alignment of activities to produce learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Tagg, 2003). A study by Nelson Laird et al. (2008) suggested that there are often fellow faculty members at an institution who are using a deep approach to learning, as previously defined, and that knowledge could lend itself to a prime opportunity for faculty members to share and uncover strategies. Valuing and working towards improvement contributed to student success at institutions involved in
the “Documenting Effective Educational Practices” project (Kuh et al., 2004).

In addition to faculty working together and valuing student learning, there are additional elements that can improve the condition of faculty. O’Meara et al. (2008) reviewed literature and explored faculty growth through a framework containing four aspects: learning, agency, professional relationships, and commitments. They presented the framework “to propel the national narrative on college and university faculty toward explicit consideration of faculty growth and to suggest directions for future research on this topic” (p.24). While they discussed the work lives of adjunct faculty, their research on growth primarily focused on full-time faculty.

Faculty members’ satisfaction increases when they feel that they are growing professionally, are supported by their deans and other administrators, and when they have job security (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007). Hoyt (2012) also found that support promotes satisfaction and that it, in turn, inspires loyalty and retention. Witt and Nye (1992) found that job satisfaction is influenced by perceived fairness of the treatment, i.e., pay and promotion, of co-workers. If growth, support, security, and fairness can make an impact on faculty satisfaction and even retention, then those are items to consider in a conversation about a major subset of the faculty group: adjunct faculty members.

**Adjunct Faculty Challenges**

Adjunct faculty members, or part-time faculty, are the fastest growing constituent in the professoriate (AAUP, 2013), and they are perhaps the most diverse group as well. Until recently, few adjunct-centered topics have been explored in research, and much of that research has been conducted by full-time faculty (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). It is
important to have sources that attempt to describe the adjunct faculty group; yet, there are very few such sources, especially ones that are recent. From 1987-2003, researchers involved in the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty collected faculty data and released four cycles of reports (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017), but when their work ended, there were no other significant sources of specific or reliable incoming data. Many statistical reports do not isolate data for adjuncts; instead they are often aggregated with contingent faculty numbers.

**Description of the group.** In 2012, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) published a national survey, comprised primarily of demographic information from part-time faculty. The CAW found that 70% of adjuncts are between the ages of 36 and 65, most have graduate degrees (47.1% doctorate/terminal degree, 40.2% master's), and over half have been in their current role for more than six years. Many of these statistics run contrary to some preconceived notions that adjuncts are mostly early or late career faculty members, under-qualified, and not loyal to their position. The survey results, combined with Lechuga’s (2006) assertion that part-time faculty are as effective as full-time faculty, challenge many myths that part-time faculty members are not high quality instructors. However, some research (Lounder et al., 2011) says that adjuncts are not as effective in certain situations.

One possible explanation of why there are so many high-quality instructors in part-time positions may be, in part, due to the challenging economy and institutional decisions to save money by relying more heavily on a less expensive workforce, as previously discussed. Or, it could be due to personal reasons on the part of the adjuncts; Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) contended that part-time positions are alluring to women
with children, women who might otherwise have taken full-time positions if they had not decided to take a care-giving role as well. Women are more likely to teach in an adjunct role than men are (O’Meara et al., 2008). Other personal reasons could certainly exist as well and will be addressed within the perimeters of this study. Gappa and Leslie (1993) created a typology describing four types of adjuncts. The first type were those who taught part-time who were also employed full-time as professionals, specialists, or experts in their field. The second type were career enders, those close to retirement. The third type were freelancers, those who were employed in multiple roles at IHEs. The fourth type were aspiring academics, adjuncts who have a desire to be full-time one day.

**Role restrictions.** The job description of part-time faculty as well as the context within which they work are also topics that shape the adjunct group. Unlike full-time faculty, they are “limited to teaching” (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006, p. 35), and they are not frequently invited to participate in institutional research or service opportunities. Their time spent on campus may be limited to the time that they are teaching. Furthermore, part-time faculty members have less student interaction than full-time faculty (Cox et al., 2010), and they typically would have less access to resources. O’Meara et al. (2008) explained that while all faculty need resources to do their job well, adjunct faculty also need them for legitimacy purposes, to indicate that they are part of the IHE. Additionally, the authors stated that when adjuncts have concerns over limited basic resources, defined generally as adequate compensation or professional development opportunities, their focus on higher level concerns like scholarship of teaching and learning can be compromised. Not only would that have an effect on their teaching, but it
can also put them into a cycle of not participating in tenure-like activities, thus keeping them further disconnected from that opportunity.

While a common complaint of many full-time faculty members is a general sense of being overwhelmed, many part-time faculty members are commonly not satisfied with the resources that are available to them nor do they feel adequately supported in doing their job (Hoyt et al., 2008; McGrew & Untener, 2010). In a qualitative study (Rich, 2016), 27 adjuncts who taught online were interviewed, and “three extrinsic factors emerged from the data analysis that influenced the adjuncts’ workplace experiences. The extrinsic factors were 1) Professional Inclusion, 2) Flexible Work Schedule, and 3) Resources” (p. 8). This study did not take into account adjuncts who teach in a classroom. It seems as though the employment and integration of the fastest growing sector in the professoriate could be guided by a stronger vision. Integration of adjuncts into the IHE, including working with full-time faculty has the potential to offer benefits for both full and part-time faculty. In addition, students also stand to benefit; when faculty members are all emphasizing the same tenets of deep learning and hold high expectations for their students, students tend to buy into the philosophy as well and have success (Kuh et al., 2004).

**Adjunct Faculty Opportunities**

There certainly have been suggestions for improving the general faculty condition. Bérubé and Ruth (2015) “propose[d] that many full-time faculty lines off the tenure track be converted to teaching-intensive tenured positions” (p. 19). Reimagining and expanding upon the concept of tenure could provide additional or different employment opportunities, perhaps even for faculty members in adjunct roles. While the
idea of granting more faculty members academic freedom and job security could help the faculty condition, the lack of a research component in the role still negates the strengths of a teacher-researcher model in which research informs teaching and teaching informs research.

More specific to adjunct faculty, Kezar (2016) surveyed key stakeholders in higher education, and her findings indicated that there is some consensus that extending the length of adjunct members’ contracts could be beneficial. Kezar, along with Maxey (2015) looked at redefining roles for all faculty. They released their work, which was a continuation of The Delphi Project on The Changing Faculty Student Success from 2012, in an attempt to lead an IHE through that redefining process. They recommend a backwards design of identifying the desired outcome, examining the current faculty model, and developing a plan to redesign the faculty model. In step 2 of their process, they recommend that an IHE examine their faculty model by asking questions such as, “What skills and assets do faculty members possess? Are faculty members’ skills, assets, and qualifications aligned to their duties? Are they being used effectively to attain desired outcomes?” (Kezar & Maxey, 2015). They ask additional guiding questions, including ones about how faculty are supported. It is at this stage that my study might be situated.

The Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW, 2012) data indicated a lack of processes and resources for adjunct faculty, and Green (2007) posed the rhetorical question, “What if, as an academic leader, you had full confidence that all adjuncts were given materials in which the academic standards developed by the full-time faculty were embedded, including specific learning outcomes?” (p. 38). Increasing adjuncts’ access to key information and quality materials as just described is of course important; however,
there are many other concerns. As previously noted, adjuncts often feel unsupported. Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, and White (2006) emphasized that adjuncts need various forms of support. It is not that administrators do not want to support adjuncts; it very well may be that they do not know what support is needed, and often adjuncts do not know what they need either (McGrew & Untener, 2010). Kelly (2006) identified the ways that an institution can retain quality adjuncts by supporting them with mentoring, professional development, resources, effective communication, opportunities for professional activities (organizations, conferences), and inclusion in governance. Rhode (2006) highlighted service and open communication as ways to have a voice in professional work decisions.

While there is much discussion on what support might be necessary, the situation is complex. Unfortunately, there is a general sentiment that while adjuncts are showing their devotion to post-secondary institutions, the institutions are not investing in their adjuncts. The CAW survey (2012) indicated that for part-timers who are not in a union, only 3.8% are paid for office hours, 5.4% are paid for department meetings, 3.9% have job security, and more than a half of them have a personal income of less than $35,000.

There is a significant opportunity to invest in and explore how adjuncts currently perceive their role at an IHE and what role might be optimal for institutions, adjuncts themselves, and students; i.e., “Adjunct faculty experience considerable role ambiguity, resulting in important discrepancies between their perceptions of their roles and those of their chairpersons” (Monroe & Denmen, 1991, p. 58). More specifically, a lack of clear standards for the position is problematic (Hainline et al., 2010) for fully realizing the
benefits of the adjunct role. There is much research left to be done on the above topics, and adjunct faculty members need the opportunity to tell their stories.

**Theoretical Constructs**

It is imperative to capture the essence of the adjunct faculty group’s perceptions of their role and experiences at this institution. To ground this work, it is useful to envision a mutually beneficial relationship between adjuncts and their IHEs, even if that involves reconsidering faculty roles in general. Kegan and Lahey (2009) argue that to encourage a positive transformation within an institution, organizations must use a developmental stance to foster institutional leadership and individual growth. Fostering institutional leadership may be a challenge in that many of the problems that surround the employment of adjunct faculty are adaptive in nature. Heifetz (1994) distinguishes *technical* from *adaptive* problems. Technical problems have solutions that are known by someone (p. 71). Adaptive problems are those for which “no adequate response has yet been developed” (p. 72), but adaptive problems can become technical if a solution is uncovered. Leadership may involve getting technical problems into the hands of those who have solutions, or it may involve working to uncover resolutions for adaptive problems. In addition to fostering leadership, fostering individual growth also needs considered, and it requires unpacking.

The term “growth” can be defined in many ways. To understand how it is perceived within this study, it is helpful to begin by looking at the way that Staudinger and Kessler (2009) differentiate between two types of positive personality change: adjustment and growth. Adjustment is situated within the realm of socialization, in that people can master certain structures, procedures, and constraints as they comprehend a
sense of well-being; however, growth is said to transcend socialization; people gain “(i) deep and broad insight into self, others and the world, (ii) complex emotion-regulation (in the tolerance of ambiguity), and (iii) a motivational orientation that is transcending self-interest and is investing in the well-being of others and the world.” (p. 243). In a sense, a person must give up the stability and comfort that adjustment brings in order to embark on a more chaotic state that can lead to growth.

In a study of graduate students, Kilbourn (2011) found that crisis and support were facilitators of self-growth: “those who appeared to be in transitional balances appear to have not only experienced a crisis, or a self-perceived traumatic event; they also discussed the presence of support, and its usefulness” (p. 30). This concept of growth occurring as a result of a particular event within a particular situation is a significant one that connects to other research as well. Kern et al. (2001) deduced a formula for personal growth. They found two important factors for their formula: first, when people have a powerful experience or engage in a helping relationship and second, when they were given time for introspection on that event. When those two things, a significant event and introspection, were combined, the outcome was personal growth. Growth is desired for personal and professional reasons as it reflects cognitive complexity, engaging in a higher form of reasoning, including considering multiple perspectives (Blanchard-Fields & Stange Kalinauskas, 2009).

Additionally, O’Meara et al. (2008) discussed change as a catalyst for growth; they found that growth occurred when a person experienced change in learning, agency, professional relationships, or commitment, and the change can result in “new and diverse knowledge, skills, values, and professional orientations” (p. 23). Specifically, they
recommended six practices in the growth process: one is to recognize that “mindsets shape thinking and feeling, so changing mindsets needs to involve the head and the heart,” and another is to provide “safety for people to take the kinds of risks inherent in changing their minds” (p. 308). These recommendations suggest that the whole person is involved in the growth process and that a person needs to have a sense of security throughout the process. One could argue that people will experience changes in personal, professional, and cognitive domains just simply in the natural course of aging. However, the context of growth cannot be ignored. Changes do not just depend on age; “but instead are also influenced by social context, motivation, beliefs, emotions, and life experiences” (Blanchard-Fields & Kalinauskas, 2009, p. 23). Love and Guthrie (1999) add that cognitive development occurs within and is influenced by social, cultural, and emotional contexts.

In light of the aforementioned concepts of growth, the term growth is operationalized in this study as a significant event that has challenged a person in a way that has required appropriate support and time for introspection and, as a result, has left that person with new, deep insight. It is understood that this growth occurs within a social, cultural, and emotional context. This comprehensive understanding of growth allows a connection to be made between the literature discussed and Constructive Developmental Theory, which connects the concept of growth and the potential transformation of meaning-making that can occur throughout one’s life.

Piaget (1932) prepared the ground work for Constructive Developmental Theory. He realized in his work that children construct their reality and that when they encounter a contradicting element, they reorganize how they think about their experiences and then
modify their reality. Kegan (1982) expanded upon those concepts, including and focusing on adults, and further shaped the theory. Kegan (1994) used the term “subject” to refer to “elements of our knowing or organizing that we are identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in,” and he used the term “object” to refer to “those elements of our knowing or organizing that we take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon” (p. 32).

Development, then, is how we change the way we construct our experiences, not necessarily what it is that we actually construct. Kegan (1994) discusses five orders of consciousness that are possible from childhood through adulthood. As we transform into different orders of consciousness, the elements that we were once subject to then become the object. The first order is experienced by very young children who are subject to their own perceptions and impulses. The second order is typically seen in slightly older children or young adults who have perceptions and impulses as object but who are subject to cause and effect, reciprocity, and their own needs and preferences. The third order is subject to others’ perceptions. People in this order have a difficult time distinguishing self from others. In the fourth order, people hold relationships as object instead of seeing themselves in terms of relationships. It is important to note that not all people will reach the fourth order. Fewer will reach the fifth order, which is characterized by seeing the self as more than a single system and embracing multiplenness and incompleteness.

Kegan (1994) explains that it is important for us to look at the demands of modern life and how those relate to the capacities of our minds. For one to develop through the orders, an environment with a balance of challenge and support is considered the ideal.
Kegan uses a bridge metaphor to illustrate the concept of meeting people where they are at the time and then constructing a bridge to help them get to where they need to be. The importance of challenge and support has previously been discussed by Sanford (1966), when he stated, “the institution which would lead an individual toward greater development must, then, present him with strong challenges, appraise accurately his ability to cope with these challenges, and offer him support when they become overwhelming” (p. 46).

Baxter Magolda’s (2007) work builds upon Kegan’s concept of self-authorship (1994) found in his explanation of the fourth order of development. Baxter Magolda depicts self-authorship as the “internal capacity to define one’s own belief system, identity, and relationships” (p. 69). In an ongoing longitudinal study started with college students, she found that individuals’ personal experiences often became opportunities for growth. She developed the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2004), acknowledging that guidance needed to be balanced with empowerment. Learning partnerships challenge authority dependence and “support self-authorship via three principles: validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learner’s experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning” (Baxter Magolda, Abes, & Torres, 2009, p. 209). There are connections that can be made between Baxter Magolda’s research with students and adult learners and Kegan’s (1994) research on occupational work. Kegan says that as employees, we are expected to “own our work…to be self-initiating, self-correcting, self-evaluating (p.153). Considering these ideas, it would be helpful to know if and how adjuncts benefit from owning their work.
and to better understand if there are learning partnerships, both within and outside of the institutional context, providing guidance and empowerment.

Connection to Research Questions

It is to the IHE’s, adjuncts’, and students’ benefit if adjunct faculty members are taking ownership of their work and acting as agents to further the IHE’s teaching and learning agenda. For example, “An agent performs activity that is directed at a goal, and commonly it is a goal the agent has adopted on the basis of an overall practical assessment of his options and opportunities” (Wilson & Shpall, 2012). The question is then begged, can adjuncts act as agents. Levine and Hernandez (2014) conducted a study of part-time faculty members at three types of institutions. The study used an interpretive approach to uncover the construction of the adjuncts’ academic identity. The researchers utilized cultural and identity theory to analyze interview data. The findings indicated that part-time faculty are demonstrating their agency; they do so based on the future that they imagine at the institution; the experience of their past, personal convictions; and when they are within their classrooms teaching. The researchers concluded that “part-time faculty members’ narratives about who they are within the college or the university reflect, in spite of the institutional disadvantages, the possibilities of self-authoring” (p.551).

A change or development in agency and recognizing the ability to serve the university community can be a powerful revelation, particularly for struggling adjunct faculty members. There is an opportunity to further acknowledge that self-authoring process and also to look beyond self-authoring to the growth and development that may be inherent in the adjunct role. Kezar’s (2013) research indicated that individual
conditions, organizational forces, and academic conditions can factor into how non-tenure track faculty experience and construct reality, but she asserted a necessity to know more about the worldview of adjuncts. Higher education leaders are not fully aware of all of the challenges and if they can be overcome, just as they are not aware of the supports that both guide and empower to overcome those challenges and encourage further development.

If the challenges as they connect to and work alongside of support are reconciled in an authentic way, the importance of optimal conflict can begin to be acknowledged (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). In their synthesis of seventy-five years of research on what increases mental capacity, they found that there is a link between the persistent experience of some frustration, dilemma, life puzzle, quandary, or personal problem that is perfectly designed to cause us to feel the limits of our current way of knowing…in some sphere of our living that we care about, with…sufficient supports so that we are neither overwhelmed by the conflict nor able to escape or diffuse it. (p. 54)

Garvey Berger (2012) built on Kegan and Lahey’s work and highlighted the importance of appropriate support. “As you think about supporting another human being at work, it is vital that you understand just what you mean by support” (Garvey Berger, 2012, p. 17); she also highlighted the connection necessary between an individual’s developmental capacity and the environment in which they are working in order for the individual to have success. By understanding the disconnect between person and the environment in which they work, a support can be devised to help create missing connections.
Connecting challenges to appropriate supports would perhaps provide a more informed way of creating policy and a shared vision that supports adjuncts and benefits IHEs. Kezar (2013) found in her study that “Non Tenure Track Faculty (NTTF) members perceive that departmental policies shape their performance and ability to create quality learning experiences” (pp. 588-589). It seems logical that a lack of policies for the adjunct faculty role would be problematic, but Kezar asserts that there are policies that can perform in unsupportive ways, opposite of what was intended. Unsupportive policies allow practices like last minute scheduling, misinformation, lack of input into the curriculum, and a lack of feedback. Supportive policies, on the other hand, include professional development, having input into curriculum, and orientations. One especially interesting finding was that when, on very rare occasions, NTTF were asked how policies affected their performance, they reported that simply being asked for their input was viewed as supportive. Adjuncts, who often do not have a strong voice on campus, may have a wealth of experience that they would be excited to share.

This review of relevant literature and research indicates that there are challenges facing the professoriate, specifically adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty members do not think they have all the supports necessary to respond to the challenges that they face, and IHEs may not realize how to answer that, sometimes silent, request for support. A clearer understanding, using a constructive developmental lens, of adjunct faculty and their role within IHEs presents opportunities to promote growth within the position, ultimately benefiting IHEs. The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of a group of adjunct faculty members’ experiences of growth in their role. IHEs stand to benefit from
a more successful adjunct relationship by capturing and utilizing more of the intellectual and resource capital that adjunct faculty members bring to campus.
Adjunct faculty members are an increasing population in higher education. They are a diverse group with diverse experiences. Many adjuncts work full-time in a career outside of academia; many are trying to get hired as tenure-track faculty; and still many others only have a desire to work part-time. Because they are such a heterogeneous group, they can have different needs, and it can be difficult for the university to assess how to best support them if or when they have challenging experiences. In this Chapter, I explain the purpose and details of this study including the study design choices, the methods used, my roles as a researcher, and the collection and interpretation of empirical materials.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study was to uncover the experiences of growth interpreted from the stories told by adjunct faculty at one university. The university community may be able to use the results of this study as a way of understanding the adjunct faculty group and to inform campus stakeholders, future research, and policy. In addition, this study might contribute to the broader conversation about adjunct faculty, a topic on which there is a deficit in research.
Many of the challenges that adjuncts may face are well known, as are many types of support that can be offered. There may be, however, challenges and supports that are not as evident. Even less understood is the impact of context or the nature of the interaction between challenges and supports and how ultimately that interaction can promote or impede growth for adjunct faculty members. The primary research question acknowledged and sought to understand the following:

**What is the experience of growth for adjunct faculty at one private university in the Midwestern United States?** The following sub-questions, that address both challenge and support, were also explored:

- What challenges conflicted with adjuncts’ world view?
- What elements of adjunct experience served as supports, and how did they use such supports for successful navigation of challenges?
- In what ways did the environment play a role in adjunct experience?

Because the term *growth* is complex, as explained in the previous chapter, the sub-questions functioned as an opportunity for participants to discuss growth as it was operationalized in this study: *a significant event that has challenged a person in a way that has required appropriate support and time for introspection and, as a result, has left that person with new, deep insight. It is understood that this growth occurs within a social, cultural, and emotional context.* As I inquired about challenges, supports, and context in the interviews, participants relayed their experiences, and as such, their perceived meaning of growth
and the elements they believed promoted it were negotiated and articulated throughout our interactions.

**Research Design**

In consideration of my research question, I chose a qualitative design because my interest was not in quantifying challenges and supports but rather in uncovering complex interactions and the process of growth. The inductive qualitative approach provided an opportunity to explore my research question in terms of the meaning that participants assigned to their experience of growth. Qualitative research is “designed to uncover or discover the meanings people have constructed about a particular phenomenon” (Merriam, 2002, p.19). Specifically, I drew on phenomenological methodology to help inform and guide my methods of discovering participants’ experience of a phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) offers a lens to view this phenomenological research as

the human scientific study of phenomena…it is *systematic* in that uses specially practiced modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing, intuiting, etc…*explicit* in that it attempts to articulate, through the content and form of text, the structures of meaning embedded in lived experience…*self-critical* in the sense that it continually examines its own goals and methods in an attempt to come to terms with the strengths and shortcomings…*intersubjective* in that the human science researcher needs the other (for example, the reader) in order to develop a dialogic relation with the phenomenon… *human science* (rather than a natural science) since the subject matter of phenomenological research is always the structure of meaning of lived human world (p.11)
My intent in conducting this study was to recognize the strength and advantages of the phenomenological research just described as I interacted with my adjunct faculty participants to understand how they experience growth and what factors may promote it.

Imbedded in phenomenology is the perspective of *symbolic interactionism*, explaining that people “tend to act on the basis of how they believe other people behave toward them; and their self-perceptions and feelings tend to be mediated by how they think others see and feel about them” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 186). This perspective begs questioning of a one-sized fits all approach to supporting adjuncts. If adjuncts act according to their perceived reality, then it is imperative to understand that reality and how it may shape their interpretation and use of supports. Otherwise the potential that exists in an adjunct faculty position may be obstructed. In addition to providing insight into supporting adjunct faculty, symbolic interactionism also helped to inform my role in the interview process, described further in the next section. The ways of seeing that I have described provided a structure for my study and have guided my choices and actions as a researcher, the details of which follow in this chapter.

**Role as a Researcher**

Drawing upon symbolic interactionism as described in the last section by Van Manen (1990), my approach in this study was anchored to the search for understanding of a phenomenon as it was socially constructed in interviews with participants. I planned to use interviews as a method for collecting empirical materials because I wanted a reciprocal method that would allow participants and myself to be engaged in the process. Specifically, I chose to use an interview guide, discussed later in this chapter, for this purpose. The interview guide allowed the interviews to go for varied lengths of time as
needed and also provided space and opportunity for me to vary the depth and number of questions if it enhanced interactions. More about my positionality and relationship with participants as they occurred in the interviews are described at the beginning of Chapter IV.

Before I began interviewing participants, I felt it important to engage in bracketing. Bracketing, as a method, was developed by Edmund Husserl, a founder of phenomenology, around the year 1906 (as cited in Beyer, 2016). While bracketing can be thought of as an activity that a researcher engages in to put aside her own prior knowledge and assumptions about a phenomenon, I saw it as helpful to acknowledge and suspend my own experiences in order to clearly perceive the perspective and discuss the experiences of participants. For this study, because of my extensive experience in an adjunct role, I made attempts to consider and manage my biases. I have had overwhelmingly positive experiences as an adjunct, and my preference had always been to teach part-time. However, I know that this was not the experience of many of my friends and colleagues from throughout the years who taught part-time at IHEs. In the bracketing process, I also considered the research that I had done in preparation for this study. My bracketed, newly acquired, information was only suspended and not taken out because I drew upon that information at various points later in the study, for instance when I was writing Chapter V. Also there were times during the interviews when I was specifically asked by participants about my experience or when I was reminded of my experiences. In those instances, I was not able to keep my experiences out of the research; I gave them a space but then resumed, when appropriate, my focus on participants.
Site

The university site for this research study was an urban, private, research institution, enrolling under 9,000 undergraduate students. The site was chosen for this research for a few different reasons. First, I have experience at this site as an adjunct faculty member, which affords me the contextual knowledge to construct a study with perceived meaning and usefulness for the university. In the beginning of 2014, when I was considering dissertation topics, I met informally with a past adjunct faculty representative on the faculty senate. She helped me locate interesting people to speak to and departments to visit. After pursuing some of the leads that she provided and after making a connection at an academic symposium where I presented some of my concerns for the adjunct faculty group, I was able to secure a meeting with the Chair of an academic department and constituents from the faculty development and learning center on campus. The purpose in meeting with them was to understand what they perceived as significant concerns or opportunities for adjunct faculty members. One of their perplexing questions revolved around the adjunct role as perceived through the eyes of adjunct faculty. They did not understand, for example, low adjunct attendance at events. I intended for this study to shed some light on role perception as adjuncts were given an opportunity to speak about their role and what they identify as challenges and as opportunities.

A second reason for choosing this university as a site for my research was to allow factors of religion to enter the conversation if adjuncts saw that as instrumental in the growth process. The university is faith-based, thus such topics are not off-limits to participants. Third, and finally, through my own experiences of over a decade as an
adjunct at five institutions of higher education, this particular institution with its emphasis on community seemed to have a more developed, inclusive program for adjunct faculty. For example, the university had a collection of facts on adjunct faculty and a statement of practice for adjunct faculty. A study by Gehrke and Kezar (2015) corroborated my suspicion about this IHE. The study “revealed that private institutions are more likely than public to provide several supports. Private institutions are more likely to provide support pertaining to mentoring, professional development for research, and orientation” (p. 956). In what could very well be considered a positive environment for adjunct faculty, my thought was this study could focus on higher level issues, not necessarily limited to the basic needs that adjuncts have. That turned out not to be the case for all adjuncts in this study.

**Collection of Empirical Materials**

The goal of collecting empirical materials in a phenomenological study is that the “researcher ‘collects’ the realities of the participants and the interpretations of their constructions” (Ridenour & Newman, 2008, p. 86). Adjunct faculty members at this university were the participants and the sources of data for this qualitative study. I used purposeful sampling to select the participants who could “better inform the researcher regarding the current focus of the investigation” (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 172).

I began the participant selection process by exploring the university’s website, which had many adjuncts and their emails listed by department. I reviewed each department’s page and made a list of faculty who were designated as adjuncts. My list contained adjuncts from a variety of departments on campus. Prior to recruitment, I had gained IRB approval. In my email to potential participants on April, 24, 2016, I attached
the *University-approved Invitation/ Information Sheet template*, found in Appendix A, which indicated their rights. I also sent them an invitation letter, found in Appendix B, which explained the background of my research and that I was looking for adjunct faculty members with at least one academic year in an adjunct faculty role on this campus and at least two years’ total experience as an adjunct to participate in an estimated hour-long interview.

The parameters for participants were set to ensure that the participants in this study had a history and lived experience in the adjunct role and also to allow them some time for introspection. I began getting replies to my request quickly after sending the email. There was one adjunct who had initially responded but whom later followed up and said he had become too busy to participate. I selected everyone else who responded, a total of fourteen adjunct participants who fit my criteria for participation. I sent out another round of emails in early May 2016, which resulted in two additional responses who became qualified participants, bringing the total number of participants to sixteen. When considering the size of the participant group, I recognized Bryman’s assertion (2004) that a phenomenological study typically has a small sample size “because of the fine-grained analysis that is often involved” (p. 18).

The sixteen participants of this study represented variety in line with the demographics found on campus. The group consisted of seven women and nine men. Collectively, they have taught courses within five schools at this university: three taught Education and Health Sciences, six taught Arts and Sciences, one taught Law, five taught Business Administration, and one taught Engineering. I chose not to collect individual demographic information out of concern for revealing the identity of participants.
However, after interviewing participants and hearing their stories, I learned some
demographic information that I am comfortable in reporting, yet not assigning to specific
participants. Most participants were American and white, but one participant was African
American, and one participant moved to the United States as an adult. They represented
the full spectrum of career stages and age groups, from just having completed their first
two years as an adjunct to having already retired from a full-time career. Four
participants were retired, and five indicated that they were close to retiring or towards the end of their career. Seven participants ranged from early in their careers to middle of the way through. It should be noted that these career stage numbers of adjuncts are quite different from those reported in the CAW survey (2012), which found only 9% of adjuncts to be age 65 or older. Granted some participants in the current study may have or will retire earlier than age 65, it seems the participants are later in their career than what is typical for adjunct faculty.

Participants in this study varied in the level of their academic degrees. Five participants said that they held a doctorate degree, and several said they had a master’s degree. I had one participant reveal that her highest degree was a bachelor’s. The participants also differed in their employment. Some of them taught part-time in addition to a full-time position outside of academia; some had chosen to only teach part-time; and some taught part-time at several IHEs to piece together full-time work. The variety that they brought to the study added a breadth of adjunct experiences to the research.

I, as the researcher, was the instrument in this study (Merriam, 2002). My method of data collection was interviews, which were informed by my use of an interview guide (Patton, 2015) that I created to align with my research; it can be found in Appendix C. I
decided to use an interview guide because I thought it was important for the participants to feel comfortable sharing their stories with me, and the guide helped the interviews feel more like a conversation. I could pull questions that naturally seemed to follow their stories as opposed to being restricted to a rote organization and wording of questions. Also, I wanted an interview question structure that would allow for additional information, other than responses to my interview questions, to surface if appropriate. It is important here again to note that because I operationalized the term growth for this study, I used the operationalized terms in the interview, not the term growth. For some of the more significant or deep questions, like “What are some challenges that you have faced? Tell me the story of your experience,” I included a few follow-up questions in case participants struggled with providing enough discussion or details. Some follow-up questions for the above question, for example, inquired about the most difficult part of their job and asked them to consider their IHE role as well as any others that they may have.

Before each interview, I re-familiarized the participants with the University-approved Invitation/Information Sheet template, explained that I would produce verbatim transcripts, and asked if they had any questions before we began. As the interviews began, I was taken somewhat by surprise how quickly I was able to gain participants’ trust, which I realized when participants put themselves in open and perhaps vulnerable positions. One participant, Kenneth, interrupted one of his thoughts to note “this comes off as kinda like a confession.” Marvin, another participant, even trusted me enough to heed his request of “don’t tell anybody this” when he knew the recorder had been running. I attribute their trust to three possible reasons. One, I identified myself as a long-
time adjunct from the beginning of the study and explained to them that I wanted to provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard. I believe that they saw me as an equal and frequently continued to talk with me before and after the interviews. It was easy for us to make quick connections. For example, the fact that I share a small office was evident when I used the space for many of the interviews. Two, I believe that they so want their voices heard and were happy to be given an opportunity. Three, there were other participants who connected with my position, working towards a Ph.D., and they wanted to help with that process.

**Interpretation of Empirical Materials**

I had completed all sixteen interviews during the month of May in 2016. I had estimated that each interview would last for one hour. Nine of the sixteen interviews were within ten minutes of an hour. The interview duration that was furthest away from the estimate was approximately thirty-six and a half minutes in length. Prior to that particular interview, I began talking with the participant and took notes as we stood in line for coffee. When it came time for the interview, I had already learned some basic information, which most likely made the interview go a little quicker.

After the interviews, I assigned each participant a number to protect their identities. I later replaced with the number with a pseudonym when I wrote my findings in Chapter IV. To assist in transcribing the audio recordings, I used a foot pedal. In my typed transcriptions, I included anything that seemed out of the ordinary, such as long pauses, utterances, and changes in speech. I also added any nonverbal communication that I had written in my field notes. Then, when I began to look at all the collected interview material, I used the process of *horizontalization*; that is, I viewed each
statement as having equal weight and value when I began to interpret the materials. (Merriam, 2002, p. 94). I worked with all of the empirical material, not dismissing, distinguishing, or prioritizing anything at this point in the process. For the purpose of preparing to code and assign participants pseudonyms, I printed out each of the sixteen transcripts on a different color of cardstock. There were approximately 192 single-spaced pages of transcripts in total. After printing, I then assigned a pseudonym to each color, which allowed me to visually see and to later scissor cut the transcripts into moveable meaning blocks.

For my first cycle of coding, I used initial coding. Saldaña (2013) describes initial coding in broad terms as an open-ended approach, not necessarily formulaic, as a way for the researcher to get to know the empirical materials and to begin to reflect upon them. I went sentence by sentence, reading and writing codes for descriptive purposes to capture meaning made in our interviews. This process produced over a hundred descriptors, but it assisted me in my next cycle of coding because I was immersed in the materials and began getting a picture of the scope. In preparation for a second cycle of coding, I cut out each block of meaning so that I could physically group them into categories. I put aside any blocks containing demographic information that had been revealed, such as what department they taught for and their religion. I created an Excel file to organize and make that information accessible if needed later.

For my second cycle of coding, I engaged in pattern coding, “a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts…Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 236). I began sorting blocks of meaning into piles and
stored each pile in its own folder. I applied Post-it labels with a pattern code, such as “challenges with two-way communication” or “being underpaid,” on each folder to capture the essence of each category. During the very lengthy process I was involved in, I found phenomenological reduction to be helpful. It is “the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself” (Merriam, 2002, p. 94). This process kept me focused on and engaged with the research questions as I noted, described, and saw connections in participants’ articulated experience.

To enhance my process, I used an imaginative variation method, in which I imagined different frames of reference and looked at constructed meaning through multiple perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). I frequently asked myself how other stakeholders may view the story and if they would be able to understand a particular point of view. I was attempting to “describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon… (The) purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007, p. 252). However, I also noted when a participant’s reality was different than the patterns that were developing. The categories and labels continued to evolve throughout the interpretation process, in that the category labels became more inclusive and descriptive as more material was added and considered.

After completing my second cycle of coding, I had a total of thirteen categories that described the challenges and supports as experienced and described by the participants in this study. Some examples of the categories were “feel outside of my
comfort zone” and “how to be an adjunct.” After deciding that I had some understanding of the experiences articulated in the interviews, I then began looking for patterns in the categories and a way to structure the meaning that I saw them making. I consulted with the then chair of my committee and created a graphic organizer to help see interpreted themes that were beginning to emerge. I continued to reflect on them as I then began exploratory writing about my findings. It was during that process of looking at how challenges and supports interacted for participants that a connection was made to Heifetz’s (1994) two types of problems, technical and adaptive. I revisited my literature review to update it to include his work. I mention this fact here to show that the framework evolved out of the empirical materials and were not prescribed by a framework.

In identifying themes, I recalled Van Manen’s (1990) description of a theme: the experience of a meaning, an attempt to capture and understand a phenomena, intransitive, and a simplification. The three themes of Structure, Neglect, and Community, as further described later in this study, derived from ten of the thirteen categories that had been created. Of the three categories not integrated, one was placed in Chapter V as recommendations, and the two others were put aside because the information, while mentioned by participants, did not appear specific and significant to any of them. My entire interpretation process took approximately four months. There were disadvantages in doing all the interpretation by hand. For one, it took me more time to search for text that I wanted to review or to type quotes back into my paper; however, I recognized the value in immersing myself in the qualitative data. The findings of the study are presented, using rich descriptive detail, in Chapter IV.
Trustworthiness and Truth Value

To build trustworthiness, I took several actions, linking the research question to truth value (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). First, I kept an audit trail, a “residue of records stemming from the inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319) throughout the process of the study to provide an explanation of the study methods and to increase transparency. My audit trail includes items such as my raw data, notes that I took throughout the process, a journal, emails, Excel sheets, and numerous drafts and sketches of my work. Second, I used member checking, in which data “are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). I invited all participants to review the transcripts to check for inaccuracies or address concerns that they had. Two participants asked me to send them the transcripts of their interview. I sent them out, but neither of the participants suggested any edits. Third, I had the advantage of peer debriefing, the experience of having “searching questions by an experienced protagonist doing his or her best to play the devil’s advocate. The inquirer’s biases are probed, meanings explored, the basis for interpretations clarified” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Interactions with my dissertation committee provided peer debriefing opportunities. In addition, I met with a dissertation writing group monthly to discuss the process, our progress, and any questions. The group contained a total of four people at various phases of the writing process, one of whom recently defended her dissertation and graduated. Fourth, the findings of my study are richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002), using illuminating words from the interviews and field notes. In addition, throughout the process, I worked to align the research purpose,
methods, research design in order to enhance truth value of the study (Ridenour & Newman, 2008).

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

There are aspects of this study that could be viewed as limitations. One constraint, while understood even in the planning stages, continued throughout the research. I was always aware of the predicament that I was putting participants in. The majority of them had intentions to continue working at this university, and yet they were discussing their challenges and sometimes critiques of their job. Due to the privilege of gaining their trust and candor, whenever necessary I erred on the side of protecting their identities. I am well aware of the lack of power that adjuncts hold and how easily their jobs could be put in jeopardy. Perhaps there would have been more richness if I had disclosed specifics about their lives or departments, but I could not take the chance of disclosing their identities. There were times that I experienced an internal struggle between what to present and the responsibility that I described. However, I mostly found that the interviews were rich enough to provide material and to reveal meaning without feeling that I was leaving out critical points for the sake of privacy.

A possible weakness in the study is that the participants needed only to have been adjuncts for one year at this university. It is possible that they have not yet reflected on their experience if this was their first-year teaching in the environment. Another weakness is that, in an attempt to hold all of the interviews before the adjuncts left campus for the semester break, end of May 2016, I scheduled quite a few interviews back-to-back. The quick pace of data collection cut down on my time to reflect after each individual interview was complete. There are ways to strengthen this design for future
research or to guide future research. One way would be to do an ethnography to add in the element of culture to understand more of the context in which adjunct faculty members experience growth. Another way would be to conduct the study at various institutions.

Another possible weakness might also be viewed as a strength. As a long-time adjunct, I shared a similar lived experience with the participants in this study. Maintaining my researcher distance and clarifying the boundaries between my role and participants was a struggle, particularly in writing Chapter IV. On the other hand, a strength of the current research study is that I have extensive adjunct faculty experience at several IHEs, which provided me with an insider perspective, adding an *emic* perspective to the research. In using an emic perspective, the researcher “tries to put aside prior theories and assumptions in order to let the participants and data ‘speak’ to them and to allow themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge.” (President and Fellows, Harvard University, 2008). I argue that my insider perspective helped me to build a rapport with current adjunct faculty members, study participants, allowing them to feel comfortable enough to share their constructed truth with me. Several participants stayed and talked with me after their individual interview ended, and others mentioned in their interviews that they believed I could relate to what they were saying. As an insider, I utilized the bracketing process to increase my focus on participants’ stories and to attempt to suspend my own.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

The purpose of my study was to reveal the experience of growth found in the role of adjunct faculty members at one university. To understand the phenomena of their lived experience, I interviewed sixteen participants. The interviews took place primarily in my shared office, when none of my officemates were using it; however, a few participants had their own office or an empty classroom where we met, and I met two at their preferred coffee shops.

I entered each interview with the disposition of having great regard for participants because I recognized and appreciated the trust they bestowed upon me in sharing their personal stories. Overall, I found participants to be very generous, offering me their stories and responding to my questions. I attribute their openness and generosity, in part, to my positionality. I had identified myself in the study Invitation Letter, Appendix B, as a long-term adjunct who cares deeply about the adjunct condition, thus, revealing my emic position and equal status on campus.

Relationship Developed

I believe study participants spoke candidly during interviews, and I did the same for them. Oakley (1981) used the phrase “no intimacy without reciprocity” (p. 49). While Oakley was specifically referring to longitudinal research, I argue that it applied to this
study. Due to the low rank of adjuncts’ positions, no job security, and little opportunity to get their voice heard, it was crucial for me to set the stage for a reciprocal relationship with participants. I was thinking about reciprocity when I chose to use an interview guide to facilitate a conversational style and tone in the interviews. During the conversations, I made every attempt to be a good listener and also an active one. I learned after the first few interviews to write down key points and phrases in my field notes to repeat back to participants to show them that they were heard and so that I could ask them to clarify when needed. I also tried not to interrupt unless necessary although I found it difficult to refrain at times. I did insert exclamations when I was moved by what they were saying.

There were times in the course of the interviews when I was asked questions by participants, such as when they inquired if I had experienced a situation similar to the one they described. I did answer their questions. Oakley (1981) found that “refusing to answer questions or offer any kind of personal feedback was not helpful in terms of the traditional goal of promoting ‘rapport’” (p.49). In addition to answering personal and professional questions, I also offered my assistance when it was appropriate; one participant had questions about how to find out the market value of an adjunct, and I referred her to a website that I knew. If, at any point, they struggled in the interview, for example when a participant had tears in her eyes as she formulated a response to a question I had asked, I apologized for the difficult question and gave her the time that she needed for a break. I believe that I was at least somewhat successful in my attempt of building rapport when participants used phrases like “as you know” or when they stayed after our interview to talk more about the adjunct topics that interested them. One participant even offered to help me network if I was interested in a full-time position, and
he followed up later in an email to alert me of some opportunities.

Besides the importance of reciprocity, Oakley (1981) also stated that “Without feeling that the interviewing process offered some personal satisfaction to them, interviewees would not be prepared to continue” (p. 49). In the simplest of ways, I am confident that the adjuncts whom I interviewed appreciated the opportunity to tell their story. Some began telling me their story in the elevator on the way up to my office before I could begin recording, and others stayed well after the interview was over. In other ways, I found that asking participants about their life achievements provided not only an opportunity for me to get to know them but also an opportunity for me to provide feedback. I congratulated them on their accolades and shared joy in their personal and professional successes. Several participants also showed interest in my work. In regards to this study they assured me that I was on a productive path, and Isabelle said that I was asking the right questions for my objectives. A few even expressed unsolicited interest in reading my study when completed and asked about my future career plans. I think they viewed this research as being for them, and it is.

In addition to my concern for building a relationship with participants, I was also attentive to my interview process and clarity of questions. As already mentioned, I wrote down what they said and asked for clarification or elaboration of their experience. I also realized that, even though I followed the same interview guide, individual participants sometimes required a unique application. Isabelle and Felicity, for instance, started discussing challenges they have faced at the beginning of the interview before I knew background information about them. I still wrote down their challenges and politely asked if we could come back to their challenges in more detail later in the interview. Gail,
on the other hand, was reluctant to label challenges because her perception was that the best qualities and worst qualities of something are interrelated, such as on a spectrum. She gave the example of attention to detail and obsessive compulsive. At that point in her interview, I explained to her that I was particularly interested in the process that occurs when an adjunct encounters a challenge. She then was easily able to respond to my question about challenges.

After the completion of the interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings and began analyzing them, coding them line by line and then organized the codes into categories. From the categories, constructed themes began to emerge and develop. I describe my process in capturing the themes in more detail in Chapter III. While different perspectives and stories presented in the interviews, there were recurring themes and patterns found. In this chapter, I present the findings and interpretation of those interviews, attempting to include rich detail. I utilized the exact words of participants at the times when it helped to paint a picture of their story. In doing so, I did, on fairly rare occasions, omit a stutter or rephrasing out of concern for how participants were portrayed and out of concern for the ease of reading. In addition, I was sensitive to their anonymity, and quotes that easily revealed their identities were not used.

**Description of Findings**

This chapter is organized by the three constructed themes from the interviews, in which growth was operationalized as a significant event that has challenged a person in a way that has required appropriate support and time for introspection and, as a result, has left that person with new, deep insight. It is understood that this growth occurs within a social, cultural, and emotional context. Within each theme, I organized by presenting
categories that emerged from my coding and helped to inform the theme. The themes and categories of challenges are **Challenges of Structure in the Adjunct Role**, which includes challenges of *scheduling, compensation, communication, and time*; **Challenges of Neglect by the IHE**, which includes challenges of *training, professional development, respect, and voice*; and **Challenges of Building a Community for Adjuncts**, which includes challenges of *connections and relationships*. The categories of challenges, as experienced by the participants, correspond to my first sub-research question: “What challenges conflicted with adjuncts’ world view?” I then provide any supports used for the described challenge, which corresponds to my last two research questions: “What elements of adjunct experience served as supports, and how did they use such supports for successful navigation of challenges?” and “In what ways did the environment play a role in adjunct experience?” In Chapter V, I delve deeper into the latter question when discussing interpretations and implications of my findings.

The descriptions found in this chapter derive from discussions about participants’ experiences at the university site of this study, unless clearly stated otherwise. There were times during the interviews when participants discussed experiences that they had at other institutions, and I redirected them when appropriate to their experiences at this university.

**Challenges of Structure in the Adjunct Role**

In Chapter II, I explained that when adjuncts have basic level concerns, such as pay, focus on the higher level concerns, such as scholarship of teaching, can be reduced or lost. When considering the environment of the study, as described in Chapter III, my suspicion was that this study would explore higher level challenges. However, I quickly realized in the course of the interviews that many participants were very much focused on
their basic needs. I briefly wrestled with finding meaning that I had not intended to examine, but I ultimately knew that those needs deserved to be addressed.

As discussed in Chapters I and II, the inherent structure of an adjunct faculty role provides an IHE flexibility in hiring and assigning courses, and it saves money. Thus, adjuncts do not enjoy job security or the pay typically associated with role of college professor at an IHE. Without job security, some participants said they felt an obligation to agree to terms they did not think were appropriate because they could easily be replaced otherwise. The structure is even more complicated because many adjuncts are not on campus for full-time hours and spend much of their time in other roles. Participants in this study talked in detail about issues related to how the adjunct position is structured. They questioned and often had grave concerns about how their work was assigned to them, what they were paid for their work, the effectiveness of communication, and the struggle to find time to fulfil their responsibilities. They did not recall much in the lines of support for these challenges and oftentimes had to find ways to mitigate on their own.

**Haphazard scheduling structure.** During the course of the interviews, some participants expressed discomfort when they recalled how their classes were scheduled and the types of tasks that they were asked to complete. The process of scheduling generated much of the frustration. Kenneth called the scheduling process “haphazard.” The issues participants experienced with scheduling ranged from mild to more serious, sometimes affecting their confidence in their work.

Nearly every semester, Patricia has been assigned to teach a new course and given little notice, around two months, as to which course she would be teaching. As years have passed, Patricia said it just has become “norm for me. So, I think that’s been more of an
acceptance thing, you know, that I’m just like alright; I’m low man on the totem pole.” She said her feelings about the situation have evolved over time, and even though she has come to accept it, it has become a source of frustration for her. Isabella made the assumption that she has been assigned the courses that full-time faculty did not want in any given semester, which may connect with Kenneth’s description of scheduling as haphazard.

Besides having little notice to prepare for classes and frequently being assigned to new courses, Harold explained another scheduling concern; one of his scheduled courses was “yanked to go to a full-time lecturer,” the cause of which he attributed to seniority. Plus, he had been graciously offered another section to compensate for that course. He said he had to turn it down, however, because he had already been scheduled to teach a course at another IHE, and the timing was too tight to account for travel time. He said when he checked the location for his other classes, ten days before the beginning of the semester, he discovered that he had been assigned to the course anyway. He told me he did not feel comfortable telling his Chair that he could not teach the class, so he kept both classes, meaning he would need to be in two places at practically the same time.

Logistics were not the only challenge that participants had with scheduling. Some discussed a misalignment in their expertise and job assignments. In addition to the frustration of a constantly revolving class schedule, Patricia talked to me about the balance that she tried to strike between her people-pleasing personality, saying yes to every class change, with her desire to feel confident in what she is teaching. She said that to teach something new every semester is challenging because I’m, and I’m teaching you know my field of expertise, but then I’m also kind of dabbling in
whatever’s leftover for other people to do them favors. So not always in my bubble.

There were times when participants were asked to teach courses that said were not a good fit for them. Both Nichole and Carla said they felt this way; their situations were a mismatch of qualifications or specialization. Nichole said that she was asked to teach a course with content that she had not studied for approximately forty years. Carla reported that during her time at this institution, she has been asked to teach upper level courses. While it sounded positive that the IHE provided an opportunity for an adjunct to teach upper level courses, recalling that adjuncts are often given introductory courses, Carla admitted to me that the courses that were offered to her were ones in which she had no background or experience with the content. Despite that, the department needed someone to teach the course, and she said she felt obligated to say yes because she worried that if she said no that she would not be offered courses in the future. I shared with her that I had had a similar experience of teaching a difficult course and had struggled with how to do so and still be an effective teacher. She then went on to say that she had to make changes in how she taught the course to lighten her lecture responsibilities.

Isabella had a more intense experience. She said she felt as though she was being “groomed” to take over a spot held by a full-time faculty member who was preparing to retire, but she felt angst about this. She said she thought to herself,

No, I can’t do that; I’m not even ready. I don’t really even have the degree to do that. Um, which is kind of something that’s-you kind of fly under the radar a little with that, and just don’t tell a lot of people that because um I have a bachelor’s degree.
She explained that she found herself struggling that semester with the difficult content in one of the courses she taught. It is important to note that there were some participants who reported that their skills were aligned with what they were asked to teach. Orville explained that he has had significant say in his schedule, which has made it easier for him to work around his other career.

Even though Orville was satisfied with his assigned classes, he and Kenneth described times when they were assigned tasks that went beyond how they perceived the responsibilities of their adjunct role. Kenneth said he was told that at the beginning of his class, containing several international students, that he was to check roster pictures because “it’s not unknown for someone to send someone under a fictitious name.” Kenneth said he wanted to know why that is his job and not the role of the “gatekeepers.” He explained that he did not see this task as being part of his role, nor did he want to do it. Orville told me about a time when he was asked to complete a task that he felt was outside of his teaching role. On one particular occasion, he said he was asked to communicate a legal issue with one of his students who would no longer be permitted on campus. The issue had nothing to do with his class. Orville said he asked for additional information but was told it was private. He reported that he felt uncomfortable carrying out the task because he wanted his classroom to be a safe place for his students, not a place where they worried about coming to class. Additionally, Orville admitted that he was concerned about security; he did not know what the situation involved. Kenneth and Orville’s part-time status denotes resources limited to teaching. As Orville explained, “what I don’t like is a couple times I’ve been asked to do very uncomfortable things without the infrastructure and support of the organization.” While resources or
infrastructure may not have made the task enjoyable, he would have at least known that he was not alone.

**Support for haphazard scheduling structure.** While some adjuncts were still struggling with this challenge, others described how they personally mitigated their challenges with scheduling. Patricia said that she did not find a solution to her challenge, but she had become at peace with it. She acknowledged that she had been invited to apply for a full-time position but opted for part-time, so she has come to accept the reality that she has chosen.

Orville, Harold, and Isabella actively solved, to varying degrees, their own challenges. Orville, in his discomfort with the legal issue, took his concern about safety and advocated for himself. He asked for security personnel, and while he did not get that, he ultimately got an administrator to carry out the task instead. I asked Harold about his problem-solving process: if he had any supports or if he was on his own. He responded that there “literally is no resource for the scheduling conflict.” However, the reality was he had been faced with a challenge, and he did have to react. He bought a pair of running shoes and ended (class) five minutes early every day, literally ran across campus, did 80 on the highway, ran across (other IHE) campus, started that class five minutes late every single day, and it was unfortunately a huge disservice to both sets of students.

Isabella had a somewhat positive outcome based on how she described her efforts to navigate the challenges of teaching upper level classes. When she was asked to teach a course that not only was unfamiliar to her but that also had difficult content, she said she first tried to work through the material ahead of time on her own. In addition, she
explained that she sat in on a different section of her same course, taught by full-time professor. She said she not only learned more about the content but that she also had the opportunity to experience the class from the students’ perspective. She said she went on to sit in on the next course in the series to see what her students would be expected to know when leaving her class, and she sat in on yet another class for the purpose of learning additional teaching strategies. She expressed that those experiences were amazing…it was just the tricks of the trade that you learn along the way to tell the students. I’m like how do you know that. You know, I mean because you’ve been doing it forever and ever and ever, and you learn that along the way, but it was-a wonderful experience.

**Perplexing compensation structure.** As might be expected, this challenge was both significant and emotional for some participants. After all, one of the most distinguishing factors of full-time and part-time faculty is salary. Of the many participants who listed pay as a challenge, they cited several different reasons. Some were unclear about the pay scale or why leaders at the university made the decisions they did about money allocation. Others described serious life implications of having an adjunct pay scale. There were a few participants who said that while money was not a concern for them, they were aware of the inherent issues surrounding adjunct wages.

There were a few aspects about the adjunct pay structure that were unclear to participants. Of course the amount of pay was questioned, criticized, and discussed, but participants were also concerned about how many courses they were permitted to teach. Carla described the credit limit as “disputable.” Her department set a two course maximum, but she consistently was assigned three. The other IHE she worked for raised
the limit, and she was allowed to teach four classes there, begging the question of where and how the regulations were being enforced.

I decided to address an opposing viewpoint when I asked Edmond if he thought it was possible the IHE would want to hire an adjunct for a specific skill set. He said that his department was not employing adjuncts in that way when they hire them to fulfill introductory level courses. He said he assumed that the university was trying to save money and that using part-time faculty was efficient; however, he questioned the alignment with the goals of IHEs. The university was saving money on salaries, but they were spending money on “aspects aside from the primary mission of the university.”

Kenneth said that adjuncts get paid so little, yet the university had spent a lot of money for what he considered insignificant things:

- the university spent what $2 million to paint the library, and they screwed it up, they did it again…There’s this $7.3 million to spend at the…Union, which I think is perfectly fine, but to make it look like little restaurants…Once again, look at what both sides of the ledger, that’s that’s a bit much. That’s a bit much.

Isabella was more conflicted when she spoke of pay. She told me that she was not in an adjunct role for the money; however, she listed money as one of the challenges she has faced while in the role. When she first started as an adjunct, she said she had an opportunity to suggest a pay rate, but she did not know how much to ask to be paid. She said she was paid the same as a graduate student. That was acceptable for her at the time because she said she did not need the money then as much as she did at the time of the interview for this study. She explained she was frustrated because she has become much more valuable to the university than she was many years ago. While she said she believed
the $20 raise for cost of living she received per year was not enough, she did not know how much she should be paid or where to find that information. She also noted that it was “touchy because they can just say okay we don’t need you anymore and replace you.”

Issues surrounding job security surfaced in the scheduling category and again in the category of compensation. While Lance said he understood that hiring adjunct faculty help the university control their costs, he asserted that the cost came at the expense of security for adjuncts. He said he realized that he was fortunate to teach a niche course but said that he was never certain whether he would be asked back each semester. He said he appreciated that his initial Chair had helped to populate his course, but he noted that he did not have that support anymore.

Harold said he has loved teaching and even has been willing to give up having job security. He explained, and showed the magnitude of his commitment, when he said that he would not be doing adjunct work, with all of its challenges, if he did not care about his students and their success. Unfortunately, he said that same care and commitment to student outcomes “gets used against us (adjuncts).” He questioned whether the university cared about the things that he did. If he were to improve students’ learning, for example,

I would have the satisfaction of goin yeah, I took a freshman and made them write about intersectionality, like that’s really hard to do, and I did it, and I have done that. Um, that would make me feel good and probably make the student feel exhausted but good. I don’t know if—it wouldn’t generate any more money though; that’s the bottom line right?

If money drives actions, it was not difficult to understand the unfairness he felt when he shared that “the tenured guy across the hall from me pulls up the damn Wikipedia page”
to read in his classes,

and gets paid four times as much as I get paid, which is like again I’m fine with
my life, I have a good life. I pay my bill- I don’t care. Um, but it feels massively
unfair...I wrote my own textbook.

Gail said that the “department knows that I work full-time hours for part-time
pay.” She said she has worked more hours in a semester as an adjunct than she did when
she was a full-time lecturer. In addition, after hearing her description of her
responsibilities at this IHE, I suggested that she was a course manager of sorts, to which
she interrupted me to state emphatically, “I am the course manager.” Originally, she said
she worked in the corporate world but came to a full-time position at this university
because she had a young family and did not want to travel. However, her role at this
institution became part-time. Although she explained that she did not need the benefits,
she said she felt very hurt that her child’s tuition reimbursement benefit was taken away;
“I felt like it was not handled in the way the (religious founders) would have wanted it to
be handled.” She said that if she was at the beginning of her career she would place a
higher value on herself, seemingly indicating that she would advocate for herself more.

Edmond described an injustice with his low pay. He said it has been bothering
him because he explained that adjuncts are expected to teach with the same quality as
full-time faculty. He said that his position requires a Master’s Degree, yet he has been
paid less for full-time hours than the average person with no high school diploma. He
said he contemplated going back to school to earn a Ph.D., but he said the statistics even
then of getting a full-time position did not look promising. Plus, he acknowledged that it
would take additional time and money to earn the degree.
One of Edmund’s biggest challenges with adjunct pay has been the instability of income. With his adjunct position as his only job and the number of courses assigned to him in flux each semester, he said he has found it impossible to make a financial plan. He added that even with his wife working too, they “fluctuate in terms of being above the poverty line barely, being below it, and getting assistance whenever we can.” He explained that the instability has complicated many aspects of his life. He said he has tried to maximize the number of courses he teaches each semester, on multiple campuses, but also has had to balance the time it takes to teach all those classes with the quality of those classes, self-determining a minimum level of quality that he will not go under.

I always have to think about- well how much time I am actually devoting to the class versus how much I am getting paid…because it’s just not fair to me or my family to be gone all the time and yet still be on the poverty line.

He said he has found it difficult to talk about his challenges with anyone for fear of losing his job and also because it has been hard to admit the position in which he has found himself. He expressed that he had always wanted to teach, aware that adjunct pay is low, but never realized how low nor the limited opportunity to advance. At the time of our interview, he said he felt “stuck in limbo”; plus, he expressed that his students were not getting the best courses that he could offer. He was stressed.

Like Edmund, Carla said she did not “feel good” about the quality of her teaching at the time of our interview. She said her emotional and financial stress had surfaced during the semester of our interview. She said she was teaching twenty-four credit hours because she “need(s) that amount of money.” Given the number of classes she taught, she did not have the time to rework her curriculum or to keep adequate office hours. She
explained that the lack of a consistent schedule was also troubling. While she stated she did not attribute fault to the person who made her schedule each semester, there was no consistency in class content. That her schedule has been “always sort of open,” she said adds to her frustration and concern. She said her need for child care increased her desire for consistency. In addition, she indicated paying for health insurance was a challenge for her. Even though her income was higher than the threshold to receive a subsidy, she explained, the difference was insufficient for her to feel comfortable paying for health insurance. She said she planned on signing up next year for health insurance to avoid the financial penalty.

Some adjuncts clarified that they were not in an adjunct position because they needed the money but the pay structure still confused them. In the interviews, they brought up many of the same points about compensation that the other participants did. Lance asked me if other adjuncts were challenged by low pay. He speculated that they were. He admitted that pay was not a significant factor for him, but he said he was perplexed at the how pay rate was determined. He described meeting someone who was teaching a similar class at a neighboring IHE and was earning double his pay. He said that he did not recall receiving a pay increase in his more than a decade of teaching at this IHE. He said he wanted to know the basis for pay raises. He contrasted his experience in industry and its clarity of salary determination with his experience at this IHE.

Marvin talked about the inequality between part-time and full-time pay. He said he believed that he had as much experience as the full-time faculty. Derrick explained he had been employed at a full-time job during the day. He laughed when he admitted that if he were to teach a newly scheduled course that his “hourly wage will come down to
about 50 cents an hour for what we get paid.” It was surprising to me, as I conducted the interviews, how pay was so critical to some adjuncts’ lives and so unimportant to others.’ I wrote in my journal that I was wondering if this finding would be different at another IHE.

Marvin was employed at two IHEs and taught in total four or five classes in what he called a “full-time load... but not full-time pay.” He said he accepted the pay because it only supplemented his income; he had insurance based on a retirement package from his previous career. However, he said he wanted to teach more classes for enjoyment. He questioned the number of hours an adjunct could teach. He expressed the view that IHEs did not want to provide insurance to employees working over the 30 hours and said when the Affordable Care Act kicked in, they had to scale that back to eleven hours per semester because they had calculated as such that anything more than eleven hours per semester equated to over 30 hours of work considering all the prep time and the grading and the teaching.

He explained that because it is difficult to schedule exactly eleven credit hours, he was frequently assigned nine or ten, which is why he came to this IHE, to teach additional classes.

Nichole said that she had, for a while, received a $50 raise each year and said that if money was limited it “probably should” go to the full-time faculty. She considered the money that she has earned from her adjunct role as “play money” because it supplemented her full-time salary and benefits from her other job. She hypothesized that that was “another reason I get hired semester after semester because I don’t have to bug you for benefits.” However, she expressed her dislike of prorating a course, earning only
10% of the established salary if only three students register for the course. At times, she said she taught a prorated course if she deemed it helpful for students. The alternative to prorating would be cancelling a class. She explained that a schedule is never guaranteed and that even after signing a teaching contract for the semester, a course could still be cancelled.

Kenneth and James shared some of the same sentiments as Nichole. Kenneth shared a lack of concern about benefits because he said his wife’s job provided them. However, he mentioned his concern that “if for some reason the university were to say oh you’re services are no longer uh needed, I have no due process rights, none.” James expressed similar thoughts about money as Nichole. He described how he views his adjunct role;

the load I’m teaching now is fun. I’m not particularly interested in money, and I enjoy what I’m doing…I know when I’ve taught two academic classes in one semester, that’s uh too much of—it takes away too much from my own free time, whatever I want to do or don’t do.

Orville presented a different perspective about pay than most of the other participants did. Various departments on the same campus pay their adjuncts different rates per semester hour, and Orville said his department has paid him fairly well, “probably one of the best adjunct gigs in town.” However, he acknowledged that there have been courses that he has been underpaid for teaching, given the challenging amount and difficulty of material. He said he has had full-time faculty tell him, “I’m really glad that you’re teaching that so I don’t have to…I know that you can teach it better than I could.”
Support for perplexing compensation structure. Some participants expressed a desire to have their questions about pay structure answered. This group, I determined, were not in a desperate financial need as others were. For those who talked more about financial struggle, some shared examples of self-care to address their challenge.

Carla and Edmond discussed a few strategies to cope with their challenges. When I asked Carla if anything was helpful for her, she said that she was able to vent to a few other adjuncts. Additionally, she expressed a need for quiet time alone. She described herself as an introvert and said she had not been able to get that self-care during the past semester because of her full schedule. To combat his financial challenges, Edmond said he tried to stay “zen” and flexible in times of change and instability. He said he is “generally frugal,” and going to thrift stores and focusing on essentials have helped him to lower his cost of living.

Other adjuncts discussed ways they found to advocate for themselves. Gail described how she had attempted to negotiate a slightly higher pay and had succeeded. Isabella said she had pushed to teach different courses. The strategy benefited her because, she explained, she gained a wider pool of classes that she could potentially teach each semester.

Ineffective communication structure. Participants highlighted problems in the communication structure at this IHE. Many expressed that they did not always receive the information that they needed to be successful in their work. Felicity said that she sometimes does not get notified of changes and told how she was left out of important communication:
twice now the first night of classes my room has changed, and I didn’t get notified...there’s (typically) nobody around by 6:30pm for me to find out where my class is, right. So, um, thankfully that first week she (administrative assistant) stays late, and she’s able to move me where I need to be. But, it’s like how hard is this to let me know where my class is. It’s a pretty easy thing.

According to Abe, a lack of communication has wasted his time. He said he had spent extra time creating materials to help students learn a new program, only to later discover that the department had bought a resource that was very similar.

Nicole, Kenneth, and Carla all recalled times when a lack of communication created a challenge for them with their students and in their teaching. Nichole told of a time when she was reprimanded as a result of not having necessary information. She had altered a course assignment because she thought it was more appropriate for her students, not knowing that the original assignment was one that was used for data collection. She added that it was frustrating when her students told her that parallel courses were being taught differently than she was teaching. She said she had not been informed of instruction strategies and expectations in parallel courses.

Kenneth described a time when he did not get an important message. He was not notified of a policy change and had directed his students according to an earlier policy. He said he felt like he had “egg on his face” for misleading students. Carla expressed experiencing similar undue stress due to lack of information. She explained that she noticed her students coming into class frustrated and unprepared. After struggling through one particularly difficult class, she said she talked to the professor in charge of the course. She was informed that this was an upper level, required class outside students’
major. She also learned that full-time faculty had struggled with teaching this course. Carla said it was helpful knowing that her experience with students in that course was common. She said she would have benefitted from learning the course status before the class began.

Of note, James mentioned that he has been kept informed and has experienced effective communication.

**Support for ineffective communication structure.** Most participants indicated that there was not a clear and complete communication structure. They would simply like to see one implemented, but it would have to be tailored to the needs of adjuncts. Patricia said that “the (communication) channels are there, to figure out how it fits into my world is where I’m not there.” She stated that she has received emails and lots of written communication but admits to not reading them all. She said that they can be lengthy and many times do not apply to her, but she said that she could miss useful pieces of information by not reading them.

Some participants described ways that they found solutions to the communication challenge. It is to be noted, however, that some of the solutions may not be ideal. For example, in response to being reprimanded for not following a protocol of which Nichole was not made aware, she said that she resolved that problem by choosing not to teach that class again. She cited that her decision was based on the fact that she is student-centered, alluding to the idea that the course was not functioning according to that ideal.

**Time-constraining structure.** The category of limited time was introduced in the previous compensation category as an effect of what participants described as teaching too many classes in an attempt to earn a living wage and thus experiencing time
constraints. This current section further explores that category as well as other competing priorities for adjuncts’ time. The term adjunct signifies that the role is supplementary to something else. While this can apply to IHEs’ employment of adjuncts, adjuncts themselves typically add their adjunct teaching role to another priority in their life.

Harold, Carla and Edmund, as stated in the previous category, have taught at more than one IHE during a semester, in order to create a full-time schedule. Harold said he has had a desire to be more involved on campus, which would be possible if he worked at only one IHE. He said that although he “wouldn’t say no to benefits,” he did not need them, but as an adjunct, he has been limited by the cap on the number of courses that he could teach. He questioned the policy on maximum number of courses allowed to adjunct faculty and said he noted some loopholes. Similarly, Edmond said he wanted to be more connected to one IHE,

but when you’re teaching at multiple campuses, it’s very difficult to keep up on everything that’s going on at the multiple campuses, and it’s hard to really devote your time to one campus or another when you’re constantly going back and forth between one and another.

He explained that he has wrestled with the decision to become more involved on one campus but then explained that he would be neglecting his students on the other campuses.

Carla described teaching a combined 24 credit hours the most recent semester. She said she struggled to find enough time to for all of her teaching responsibilities. She said that when she was first hired at this university, she was given only course goals and a “bare bones” syllabus. She said she designed the course herself to meet the goals, but
after some time had passed, she would have liked to rethink and rework her course. She said she has not had the time to do either. In this quotation, she was especially concerned about the semester after our interview:

I have one week, next week to get all of my grading done and then to set up everything for summer, and I have nothing done for summer, nothing. And, one of those (courses) is um a brand new upper level class again…I feel always like I’m behind, that as much as I try to plan my time, it just doesn’t work out. I can’t get ahead.

Edmond said he struggled with time, but he attributed his struggle in part to having many students. He explained that in upper level courses, he had approximately seventeen students, but in introduction courses, the number of students doubled. From his experience, he deduced that adjuncts are assigned many more introduction courses than are full-time faculty. He said that unfortunately, the increased number of students has had negative consequences,

...even a small assignment, just entering the grades alone uh takes you a long time…so you definitely have to change the way you teach, uh what goals you set for your students, based upon just pure practicality on time wise.

In addition to adjuncts teaching at multiple IHEs, about half of the participants cited a lack of time as a primary concern. Some adjuncts were working full-time hours, had a career outside of academia, or had family obligations. In their descriptions, the responsibilities of these different roles were often translated into an inconvenient, packed, or even a spontaneous schedule, which made time their most valuable and most limited resource.
Several participants described significant roles or priorities outside their adjunct roles at IHEs that competed for their time. Full-time jobs, such as Kenneth’s two professional roles in addition to his adjunct role, accounted for a significant amount of time. Nichole’s full-time job, she explained, has made it difficult for her to find time to try new textbooks and strategies in her class. For our interview, she asked that we meet at her day job because she explained that was the only time she had available. She continued to talk with co-workers periodically throughout our interview. Derrick described how his career outside of academia created challenges for his adjunct role. He spent most of his work week at his “regular job,” he said, so he would give students the phone number of his regular full-time job instead of the number of the university. He explained that

“I’m really only on campus maybe an hour before my class, and when class is over, I’m gone…so my ability to be on campus and be a more active participant in the department or even university activities are limited.

Also, he described time as a limitation to reorganizing his class. He said he had changed textbooks but has gotten “bored” with his PowerPoints, “I don’t necessarily have time outside of class to sit down and completely reorganize.” He said he would love to research more about blogs and websites in his field or to talk with other faculty who teach similar courses. He said he assumed that full-time faculty members have “more flexibility and time in terms of having more time to put together a new class and completely redo a current class if (they) want to.”

Some participants were primary caretakers of family members. Abe said he chose to teach at night so that he could care, during the day, for a family member with a
disability. Patricia said she had an active home life with several young children, and she labeled her primary role as that of mother. She listed managing her time as a major challenge. She said she had especially struggled working from home because “something always comes up.” As opposed to other places that she has taught, she said this IHE is most time-consuming, due in part to the fact that she has been assigned a new course each semester, requiring research to prepare and update her lectures. She estimated that she spends 35 hours per week at this IHE.

Support for time-constraining structure. The types of support that the participants discussed to address their challenge of limited time ran a full spectrum, from Carla who seemed to surrender when she said, “I can’t get caught up,” to others who have made choices to mitigate their challenge. Derric has taken ownership of his situation; he said he recognized that he entered into this challenge while knowing that his family and full-time career required much of his time already. During the interview, we digressed and shared the many activities our children have participated in and how to multi-task while watching their sporting events. Besides acknowledging the predicament that he chose, he described times when his perceived value of a learning experience for students necessitated that he find a way to make it all work. Despite the extra time that it was taking him, he said he was in the process of submitting a proposal to create a new course that he felt was significant.

Other participants described having made personal and professional changes in an attempt to maximize effectiveness within their limited time. Nichole and Patricia spoke of limiting their work load. Nichole said she made the decision to turn down courses if they required a new preparation. Patricia said she has worked less in the summer because
she does not want a “twelve month gig.” She expressed she wants to spend time with her children in the summer. Kenneth said he had made a few changes as well. He described having worked on time management; he said he “consciously” has to “partition” his time, and he had actively read about and worked on time management strategies. Edmund said he had made changes to his teaching style as a result of limited time. He described the ways in which he had been “mitigating the large class size,” such as providing feedback to students only upon request and recording completion grades. Completion grades are given by an instructor based solely on whether or not students completed an assignment. However, he said he struggled with knowing that his solution is “imperfect, it’s not the way I’d like to be able to teach the course.”

**Challenges of Neglect by the IHE**

I noted in my journal that participants had a sadness in their voices when they talked about not having the training to do their jobs or not having the respect and voice at the IHE that they wanted and expected. These are the categories that constituted this theme of neglect. Neglect is a strong word, and when it is intentional, it is even more intense, but one participant used the words, “blind neglect,” when discussing the view that he said the IHE has towards adjunct faculty. The majority of adjuncts shared at least some of his sentiment. They described the lack of respect and understanding of them as individuals and the role that they provide for the IHE.

**Training neglected.** Because the adjunct faculty role is one that is only defined by its part-time status and its function of teaching courses, there is much room for interpretation by each IHE and by each department. The participants in this study talked often about their confusion in what was expected of them. The adjunct faculty model has
some limitations just by its very nature. One common challenge depicted in participants’ stories was a rough transition into their role as adjunct faculty at this IHE. Starting a new job can be tough for anyone, but what made this experience particularly challenging was the lack of resources, guidance, or basic understanding of expectations or how to perform in their role.

For the adjuncts who had previously held roles outside of academia, their concerns were highlighted when they compared how different the two experiences had been. Isabella made a distinction between her adjunct role and her past work experience. She said that in her experience working in the field, she was told exactly what to do and attended regular meetings; whereas, in her adjunct role, she has felt very much on her own.

Lance came from industry and said he noticed significant contrasts. He described the context that he came from as

a very structured work environment in industry, and I walked in something that had no structure at all. Uh, there were no guidelines; there was no handbook for a new um adjunct lecture, uh, so I felt a little at sea. I didn’t know how much work to set for the students. I didn’t know how many tests to set for the students; uh I didn’t know how much they should be participating in the classes. There was just no structure at all around it. Uh there was no management that I could go to.

He described that he was hired to create and teach a course in his specialty area, the content of which connected to his recent career. However, according to Lance, it took him six months of unpaid work to develop the course. He said that he started with nothing and had to choose a textbook and design a syllabus, all before he began teaching
Kenneth, due to his background in industry, expressed his particular frustration because of the contrast in clarity, particularly in decision-making, between his past role and his current adjunct one. He explained that in industry, the clients dictate the scope and deadline of the project, and there is a manager who is available to the workforce and who is the ultimate decision maker. He has found the decision-making process “mystifying here.” He said that when he began his adjunct role, no one ever showed him any resources.

Even when adjuncts had experience related to education, they still expressed confusion. Felicity described her business and teaching experience prior to becoming an adjunct, but she explained that she knew nothing about the university. She said she started out from ground zero with “absolutely no information or training.” She said one of her first challenges was to find a campus map to know where she was going; they all just assume, you know, that you know where everything is…similar to Freshman coming in, you know, and trying to figure out where’s your dorm, where’s your classrooms. Felicity also struggled with learning the technology in the classrooms. I asked her about any available resources she did have, to which she responded, this is going to sound terrible, but I’m not even aware of anything from the department. They’ve given me no guidelines, no direction. The only thing that I can even think of is the copier code…I haven’t even met my current dean. He wouldn’t know me if he saw me. So, again it’s (adjuncts) just kind of this dangling participle out here somewhere.
Beth echoed Felicity’s concern. When Beth encountered an unclear task or a barrier to completing the responsibilities of her role, she has had no problem asking for assistance or asking questions to help clarify the task. However, she said that it takes too long to find a person who knows the answer or who can help, even with the most basic of office tasks, such as enlarging a document. She declared that it should not be so “helter skelter.”

Participants expressed particular difficulty when they were hired close to the beginning of the semester or after the semester had begun. Derrick struggled when he came into his adjunct role two weeks before the semester was to begin. He felt that he had to make decisions about the course based on the time that he had to prepare. In addition, he explained that his department was small and in flux at the time, so there was not an ideal number of people or resources available.

Beth said she was hired after the semester began, worsening her sense of confusion. At the time of our interview, she expressed continuing to struggle with figuring out the specifics of her role. She explained that she was missing certain pieces of information to do her job effectively; for example, she expressed confusion about deadlines and paperwork. She also said that she has been unsure of how to respond to emails that require faculty responses, unsure whether or not they apply to her.

**Support for training neglected.** Some adjuncts reported that they were offered support when they began their role. Beth said she was provided with some training; however, she was brought in to the role when the semester had already started. She said she was not able to fully make use of the information because much of it was out of context. As for support, Beth reported she only recently felt generally familiar with the administrative staff but not individuals and their roles.
Derrick said he was provided the textbook and syllabus used by the person who previously taught his class. He said he felt obligated to use the materials because of the lack of time to consider alternatives. As a result, he felt he “wasn’t horrible, but…I’m like whoa, you know, I wouldn’t do it this way, but now I’m gonna do it this way, and I’m gonna change it alter kind of thing.” He added that he had contacted some of his friends in the field for advice.

There were other adjuncts who sought out support on their own. Isabella said she struggled with feeling isolated, which created a challenge because she had to learn everything by herself, starting with the basics of the role. Felicity said she began asking others to find answers to her questions. She reported that she spoke with several people before finding someone who could help; “so eventually you get there, but it’s just harder than it really should have to be.” She said the people that she ultimately found were helpful, as was the administrative assistant. She described feeling the freedom to teach how she sees fit. The challenges that she once had “are pretty old news now.”

Lance said he searched out resources on his own and was fortunate that he had a previously established connection to a full-time faculty member in the department. While he had reached out to her, he said that she was very busy. He went to the adjunct meeting and received some “background information” and insight from other adjuncts. Kenneth said he attended the adjunct meeting in his quest for advice and resources. He said the meeting did not provide what he needed, which was conversation with adjuncts about teaching and learning strategies. He said he was looking forward to attending a mini-conference, provided by a learning center on campus, and he was hopeful that it would be a good start to the conversation.
James’ story differed from the others’. He said that “teaching is a challenge, not the (adjunct) role.” Initially when I asked him about challenges that he had encountered, he provided what I understood as general instructional challenges, such as engaging students, and not distinct adjunct challenges. In these instances, I followed his conversation path and inquired as to what support he utilized. At one point later in the interview, he did mention supports as described in the student population theme constructed in this research. He clarified in the interview that that while he thought the academic challenges are similar for full and part-time faculty, he was happy that the administrative aspect is different for adjuncts. He said he does not want to attend meetings and “publish or perish.” James said he has already retired from a career outside of academia and was previously familiar with the department; his background story was notably different than the other participants.

**Professional development for change neglected.** A few participants cited that the changes that occurred from semester to semester were difficult to navigate because they did not have necessary professional development or resources. Beth listed several examples of changes, including the question of how student absences were supposed to be handled. One change was consistently discussed by participants; it was also what surprised me the most in the interviews. The participants felt challenged by the changing demographics at the university, specifically the addition of international students. There was some difference to be noted in how each of them viewed the change and how intensely they felt the impact of that change.

The shear suddenness of the change was noted by James, who recalled that his international numbers increased quickly, most recently accounting for more than half of
the students in his class. Lance reported even higher numbers: 75% of his students in the most recent semester were international students. Harold said he recently noticed the significant population change when he looked at his roster and saw that 85% of his students were international. The majority of the challenges that the participants discussed with the influx of students from other countries centered on classroom communication, customs, and cheating.

Felicity cited communication as her biggest obstacle when discussing the challenge of students for whom English was not their first language. Not only did she experience the teaching and learning of the content difficult, but there was a barrier to conversation. Lance was less concerned with the content of his course because he explained to me that his assignments have room for diverse responses and perspectives. However, he described how grading students’ work left him feeling that there was a double standard. If a student turned in a paper with grammar or writing errors, he would “criticize” an American student, but if from an international student, he understood that they were probably struggling with the language, and he accommodated their efforts.

James listed the writing abilities of his international students as his biggest challenge. He cut(s) them a lot of slack. I don’t grade their grammar, punctuation, spelling, things like that. If I can figure out what they’re saying, and they’ve got the idea, then that’s functional, but some of them- I had several ones that’ve gone on academic probation; some of them on academic dismissal.

There seemed to be some connection that he was making in students’ writing quality and academic probation, but it was somewhat unclear if that was intentional or in
what ways those ideas connect.

Felicity inquired about the requirements for international students so as to help her better understand her students. She said she was told that they had to be proficient in English, but she said that “they’re not proficient in English. When they write an exam, they memorize the book, and they write the book; that’s not the answer.” Kenneth said he tried to understand different perspectives. He said that he understood that the university benefits financially from international students, but he thought that some students were being admitted that should not have been. As a result, he explained that it was a struggle and how he felt it should be another person’s role to manage the challenge. Secondly, he said that he would see students use their phones to translate every word in his lecture, and then they would want to use their phones on the exam.

Harold, like Kenneth, said values of capitalism led to the increase in enrollment of international students. He expressed his concern that the university would eventually lose its “brand” because “I’m having to water down my standards.” He, again like Kenneth, said he struggled with the issue of whether the students were adequately prepared for class. He described the written work that was turned in as “word soup.” While he said that he was willing to work to help the students, he questioned his students’ interest in a diploma and not his class. He invoked his imagery of a bottomless pit of effort. He put in lots of effort, but it was either not enough or had no reward.

Harold made a clarification in his explanation of his struggle. He said that he has noticed differences between students from different countries of origin. One group, which he discussed in the preceding section, has language struggles which makes understanding assignments and conferences especially difficult. He said the Kuwaitis’ do not value
being on time and another group has struggled more with cultural differences including the understanding of intellectual property. After momentarily considering that a “plague wipe(d) out the campus” when he experienced high absences for two weeks, he was told by students that Saudis do not attend classes those two weeks. He has questioned the cultural norms he has heard. While James said he has struggled with cultural differences, such as the importance of being on time and how to teach a concept that has no cultural parallel, he has used culture differences in his class to break down stereotypes and show commonalities. Kenneth said he connects some differences, such as gender differences, to students’ countries of origin. He said that he was told by an administrator that many Chinese men will return to their country and take over a business, but that the women have to distinguish themselves to compete for opportunities.

Several participants honed in specifically on cheating as their challenge with international students. Felicity said she has struggled with the cheating that she saw. She said she would tell the students, “eyes on your own paper. I don’t want to see that again…you will have a zero next time.” Felicity wrote notes to the students clarifying her requirement for students to write their own ideas in their assignments and not copy word for word from the text. She said, though, that she awarded points and credit for the copied responses because it was not a “wrong answer.” Kenneth said he has struggled with cheating, and said he has spoken to students about intellectual property. Harold showed students several examples of plagiarism. He said that when he questioned one student about his work, both the structure of the writing and the content of his paper, the student explained that he may have had his cousin help him edit. Harold then said he told the student, “You didn’t- it’s not editing, you don’t even know what you’re topic is.” Harold
said that during class he told students to put a certain code on their paper, and when they turned their papers in, if the paper lacked the code he provided in class, he would know the author of the work had not been in class. He then concluded that a student without the code in the paper was “taking the assignment sheet, passing it to the grad students, turning in beautifully written off prompt, off topic papers or sometimes recycling papers from previous classes.”

*Support for professional development for change neglected.* As the participants discussed support in regards to international students, they did not all talk about the same recipient of the support. Lance, for example, discussed support for students. He said that the students are becoming more supported as time has gone on and as the number of international students has grown. However, he said that a gap still exists, “which makes a lecturer like myself, in my opinion, teach a double standard.” He said he has tried to offer students additional support by telling them about the writing center on campus, but he expressed doubt about students using it.

Harold said he has tried to support international students in class by changing the way he lectures, runs a class discussion, and designs assignments. He explained that he has had success with creating worksheets to accompany the readings because the worksheets helped students understand the readings without altering the content. Kenneth considered ways to restructure and reorganize the content of the class in ways that would provide more support for the international students. However, he said he was told implementing the change and altering the structure would not comply with accreditation standards. He said he was disappointed that there was not more conversation on improving instruction for international students.
James acknowledged the workshops and meetings supporting him in meeting challenges of teaching international students, but he resisted attending. He said support should be directed to students; they should be better prepared. He, like Harold, has made changes to his instruction to support international students, but they both viewed their changes negatively. He said he has had to change his teaching “back to a basic level that (he) wouldn’t have to with all U.S. students, which is not really fair to the U.S. students.” He concluded that it is “twice as much work to teach international students.”

Gail viewed supporting international students differently. She said she has had extensive international experience herself and has brought the “attitude of I’m part of a family of humanity into my work.” She said she asks her international students to not use translators due to her own language learning experience;

if you lose track and get hung up on one word, you’re going to lose the context and you’ve lost the whole thing. So, you know, it’s not a matter of stopping and chasing one little tiny bit of thing, it’s a matter of be present, be in, you know, be involved.

Other participants discussed the need to support adjuncts. Kenneth expressed his assumption that full-time faculty meet regularly and work from common understanding. He said it was his responsibility to search and find the support offices and the academic support staff for international students. He described finding helpful support. When Harold was explaining his experience with increasing numbers of international students, I told him I was going “off script” to ask him about whether he felt this challenge is unique to adjuncts. He explained that he believes full-time faculty are somewhat insulated from the increase in international students because the full-time faculty primarily teach upper
level courses. He described adjuncts as the gatekeepers, on the frontline and in need of support.

Felicity has not been so fortunate with the support that she has found. She said she tried several avenues to find support in working with international students. She said she located a support person whom she described as “compassionate” and having a plan of action to help, but Felicity said that person never would follow through, even though Felicity met with her several times. Harold seemed quite hopeless to an extent:

I just gave in. I just, you know, I have an attendance policy, you guys are gonna flout it; I’m not gonna flunk half the class, so I guess whatever, um which I’ll have to change it next semester cause we can’t do this again.

He described his love of his job, but he also said that there have been some obstacles with which he has struggled. He told me that there have been times when he wanted to quit teaching and, “I want to go wash dishes in a bar.”

Respect neglected. Many participants, in the course of the interviews, showed emotion as they spoke about the lack of respect shown to them and to their adjunct faculty role. Their language included being deeply saddened, and sometimes angry, about the challenge from little respect, more so than the other challenges. Few offered a support or a way that they have come to reconcile their frustration. They would simply like to be recognized for the work that they do and the role that they fulfill at the university. Therefore, what follows are stories of why they feel impassioned about gaining respect. Carla said that

ultimately I would just- I would like some recognition from someone that this is incredibly difficult, and that they’re asking- they’re asking something of us that is
really not best for the students. It’s not best for us, and ultimately it’s not best for the institution. I would like some sort of honest, inclusive conversation, someone to just talk about it because the situation is complex, and I understand the other perspectives. But, I think it’s time for some creative solutions. If this is the way it’s gonna go, that they have to use adjuncts, then let’s all get together and have some honest conversation and see if we can’t come up with something new. And, I don’t think that’s asking too much. I mean they are using us. They’re expecting us to do a good job in the classroom, and I think that we all want to do a good job. I don’t think we would be doing this for this amount of money if it weren’t something that we were truly dedicated to. So, um, I would like some recognition.

She acknowledged the university’s position of why they would want to hire adjuncts, but she also understood the resulting complications. She said that “the more that I work in this capacity, the more clear the injustice is to me.”

Carla saw the lack of respect as a social justice issue. She explained that the business sector, as well, is increasing its reliance on part-time employees, but she drew the distinction that part-timers in IHEs have graduate degrees. She said that it is “dehumanizing” and wishes that her students “had more of a perspective on what my life looks like because they’ll send me emails at midnight and expect me to get back with them in an hour.” As another example,

even though I told them on the first day I’m only on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays- I teach at a different institution on Monday, Wednesday, Friday—consistently they have emailed me and asked to meet on one of those days that
I’m on a different campus...I sort of wish that I could make them more aware of what’s going on right in front of their faces.

She then she whispered, “I don’t know” almost in exasperation; “I don’t know if they’d care”

Kenneth made a comparison to lessons that he learned from his work in industry, “it’s not just about the money. It’s about respect, and if your employees don’t think you respect them, um you got a problem.” He further explained that adjuncts are a resource for the university but lack respect. For clarification, he said even if “adjuncts are invited to faculty meetings, but there’s no agenda item that says what’s going on with the faculty, with the adjuncts. You know, it’s kind of like we’re a necessary evil.”

Gail said that if she was in the beginning of her career, she would place more “value” on herself and “walk away.” She and Harold mentioned that their work that goes into teaching a class has been increasing as time goes on. She blamed the increasing number of students and technology that is getting more sophisticated and complicated. The latter has been both helpful to her in managing her course load; however, it has also been more to manage because she has had to assist students with their use of the new technology. Harold again described his experience as a “bottomless hole of effort,” and he said that the demand placed on him continues to grow; “it’s just this requires so much more effort than it did ten years ago or thirty years ago.” He explained that in the previous semester,

I got double booked [teaching two classes that have overlapping times]…and I was like I’m busting my ass every day, and no one knows it…both schools they had no idea that it happened, and no one was going hey good job, taking one for
the team. No one knows that I’m teaching a class that’s 85% [English learners].

In his experience, Harold reflected on being an adjunct as
demoralizing. I’m not gonna lie. I was petty – in fact I was even talking to my
officemate; I was like I’m outta here. If I can get a job over summer, I will wash
dishes at a bar. I don’t care.

Edmond described “the educational system as more towards a system of
exploitation,” in part because what is best for students or adjuncts is not always the
motivating factor for institutional decisions. He explained that adjuncts are in a unique
position and have unique challenges. He elaborated about his frustration with no formal
promotion to a full-time role as a reward for overcoming challenges.

Kenneth wondered if perhaps the adjuncts are viewed by constituents of this IHE
as wanting
to perform a service, to pay back to the university as part of the (religious)
community, but you know when you’re not being paid a fair wage and you have
no benefits, um that uh whatever you want to call…the solidarity card doesn’t go
too far.

When I asked Abe if he had experienced any challenges in his teaching role, he
said that, initially, he had none. However, after a moment, he added that receiving
acceptance from his peers became a challenge. He provided a metaphor to describe how
adjuncts are viewed: “it’s like Thanksgiving dinner as a youngster. You don’t get to sit at
the big table; you have to sit at the card table and eat with plastic silverware.” However,
Abe later described how he enjoyed working with the staff and that he has studied higher
education and knows he is “fighting a culture.” He provided an example of when he was
denied the opportunity to teach a course. He explained, “at one point I was told that I
couldn’t teach…a particular class one semester, and it was because the students were
flocking to my class as opposed to a tenured faculty member; he had low enrollments, so
they basically said, we can’t have that.”

**Support for respect neglected.** There were not many examples of traditional
support that participants were able to share in meeting this challenge. However, they did
request if not respect, acknowledgment. Harold had been thinking of leaving his position,
but when he heard that his chair said “good things” about him, “I was like that was all I
needed, that was all I want—I’ll come back in the Fall.”

Marvin and Nichole did not see the disrespect as the other participants did, and it
is useful to understand why. Marvin said particularly at other IHEs there is a caste system
where people assume that adjuncts are not worthy to be full-time faculty, adjuncts are
expected to leave after they teach, and adjuncts do not have a voice. He said that way of
viewing the role is not as prevalent at this IHE. According to Nichole, she has
experienced respect from her department colleagues, which she attributes, in part, to her
success in her full-time job and current content knowledge. She indicated that she is in a
unique position in that she has more experience in the field than the other faculty. She
said that she has felt respect on several levels. First, she said that the head of her
department treats her “as an equal.” She described examples: she is included in
correspondence and planning meetings, and during the meetings she is invited to share
her knowledge. However, she pointed out that “I don’t really speak unless I’m asked” or
if there are topics of serious concern. Second, she reported feeling respected because the
head of her department has accommodated her scheduling needs. In addition, she said she
has felt comfortable turning down new courses that she has had the opportunity to teach. She said there were times when she was unable to commit to the time necessary to prepare new materials and, therefore, turned down courses, and she said she has turned down courses due to the level of pay. She explained that her decisions have been respected and not been cause of denying her being hired to teach future courses.

**Adjunct voice neglected.** Issues surrounding effective communication abounded in the interviews. Clearly, there were basic challenges when adjuncts did not receive necessary information to perform in their role, as previously discussed in the section on the *Ineffective communication structure*. However, there is also a potentially significant challenge if the IHE does not receive information from adjuncts. Three adjuncts in this study specifically used the word “voice” when they discussed challenges at this IHE. Two additional adjuncts expressed the same spirit of the word in their explanations. In some cases, adjuncts’ use of the word *voice* could be viewed and described in this section as overlapping with the concept of agency.

Several participants commented that they had no voice in their department or the institution at large. Marvin noted that there exists no forum for him to get his voice heard. He said he could send emails to the department, which he said may or may not be entertained, but he said he was not aware of other options. Several participants discussed times that they attempted to get their voices heard. Kenneth explained that he was invited to attend faculty meetings, but when he attended, he felt “like an intruder.” He described only listening during the meeting and not being given an opportunity to provide input.

Participants also noted times when they had needed to discuss an issue with department personnel but were unsure who to contact. Patricia and Kenneth said they did
not know who to confide in. Kenneth used the word “vent,” but he followed it up by saying that he wanted to “vent” because he recognized a problem that needed to be solved. As discussed in the section on pay, job security was a concern for some participants who feared talking inappropriately to department personnel. Kenneth explained to me his desire to feel connected to the IHE and the difficulty that he has faced in that endeavor;

    I think it’s how should I put it- I don’t think it’s intentional at all. I think it’s benign neglect. Someone in the powers that be, they haven’t said gee uh we have this huge resource that is supporting the institution, why don’t we communicate. Many adjunct faculty members expressed great pride in their achievements, experiences, and knowledge. Beth stated that she has strengths that would be an asset to the department. She continued, because there was not good communication, the department chair and faculty did not know what unknown adjuncts could “bring to the table.” When I inquired if effective communication between the department and adjunct faculty was possible, she responded that “It is definitely possible. I don’t care what organization it is…even in the Bible, Moses said his father-in-law had to tell him you can’t do it all…so you gotta delegate power so the people can communicate.” Abe said he wanted an opportunity to share the publishing that he has done with the full-time faculty. Marvin also said that he has “lots to share.” He explained that he has four academic degrees, life experience, and more field experience than many full-time faculty members in his department. He shared a deep desire to share his expertise and contribute outside of the classroom, but he said he did not believe that anyone had interest in that. Not having an effective communication avenue prevents adjuncts’ respective departments from
knowing what strengths and opportunities the adjunct group could contribute, thus limiting their agency.

Adjunct faculty members spoke of instances when they have offered a contribution of their voice, as well as their time, without asking for anything in return. Orrville, an adjunct, with a Ph.D. and a career in the field he teaches, has asked to be on thesis committees and to teach independent study courses, whether or not he would be paid to do those tasks. He stated that those opportunities to mentor students and use his expertise were important to him. While additional pay for performing additional roles was not a significant factor for Orville, it is necessary to note that it could be for other adjuncts who are not already financially secure, as discussed in the section on pay.

After offering additional services, Orrville said he was told by the department head that he is only expected to teach and that “you (Orville) do more than you need to do.” However, Orrville said that it was not something he has to do; he enjoys helping students. He has had a difficult time defining his adjunct role so narrowly. Marvin stated that “most adjuncts want to contribute. They’re not necessarily just to come in teach and go like the universities want them to. They want to contribute.” Unfortunately, he said, “I don’t feel that there’s anything that I can contribute here outside of my classroom instruction. What can I do here...to help, to promote, to get involved? There’s not a lot.”

Adjuncts can offer a useful perspective, given that they have a unique role on campus. They often spend a lot of time with first year students when they teach introductory courses. Kenneth described a problem he experienced: sections of an introductory course had so many students in them that instructors were not able to incorporate any writing, which he asserted is a valued component. He went to his
department and offered his flexibility for teaching an additional course at a time that could fit into the department’s schedule. He explained that he had agreement among academics in his department, but he was not able to navigate the communication with higher levels of administration, “powers that be,” and was left unsatisfied by the situation.

Kenneth described another time when he struggled with getting his voice heard. He said he suggested an idea for a new class offering, and despite receiving positive feedback from the dean and department chair, they both told him to talk about it with the associate dean and other faculty in the department. Kenneth said he believed that the communication process should not be so difficult. He expressed that the department does not effectively communicate. Nichole experienced a similar situation. She said she frequently has adjusted her face-to-face courses to reflect the changing content matter and student learning needs, but she said she was not permitted to write, or even alter without opposition, the online courses that she taught. She noted that this constraint was due to her role as an adjunct; full-time faculty could alter their online courses. However, she said that in many other situations at this IHE her voice has been valued, as depicted in the previous section in which she said she felt respected. That seemed to contradict with other stories that I had heard, so I asked her why she thought that was. She explained that they valued her content knowledge.

**Support for adjunct voice neglected.** In the process of the interviews, participants discussed several supports to address the challenge of getting their voices heard. As mentioned in one of the earlier paragraphs in this section, adjuncts are sometimes invited to various department or faculty meetings. In contrast to the stories that depicted a lack of
opportunity to provide input at gatherings, Nichole explained a situation in which
meetings did support that activity.

Nichole was invited to a governance meeting with her department to discuss
content changes for the following term and participated at the meeting as a member of a
mixed group, comprised of part-time and full-time faculty members. She said she felt that
her voice was heard at this meeting. As another example, Kenneth said he was asked to
meet with the associate dean to help advise her on a program because of his knowledge of
similar programs at other IHEs. In both of these examples, the departments, or at least
some members of each department, acknowledged and valued the voice of their adjuncts
and wanted to hear what they could contribute. Beth depicted the benefit in
communicating with adjuncts “so that you will know you’ve got this body of people that
also can also be used as resources for you.”

There were other supports that were discussed, but each of them came with
somewhat of a caveat, as discussed throughout the remainder of this section. Several
adjuncts made mention that they had an adjunct representative on the faculty senate,
which had noted appreciation across several participants’ stories. Nichole said she
noticed that communication has been better since there has been an adjunct representative
on the Senate. Marvin, who had said that the feeling of not having a voice as an adjunct
was his biggest challenge, talked about the fact that adjuncts have “unique concerns and
needs.” He liked the idea of representation and realized that this support does not always
exist at other IHEs; however, he was uncertain as to how vocal the representative is.
Participants also questioned the access that they had to and the influence that they had on
the adjunct faculty representative. A couple of adjuncts felt that the role of the
representative was simply to give them information. The other concern was the number of representatives. Lance questioned whether the university “recognizes the impact of adjuncts on their business cause I believe 20% of the lecturers are adjuncts. It’s a significant number.” Marvin stated, to have one for all of the adjuncts, that’s not representation. Um, maybe three or four would be better, but that’s not representation-when you’ve got all these full-time faculty people from every department…and I would assume that Faculty Senate there’s one from each department…adjuncts work in all departments, and there’s one. He stressed that hearing the adjunct voice has to be intentional because currently “at best, the structure is minimal.”

Towards the beginning of our interview, Marvin began discussing supports that he had been experiencing, even before I had asked about them. He explained that he is a “self-starter” and rarely needs help but that when he does, his department chair has been able to answer his questions. He said that his department chair has also supported him by providing him “academic freedom.” Marvin viewed that gesture as acknowledgment of his competence to make curriculum and teaching decisions. Perhaps his view of academic freedom can be seen in the contrast that he noted about another IHE where he teaches. He said his academic freedom was limited there:

There are canned syllabi; there are rules and regulations that the department lays down that you have to follow. There are guidelines for tests that you make up; there are premade final exams. Then on any portion of a final exam that the instructor makes up, there’s guidelines for that. Guidelines, guidelines,
guidelines.

He said he disagreed with some of the assignment requirements and felt that they had adverse effects on student learning. Gail’s experience echoes Marvin’s. She said she was aware that her experience at this IHE is not typical. She has had the opportunity to build her course and perfect it over time. Orville has also enjoyed his freedom to alter and teach his course how he chooses. When participants were given the freedom to alter the syllabus and learning activities or had an opportunity to use their expertise to add to the curricular or instructional conversation, it seemed to support their voice, or agency, in this case.

Even though Nichole was not permitted to alter her online courses, she was able to in her face-to-face courses. So, in an attempt to mitigate the challenge of not being able to alter her online course, she decided that, in respect for her time and manageability of her courses, she would alter her face to face course to align with the online course. She said this decision ran counter to her professional opinion; she felt that, with the authority to design the course as she desired, she could have increased student success. So while she neutralized her challenge of not having a voice in how or what changes can be made to the format of her online course, she was not satisfied with the result.

Challenges of Building a Community for Adjuncts.

Due in part to challenges already listed, building a community that is inclusive for adjunct faculty can be difficult. The inherent structure of their role poses limitations for integration, and the neglect they feel further distances them. At the end of my interview with Felicity, I asked her if there was anything else that she wanted me to know to inform my research. She said,
the thing that would be helpful to me to know is am I alone. Am I like this person out here with this perception going wow that feels really weird to me, and everybody else is like hey I’m fine with that. Do other people have the same experiences?

She seemed to be explaining, clearly, her need for a community with people whom she can relate. While there are structures in place on campus that have the potential of helping adjuncts feel more connected and integrated into the campus community, unfortunately those supports are sometimes ultimately unhelpful for adjuncts.

**Connection building.** All but two participants in this study reported feeling disconnected as one of the challenges that they face in their adjunct faculty role. Within this category, there was a range of how they discussed the concept of being disconnected. Some described feeling physically separated, due to the location of their work space, and some noted that they did not attend meetings or activities; they only attended their assigned classes. It is also significant to note that some participants felt very pained by this disconnection and isolation, while others had a part in choosing it or simply saw it as a consequence of circumstance.

Some adjuncts cited that their work areas or offices were physically separated from other faculty or from their department and resources. Marvin’s office was positioned away from full-time faculty and resources. In addition, the room, equipped with only a few computers, had to be shared with up to sixteen adjuncts. There was no space to keep his files, so he put his filing cabinet at home. He viewed the lack of office resources as unprofessional. He made the point that “I’m not saying this from a complaint, what I’m saying is from a professionalism standard; adjuncts are
professionals. They’re either—they either are or were experts in their field.”

Like Marvin, Isabella also said her office was physically isolated, and she described the challenge that it brings. When Isabella first began her role as an adjunct at this IHE, she said she had to learn everything on her own without clear job expectations. In an attempt to support adjuncts, Isabella said the department’s process of onboarding was to place new adjuncts’ desks near the administrative assistants who could answer questions, but she was unaware of that reasoning at first and did not realize the potential benefit. She said she later discovered that after an initial adjustment period, it was customary in the department for adjuncts desks to be moved from their location by the administration assistant and relocated into an individual office space, several floors away. Isabella noted both opportunities and drawbacks of the office move. She said in the first location, she saw and interacted with other adjuncts, but she acknowledged that it was much easier to meet with students in her new private office. In addition to her office being separated, her classroom was located in a basement, and the only time she would go back to her department office was to copy papers. She described feeling somewhat isolated and commented that no one sees her work or knows anything about what she does.

The concept of a separated, individual, office versus a shared office came up in the interviews several times. Whereas James described himself as a “lone wolf” because his office was located on a different floor than the rest of his department, Edmund and Patricia discussed challenges surrounding a shared office. Edmond described a few struggles he has had with a shared space. First, he said that when he has to meet with students, a shared office space does not meet the need for privacy. Second, he reported
that he cannot count on having a reliable work space, and he further struggles because
“having kids I can’t work at home. It’s impossible. I need a place to work.”

Patricia spoke at length about her physical work space. She said it is a challenge
to share a small office, with two desks, with other adjuncts. She described some adjunct
colleagues as very “territorial,” marking their areas and leaving personal items on the
desk, even in their absence. She said she has had difficulty getting work accomplished
when another adjunct was in the office, for example, watching YouTube videos without
headphones. She explained that

I’d rather have a really tiny closet that I can be all by myself, just for the four
hours that I’m there…I do everything on my own laptop, so but sometimes I need
the printer, sometimes I just need a quiet space. I mean I—it’s challenging um to
set aside work time. So, um and I’m not picky about my space, but I do
need somewhere to go.

Other adjuncts struggled to even find a space to work. I planned to interview
Kenneth at his workspace. However, once there, we had to move to different rooms twice
because there was no space available for us to meet. We ultimately conducted the
interview in the department’s common space. Department personnel were engaged in
printing, coming and going during our interview. I managed to maintain privacy by
pausing the interview when others were present. Orville said he does not have a personal
work space and has to borrow an office when he needs one to work. Perhaps one of his
biggest daily frustrations, he said, was that he has had no printing capabilities. He
explained that he was told adjuncts are not permitted to print on university printers. He
told me the policy permitted him to send files to an administrator to be printed. He
admitted the policy has not always been a reliable option because on at least one occasion, he never heard back after sending files to be printed. He told me he had tried to print to his home computer from campus but had no success. Over time, he said he has been able to form a relationship with a couple of full-time faculty who print course documents for him. Because of difficult access to printing, he explained that he does not work on campus and does not see other teaching faculty; he typically teaches and then goes home to do his work. Felicity gave additional evidence of why workspace matters. She said that she was

not connected to adjuncts at all. The only people that I have even the slightest connection to are maybe four people…and it’s just because their offices are located right there where I go in and out all the time, and I see them, and every now and then chat with them.

In addition to having disconnected offices, many participants felt disconnected for other reasons. Carla said she considered that her lack of inclusion was because “There is a definite—there’s a hierarchy, but the hierarchy itself doesn’t bother me. It’s the fact that adjuncts almost don’t even rank on the hierarchy. Uh, we are non-entities.” An example of not ranking on the hierarchy, adjuncts are often not included in activities in their department, such as faculty meetings. Unlike the previous discussion of not having a voice at meetings, this discussion focuses on the feeling of being entirely segregated from the department. Marvin said that at the time of our interview, a planning meeting was occurring, and adjuncts were not included. He described adjuncts as an “after the fact” thought instead of being a valuable part of a process.
Isabelle said she was told that she was not invited to faculty meetings. On one hand, she expressed being glad that she does not hear the “politics,” but she said she realized that she had no opportunity to share ideas with others. She had seen professors on this campus who have “really great ideas” about teaching. She said it is a “shame” when those professors retire without sharing all of their great ideas. I asked Abe to imagine that he did have open invitations to department meetings and asked if he would attend. He said that he did not believe that he should be invited to everything, and in fact he said he used to attend the school wide meetings but that he did not feel “comfortable in that environment” after the experience of asking a question at the meeting and “sticking out.” He explained that he overheard full-time faculty asking, “who’s that, what’s, who is that, what’s he teach, what department is he in?” However, he expressed surprise to me that teaching three sections does not get him an invitation to department meetings. Carla told me she has gone to the adjunct workshop each year but has never been invited to a department meeting; therefore, “I don’t feel like an actual part of the department.”

Edmond said he thinks that IHEs hire adjuncts for a limited capacity: “we’re not even invited to like department meetings or anything like that …so they kind of try to keep this barrier between uh adjuncts and non-adjuncts.” He said that he was invited to and attended one department wide meeting the semester of our interview, but he highlighted the fact that at the meeting he sat at an adjunct table that was “off to the side.” He went on further to explain his feeling of disconnection by describing the award presentation at the meeting, namely that the awards went to only to full-time faculty and students, but none went to adjuncts.
There were other participants who had been invited to various meetings but either chose to not attend or could not attend. Harold received department meeting invitations, via mass email, but he described that he never attended because he typically had to teach at another IHE during the time of the meeting. Orville missed out on department meetings because he was at his full-time job during the day. He said if department meetings were held in the evening, he could attend. At this university, adjunct meetings have been held on Saturdays. However, Orrville said that he had chosen not to attend those, explaining, “I’m not going to make that investment when I have grading to do.” Time is valuable to adjuncts working both a full-time and a part-time job. He then noted that he had heard about an IHE that pays adjuncts for attending relevant university meetings, perhaps insinuating that that might be an added consideration in whether or not he made the time investment.

Beth discussed the inner conflict she had faced with making the time and altering her schedule to attend meetings,

because you’re not really required to go to any of the meetings okay. But if you don’t go to the meetings, then if the information that you may need to know about if you’re not there, then it’s something that plays a significant role in your functioning of your job.

However, she also noted that scheduling conflicts have sometimes prevented her from attending meetings. She said she wondered if a phone conference option was available.

Patricia said she did not spend much time on campus and that she did not pursue attendance at meetings because “90% I don’t really care about…but like the little things (she does care about), you know, like a new form, a new person on faculty.” She said she
had decided not to attend adjunct faculty meetings because she said if she became more involved, she would first pursue her department meetings. She is a self-described “stay-at-home mom,” which provides some insight into her priorities. However, she noted that she very well may decide to become more involved at the university in the future in the next “stage” of her life.

Nichole has attended adjunct workshops held on Saturdays because those events fit into full-time schedule. She said she had avoided meetings and trainings with full-time faculty because she “never felt like (she) fit in.” James had a different opinion about meetings. He had received an open invitation to department meetings, but he said he had seldom attended. I asked him if it was because he had competing priorities. He said, “It’s because I hate meetings.” He added that, as an adjunct, he was not required to attend. He said the meetings “would drive me crazy” and the duration is too long because “no academic can ever ask a questions without explaining how smart they are.” James had earned a Ph.D., and he said he did not plan to pursue a full-time faculty position.

Some participants seemed to be describing a link between time spent on campus and being connected with the IHE. Derrick said that full-time faculty members “have each other, you know, they don’t just teach classes. They’re parts of committees.” Orrville said his full-time job had limited the time he has available to spend on campus. He said he was unaware of the “rhythm of the office” during the day. He said he did not know when his colleagues were available. He recognized that the reverse is true; his erratic schedule on campus made it difficult for university personnel to contact him.

Participants cited institutional reasons for their feeling of disconnection. Felicity and Nichole reported that their parking pass was the reason that their time on campus was
limited. Felicity said that one of her biggest frustrations had been that her parking pass was only valid after 4:30 p.m. When she has had to come on campus before 4:30 p.m. to meet students or to work, she described her choices as asking the parking attendant for a pass, usually unsuccessful, or obtaining a temporary permit from her department administrator. Both choices require planning ahead. However, she said that she had received many tickets for parking in six-minute parking. Nichole mentioned that she had been given a restricted parking pass, which presumably is an evening pass. She said the inability to park in official lots prevents her from attending daytime events on campus, including the library. Rather than parking barriers, Nichole described feeling disconnected due to the barriers in communicating with other adjuncts. She said that a list of adjuncts is like “sacred material.” She deduced that “they didn’t want somebody like me to have access to send an email to all those people unless it was channeled through the provost.”

*Support for connection building.* For the adjuncts who voiced feelings of disconnect due to physical location disconnection or feelings of exclusion, there was a mix of where they placed responsibility, sometimes with themselves and sometimes with the IHE. Stories from other adjuncts indicate that they have actively chosen to be disconnected or they conclude that the institution had provided some support.

A few participants took responsibility for their feelings of disconnection. Felicity said that she was at least partially responsible for why she feels disconnected. She explained that in demanding periods of her life, she “got in the habit of saying delete, delete, delete, delete, delete (emails), unfortunately. And I really could go to those things (meetings) now, and I’m not…I really could take advantage of more.” I asked what might
make it easier for her to attend meetings. She replied that it was not difficult to attend; she recognized that she could make the commitment. Like Felicity, Gail also took some responsibility for feeling disconnected. She admitted that she has had some “reluctance to get involved.” She explained that she worked “very hard at this job.” She said she taught more than 300 students the semester preceding our interview, and that the likelihood of attending meetings would be greater if she were teaching one class only.

To mitigate the challenge of being physically separated or isolated, some participants found their own support. James’ office was located on a different floor than the floor of his department offices. He said when searching for support he had gone to the college rather than the department because of the variety of support and student services located there. To mitigate his challenge of a quiet workspace, Edmond had frequently worked in a café. He said that had become difficult financially. Isabella said she viewed her feeling of being disconnected in terms of her past career outside higher education, “ultimately you go in your room and you shut the door, and you do what you want, you know. So, that’s what I was used to, and so I did.” She closed her door and worked in isolation.

Several adjuncts described situations or supports from the IHE that they have found helpful in connecting themselves to the university. Harold and Nichole described the university’s positive environment. Harold listed sharing experiences with other adjuncts as his only resource. Therefore, he valued his large office space that he typically shared with three other adjuncts. Although Nichole experienced feelings of being disconnected, she noted that she had noticed a recent positive change in the physical environment. Her entire department had moved to one location from being scattered in
various places. She also mentioned the addition of information technology personnel. She said she had noticed that people are more “collegial” now, due to what she concluded was proximity to one another. Marvin mentioned a specific person, the department “secretary,” as the source of important assistance when he had sought her help.

Patricia and Edmond described various meetings as helping them to feel connected to the IHE. Patricia said she attended the yearly department meeting, and she experienced feeling included there. She mentioned that at the meeting adjuncts received the same “swag bag” and as full-time faculty do. She explained that “things like that- it just kind of says you matter in this department.” Edmond told of a time in the year prior to our interview when he was invited to a workshop. At that event the full-time faculty members and the adjuncts were given an opportunity to work together as a full department. He said he anticipated another workshop this year, where both full-time and adjuncts would be offered attendance stipends. In contrast, Isabella said that her attendance at meetings would not depend on whether or not she was paid.

It is important to again point out differences in experiences. Orville reported that one of his biggest challenges was having no access to print instructional materials; whereas, the majority of participants did have that access on campus. James and Beth described experiences that differ from experiences of other participants discussed in this section. Beth reminded me that she is on the “downside” of her career and had already experienced being full-time faculty at a IHE, signifying that she was not been affected by a feeling of disconnection. However, she expressed concern for adjuncts who aspire to full-time faculty roles. James said, overall, he has not experienced feelings of disconnection. Perhaps his experience was shaped by earlier experiences in this IHE. He
completed his graduate degree at this university and in the same building in which he has worked as an adjunct. He began his adjunct role already familiar with the building and many of the inner workings of the department. When he did have questions, he knew who to ask, and that practice provided needed supports to meet challenges.

**Collegial relationship building.** For this category, many participants listed relationships with other faculty, or lack thereof, as a challenge. Others viewed the relationships as a support or viewed their relationships with others on campus as neutral, mentioning them but not citing relationships as either a challenge nor a support. Participants who discussed relationships as a challenge discussed them in terms of personal challenges as well as professional challenges.

Lance said that he had no connection to faculty members. Patricia and Orville both expressed struggle with a lack of closeness with others in their department. Patricia acknowledged that she does not spend time in the department office, resulting in both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, she said that

I don’t get caught up in gossipy stuff. I don’t get caught up in jobs that aren’t mine because I’m not around, you know. Um, but at the same time, there’s times where um because I’m a people person, you know, like I do wish I knew more about, I don’t know, people’s personal lives, but people on a different level, you know, that’s one of the things, in the beginning of not teaching full-time that I missed was just having friends at work.

She said that when she is at work, “I feel like I fit in,” but she feels like she “flirt(s) with this fine line of do I belong, you know, how much do I belong with this community, and how much do I not, um, as colleagues.”
Orville expressed sadness that he has not developed close relationships with his colleagues. He explained that he valued “building (an) organization into a family,” and he does not get that “family feel” at this IHE. While he did report having made a good friend or two in his department, he described being absent from any daytime celebrations that occur while he is at his fulltime job. It particularly troubles him, he said, because when he led another organization, he built it into a “family.” He said that he does not think that family metaphor applies to the full-time faculty. Still evidencing his struggle, he said, “I don’t think it matters to them. I don’t think it matters to me. Um, if given the opportunity, yes, I would make them more of a family.”

Gail attributed her feeling of isolation to what she called a lack of collaboration. She said that personal connections were important to her, and her “sense of isolation has been a real challenge and one that I, you know, I don’t necessarily feel that I’ve overcome that while here.” The isolation has remained painful for her because she described one of her strengths as being able to connect with others, translating that spirit to her students. She made several references to being on a “team” in other aspects of her life, including in her previous corporate career. She said she had considered that “professors are in many ways rather isolated.” In other words, perhaps isolation was not a feeling exclusive to adjuncts and that it may be a cultural trait of IHEs. She noted that she did make a friend through the adjunct faculty workshop, but there was no consistency of a “weekly or monthly connection with people over a common cause.”

Like Gail, Derrick said he would like to have a relationship with his colleagues. He described this as, “more time to be on campus and sit down with um others to really talk more about them: what do you do in the classroom, and just get some new ideas.”
said this type of experience would help him generate ideas to use in his classroom. This type of interaction appealed to him because, he said, he is, “not real comfortable in those kind of real formal, big settings (workshops). I like more just walking into somebody’s office, sit down, and chat about it.” He explained that full-time faculty “have other, you know, they don’t just teach classes, they’re parts of committees and they have administrative kinds of things.” He explained that a lack of time on campus prevented his potential to meet with other faculty.

Isabella offered an insight into why, perhaps, relationships were difficult to form. She offered that adjuncts have a high turnover rate. As a result, she said, she has infrequently encountered the same adjunct colleagues from semester to semester. She questioned whether the turnover is due to adjuncts’ unsuccessful performance. She also noted that she often meets new full-time professors as well, due to retirements and general changes in faculty.

In addition to the enjoyment that can come from collegial relationships, Orville pointed to the lack of support from his full-time colleagues as a precursor to his difficulty in carrying out his adjunct role. Orville expressed disappointment in the lack of access to support after 4:30p.m., which is the time he is typically on campus to teach. Nichole added that those adjuncts who teach after 4:30p.m. were “lucky to even see another faculty member.” Orville drew a connection from his business experience, declaring if his employees asked for support, he would provide it, but he said that was not happening at this IHE. He recalled asking for assistance on two separate occasions when he needed to talk with a student about a sensitive topic. He was unable to find anyone to help. This became his most important complaint. Otherwise, he said he felt that his adjunct
experience was not like the stories and complaints that he had read about other adjuncts. He repeatedly told me that he has had it “pretty good.”

Carla said that most of her university relationships have been with other adjuncts. In terms of full-time faculty, she said that her administrator was knowledgeable and helpful when she had gone to her for assistance. However, when she needed support for teaching a class for the first time, the resource she was offered was the name of a professor. This support was one that she did not want to use because she was “not familiar with that professor.” While Abe reported that he had supportive relationships with other faculty, he did express dissatisfaction with the feedback that he had received. He explained, “I’m not afraid of constructive criticism. I’m always anxious to change. I say change is not a 4 letter word.” He said that constructive criticism “in the last couple of years has become a little frustrating and a little daunting. “You don’t get adequate feedback, and you don’t get it often enough.” Other adjunct stories echoed his concern about a lack of feedback on adjuncts’ teaching.

Lance had been used to getting feedback from management in his past role in industry. He said that he valued feedback and would like feedback in addition to the standard student evaluation of faculty. He thought his course “would be much better if um a peer would sit down and go through my course or sit in some of the classes and make recommendations…but that structure just doesn’t seem to exist.” He said it surprised him that his “chair doesn’t take a bigger interest in the adjunct faculty.” Lance had tried to begin an exchange with him, but he said it was not successful.

Orville said he thinks he puts “more credence into the instrument than he (department head) does, I think, at least from what I can tell.” On one occasion, Orville
said he was anxious to discuss his last assessment, but he said the department head “said eh I haven’t even checked on those things yet…you know you just never know what the students are thinking. So I’ve put more credence into the test-the instrument than he does, I think.”

Harold described a time when his chair had given him positive feedback; he said he “heard good things” about Harold’s work. However, Harold questioned his chair’s compliment, “I don’t know who he heard it from. I don’t know how he could have heard good things because I literally, again I show up often an hour before classes start…I’ve spent my whole time in the office, tucked away.” Harold also admitted that while he feels like he is “on call” for his students, his student evaluation ratings, he said, have not been as high as he hoped, which led him, he said, to question his chair’s compliment.

Three participants, Marvin, James, and Nichole, talked about how relationships with colleagues can be a challenge for some adjuncts, but they did not feel that relationships were a major challenge for them personally. Marvin said that, in general, “the full time people kind of look down on the part time people, whether it’s because they’re part timers or you must not have as much academic um polish as I do.” However, he noted that there is very little difference between the two groups in some cases, when considering the variables of experience and education. He said that while he personally exchanges simple pleasantries with full-time faculty saying, “Hi how ya doin, you know that kind of thing.” He hypothesized that the feeling of being “looked down” upon would be more significant for the “younger adjuncts.” He said it was not concerned himself because he was “secure enough in what I’m doing in my life and in what I’m doing as an adjunct that I’ve gone beyond.”
James said that he has “read, not necessarily here but at other universities, there is a perceived negative attitude towards adjuncts,” referencing “that second class citizen attitude,” but he said that has not been his experience. “I’m kind of usual as an adjunct with Ph.D. A lot of the other adjuncts are Masters, so they aren’t really sure how to handle me anyway.” Early in the interview James made it a point to tell me that he preferred the term *part-time* to *adjunct*. He admitted that he did not understand the adjunct situation at this university because he knew only one or two other adjuncts.

Nichole and Marvin both mentioned colleagues as friends. Marvin, in regards to relationships with other adjuncts, speculated that friendships can form if he was in the office at the same time as other adjuncts. He said he did not typically see the same people in the office over time due to frequent schedule changes. Nichole said she had come to view relationships with her colleagues, including full-time faculty who teach the same course she does, as more of a friendship than a collegial relationship. She said she did not feel a barrier between full-time and part-time faculty. She attributed her more unique view of full-time faculty members to her past role as a full-time faculty member at other IHEs.

*Support for collegial relationship building.* Some participants who discussed their experience in working with other employees at the university discussed them in terms of the support that they had been offered.

Abe said, “I like my colleagues a great deal. I love working with the other staff;” pointing to his description of a distinguishing feature between part-time and full-time. He said that part-timers need to actively seek relationships. He described relationships he built with employees in the learning center; he had worked with them to incorporate
technology in his class and stay “ahead of the curve.” In addition to connecting with people one-to-one, he said that one of the most rewarding seminars was one that brought together people from all departments and levels at the university to share ideas. He suspected that his positive view about collaboration was informed by his work outside of academia.

Marvin and Isabella both said they value sharing experiences with faculty and that, as adjuncts, they have had time for such opportunities. Marvin said that he attended the once a semester adjunct meeting and thought it “is a good way of communicating different aspects uh of the academic institution.” He said that despite low attendance and that he was the only adjunct from his department, he understood the benefit of “shared experiences.”

Isabella explained that she was invited to department meetings and had, over time, become more comfortable attending. She said that she did not attend originally because she knew no one. After a couple of full-time faculty in the department encouraged her to attend, and when she saw that a few of the people she knew planned to attend, then she began to attend. At one of the meetings she attended, she recalled that a professor had set up the meeting to help the department learn a new program. During the meeting, full-time faculty and adjunct faculty together shared how they taught their classes. She said she felt that she finally connected with the people in her department. She noted that this summer meeting was not mandatory but that attendance was high. She posits that strong faculty interest in the topic might have been the appeal.

Beyond the purpose of sharing ideas, James viewed his colleagues as a resource; “If I have a question, somebody’s field, I’ll go talk to them, and I have never had a poor
result asking other faculty questions about something in their field.” Isabella reported getting help from more experienced professors. She added the department’s secretary had been a key resource. Isabella said she has gotten more “bold” over time, asking more questions than she initially did.

As previously discussed, Felicity and Kenneth talked of their desire to get feedback from colleagues. They were unable to find that opportunity. They explained how, instead, they had attempted to create other opportunities for feedback. Felicity said that she devoted time to reflect on her own teaching and sought feedback from her students. Kenneth had asked teaching assistants to write him reports to give him feedback on his teaching to serve as a method of “quality control.”
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Adjunct faculty members are a faculty majority on many campuses (AAUP, 2015), and as such, their work is vital to IHEs. Much has been written about the challenges that adjunct faculty face, working with limited resources and benefits, for example. IHEs have a vested interest in improving the adjunct condition for many reasons, including the impact on student success. Unpacking the adjunct role is complicated when considering that their role can be messy; their work can be under-supported, and their career path is limited. At the university site of this study, members of the administration expressed their desire to meet the needs of adjunct faculty and to better understand the adjunct faculty group’s perception of their own role. This study offers some insight on the interaction of the challenges that adjuncts face, the support they utilize, and the context in which their role functions: their collective experience of growth uncovered from their depictions of their role.

My findings, found in Chapter IV, uncover the complexity within the sixteen participants’ perceptions of the challenges that they have faced. Their stories told of challenges that ranged from the immensely difficult and complicated to the more basic, yet still significant. Their description of supports differed from one another in terms of what was available to them, how they perceived them, which ones they chose to utilize, and even supports or solutions that the participants created on their own. While the
participants were employed at the same IHE at the time of the interviews, their environment and contexts differed. They had different life conditions, and they worked in a variety of department environments, each of which had various inputs and outcomes.

The way in which I interpreted participants’ stories and understood their views was impacted by my positionality as a researcher. I was an insider in that I had been an adjunct faculty member at the university site of the study, adding to my understanding of the campus environment and my accessibility and awareness of adjunct life. I realize that my findings would likely be viewed differently through alternate lenses or positionalities.

In this chapter, I review the findings from Chapter IV and provide conclusions, depicting the interactions between the challenges and supports as derived from the interviews. Next, I put forth possible implications for practice. Finally, in the discussion section, I consider ways in which participants’ experiences are consistent with the literature in Chapter II. Also in the discussion, I share my experience of conducting this research study and suggest ideas for further study.

Conclusion

My research question, “What is the experience of growth for adjunct faculty at one private university in the Midwestern United States?” can begin to be unpacked and uncovered by first looking at the three sub-questions. The answer to the first sub-question, “What challenges conflicted with adjuncts’ world view?” can be found in the themes generated and described in the findings, Chapter IV. The participants in this study could easily tell me with what challenges they were struggling and how they were attempting to make sense of those struggles. In articulating these challenges, they made decisions about the order that they discussed each challenge and the level of severity they
assigned each struggle. The three constructed themes of challenges faced by participants are as follows: Structure in the Adjunct Role, Neglect by the IHE, and Building a Community for Adjuncts.

The second sub-question, “What elements of adjunct experience served as supports, and how did they use such supports for successful navigation of challenges?” is a little less straightforward because many times, more often than I would have thought, participants created their own mitigation or did not utilize a support. Sometimes they supplied a description of what an appropriate support could potentially look like. I saved most of the “in a perfect world” type responses for the implications section of this chapter. Instead, I want to focus here on the more clearly defined supports. For each of the themes, I review, flesh out, and draw conclusions about the supports that interact with the corresponding challenges. The third sub-question, “In what ways did the environment play a role in adjunct experience?” is addressed in the discussions on supports as well as throughout subsequent sections in this chapter.

**Challenges of structure in the adjunct role.** A structure challenge was depicted when participants talked about feeling uncomfortable when they were asked to teach new classes each semester with little notice, teach classes that are outside of their content knowledge base, or carry out responsibilities unrelated to their teaching role. While some of the participants who have faced these challenges continued to struggle at the time of the interviews, some have come to a resolution. For the latter group, resolution took various forms; some simply accepted the challenge because they recognized it was a natural aspect of the role. Others found resolution on their own; they educated themselves on challenging course content, advocated for themselves, or inconvenienced themselves.
In all of these situations, when looking at the interaction between challenges and supports, the burden was placed on the adjunct, and if the adjunct did not accept that responsibility, the scheduling challenge prevailed.

Other established structures, such as compensation challenges, had more severe consequences and affected some participants’ lives outside of work. Even for participants for whom pay was not an issue, the majority of the adjuncts that I interviewed were mystified by the calculation of their pay. They were unclear about policies, such as the number of credit hours they could be assigned, the staggering difference between full-time and part-time pay, one department’s pay scale versus another, or one institution’s pay versus another. Others were angry when they reflected on the amount of work they did and the low compensation they received, especially considering the budget allocations for non-instructional activities that, at least on the surface, seemed less important. The participants for whom pay was confusing and frustrating but not a major challenge tended to not need the money, and money was not a reason that they were in the role. They either had a pension, were collecting a salary in another role, or had a spouse who contributed to their family income.

To other participants, unstable and low pay was detrimental to their life, causing them to take on more credit hours than they could comfortably teach, live frugally at the poverty line, take financial assistance, or neglect insurance. A few participants told me about times that they decided that they needed to advocate for themselves, asking for a higher pay or more classes. However, not all of the participants felt that they could do this due to embarrassment for the position they were in or for fear of losing their job because they were contracted only on a semester-by-semester basis. Self-care seemed
paramount, whether it was an opportunity to vent to someone, have some peaceful time alone, staying “zen,” or trying to embrace change and instability.

Another structure challenge surrounded communication, specifically related to not receiving messages pertaining to their adjunct teaching work. Many times these communication lapses resulted in inconveniences, wasted time, and frustrations for participants. Some of these deficits were a result of not being notified of changes, new resources, curriculum details, and policies. Other times, participants reported being inundated with information, much of which did not apply to them and which made it difficult for them to determine what was significant for adjuncts. The communication supports that did exist were not always tailored to the needs of adjuncts. As participants attempted to resolve the communication challenges, they typically ended up disengaging either from the voluminous amount of messaging or from teaching the courses in which they had experienced the communication challenge. Clearly, neither of these solutions were ideal for anyone involved.

Time posed a major structure challenge for those participants who were teaching several introduction courses with high enrollment, who were teaching on more than one campus, who had a career outside of academia, or those who also had a caretaker role at home. In thinking about how to mitigate this challenge, some adjuncts felt defeated, and I could not help but wonder how long that feeling and state of being would be sustainable for them. While some participants had come to the realization that they were short on time because of their own choices, for example those who had a career and teach part-time, others had decided to limit their workload or change their teaching style to make their job easier and save themselves time. Only a couple of participants were able to
locate supports, such as seeking out and using time management strategies, found outside of the IHE. The issue of time is additionally important because it was a critical element in the operationalized definition of growth in this study, as it is necessary for reflection.

**Challenges of neglect by the IHE.** Participants noted that their transition into the adjunct role at this institution felt somewhat unusual in that they were not provided with much direction. Adjuncts who came from a business world or a career outside of academia seemed to find this particularly odd. Some reported that they felt isolated or that they had to start from nothing, even being in need of a campus map. Some adjuncts attempted to find resources, but events and meetings did not address their needs, and they were often unsuccessful in finding someone to help them. They did note that often the people they reached out to tried to be helpful. In addition, participants who were hired immediately before or after the semester began explained that they did not have adequate time to utilize any resources or to prepare for their role. In meeting the challenge of adequate training, it seemed that supports did exist but were somewhat incomplete, unhelpful, hard to find, or not timely.

Struggling with how to perform in their role was particularly highlighted when many participants were confronted with a significant change in the sharp increases in students from other countries in their classes. They felt like they were caught off guard and had little support in communication challenges they had with their students, gaps in their students’ knowledge or abilities, and unfamiliarity with cultural differences. The supports that adjuncts discussed varied greatly. Some participants said that the students were the ones in need of support to be successful in class and that the responsibility should not rest on the instructors. Other participants mitigated the gaps in support or
training by finding their own solutions. Some altered their class to meet different learning needs or incorporated culture differences into learning opportunities within their classes. Others suggested curricular changes. While some of these alterations can be viewed as positive, there were questions that arose from altering classes, such as whether or not the changes benefitted all the students in the class, how they would work, or whether they required too much time for an adjunct to implement. The remaining participants who faced this challenge sought out support, and after some time, found what they needed. However, others were still seeking, feeling hopeless, or experiencing frustration about not having access to the supportive meetings and interactions they assumed were available to full-time faculty.

Perhaps the most fundamental challenge of neglect was experienced primarily by participants who were early in their adjunct teaching careers. They struggled with their perceived lack of respect for adjunct faculty members. Unlike other challenges, only one solution was mentioned for this challenge and that was receiving acknowledgement. It seems like a very simple way of mitigation. Adjuncts, by in large, have advanced degrees, are experienced in their field, provide quality teaching, and receive little pay. Many of them feel ignored and as though other members of the IHE community have no knowledge of the adjunct experience. Participants talked about their situation in terms of social justice and used words like demoralizing, self-value, necessary evil, bottomless hole of effort, system of exploitation, solidarity card, and fighting a culture. The few participants who acknowledged the problem of respect but did not themselves feel the absence were either retired or close to retirement from a full-time career.
The final challenge of neglect permeated because participants felt like an adequate forum does not exist for getting their voices heard. They were disappointed by a lack of appropriate opportunities to communicate with their departments or the IHE. They reported not having anyone with whom to vent and no way to share their contributions to the IHE. They believed they were limited in what role they could play and even what agency they had. Participants did recall a few valuable opportunities they were provided to share their ideas at various meetings or with other adjuncts. Participants also appreciated the adjunct faculty representation on the Faculty Senate, although some questioned why there was only one representative for all of the adjunct faculty. Many participants also felt that they had academic freedom in the classroom, which they appreciated.

**Challenge of building a community for adjuncts.** Participants reported challenges when they felt disconnected from their departments or from the university at large. Their work spaces were separated from the department and ill-equipped with enough space or equipment, making it difficult for them to work on campus. Some reported that their parking passes did not permit them to park on campus during the day. When they were on campus, many adjuncts were not invited to department meetings, resulting in feeling even further separated from their campus community. Other adjuncts were invited but could not attend due to conflicts with their jobs, they did not think it included them, or because it was difficult to justify the use of unpaid time. Many participants cited a lack of effective communication as a reason for their disconnect. They may have missed important information about their class, resources available to them, or knowledge of policies. Lack of time spent on campus and a lack of communication were
both previously discussed as challenges, but here they are also seen as affecting participants’ sense of connection to the IHE. In response to feeling disconnected from the institution, some participants took responsibility saying that they had chosen not to be more involved. Some found support outside their department, or others worked in isolation. There were positive outcomes reported, discussed when participants made use of their shared office space to connect with other adjuncts, attended meetings that they were invited to, and saw the benefit of a representative on senate. In another situation, a college moved the entire department to the same physical location, making connections easier. The participants who did not express disconnection as a challenge were either near the end of their career or had an established familiarity with their department.

Besides feeling disconnected from the IHE, some participants also struggled in their relationships with colleagues. They expressed sadness that they were not close with faculty in their department due what they saw as a high turnover rate, no consistency in seeing people, or not enough time on campus. There was also a sense that relationship building was not a priority of their department. In addition to a lack of personal relationships, they reported not knowing who to go to with questions, and they had a desire for feedback, other than from students. For some participants, relationships with their colleagues did not pose a challenge, either because they felt secure in their work at that point in time or because they were able to form friendships and positive working relationships with colleagues. Other participants had the time to go to various meetings and seek out connections. To counter the lack of feedback, some participants created their own opportunities through reflection or asking for additional feedback. Other than a professional relationship, such as an evaluator or a mentor-type relationship, building
relationships with colleagues seems unlikely if connections to the institution are not forged.

**Connections to the research questions.** Even after summarizing the findings, there is rich and deep meaning to be probed, and the response to the research question, “What is the experience of growth for adjunct faculty at one private university in the Midwestern United States?” may still appear unclear. Part of the difficulty, as shown in the study, is that adjuncts have different world views and do not have the same experiences with challenges and access to supports. To make sense of the variety of responses, all elements in the operational definition of growth, must be examined: challenges, appropriate support, and time for reflection. For some challenges, growth seems unlikely without a significant change in the adjunct condition, but for other challenges, there appears to be the potential for support and growth.

The Challenges of Structure seem to contain what Heifetz (1994) terms *adaptive* problems, meaning it would be difficult for them to be resolved without a systems-type change. For example, the institution can most likely not fix the problem of participants’ struggle with hectic schedules and unstable, low pay without doing much restructuring. Currently, there is not a clear indication that universities are changing their faculty structure or financial incentives that would benefit adjuncts. Therefore, the only valid option for adjuncts who are troubled by low pay is to find a new line of work or to use their own coping mechanisms. However, relying on government assistance, being frugal, and trying to stay “zen” do not seem appropriate supports or resolutions for living in poverty. Growth seems difficult when adjuncts struggle with making a living wage. Limited time on campus and for completing teaching tasks is another structure challenge
that would require a significant shift in the adjunct role. Many adjuncts have several roles competing for their time. To combat this challenge, participants found they needed to adjust their teaching in an effort to save time. However, the results may not be the best for student learning. Additionally, for participants with limited time, growth could be impacted when considering that time is a critical element of the process. Again, a significant change in the faculty structure would need to occur to create more opportunity.

While opportunities for growth seem difficult when considering Challenges of Structure, it may be possible when examining the Challenges of Neglect. There are challenges that seem surmountable with appropriate support. For example, when facing a lack of training, most participants were able to find effective supports, given enough time and experience in the role. Because there are known supports, it is a technical problem (Heifetz, 1994). Supports, such as basic campus information and resources, training modules, and professional development already exist for some employees on some campuses. If made available to adjuncts, they might greatly promote growth. When considering challenges of respect and lacking a voice, participants were fairly clear about their need for acknowledgement, to have their voice heard and valued, and access to pertinent information. Some had these supports, but whether they could all utilize them was debatable and an opportunity for improvement.

Some of the Challenges of Building a Community can be categorized as technical. To ease the challenge of feeling disconnected, a support could include placing adjuncts’ workspaces in close proximity to their department, giving them access to supplies, and inviting them to gatherings. Another example would be to reconsider the label placed on
the adjunct group. It has significance for how they are viewed or how they view themselves. James, in his preference to be called part-time as opposed to the term *adjunct*, seemingly identifies more with an inclusive faculty role than with a separate adjunct role. Other challenges in this category also contain adaptive problems that can be viewed as a symptom of underlying causes described in the two previous challenge themes. For example, a lack of time on campus also affects feeling connected to the IHE or building relationships with colleagues with whom they may not have opportunities to interact. For some challenges, such as a lack of feedback, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain the underlying cause. It could be due to a structure problem, not enough time for chairs or full-time faculty to focus on adjunct faculty, or it could simply be that the feedback system has not been applied to adjuncts. Providing adjuncts feedback is of particular interest because not only can it provide a support in the form of suggestions and encouragement, but it can also supply a challenge and thus an opportunity to improve upon and grow in an area.

As described, the three themes of challenges and the experience of growth for adjunct faculty members can vary depending upon their particular institutional environment. Individual schools and departments may find it more or less difficult to relieve or solve challenges depending on the culture and resources of the particular environment. For example, some departments are more trained in communication and styles of leadership, and some departments have more funding to implement change.

Personal differences of adjunct faculty members are also pronounced when looking at how adjuncts experience growth. For example, when considering challenges related to compensation, a retired adjunct, who does not rely on money from an adjunct
role will have a different world view than an adjunct trying to earn a living wage. Adjuncts who have the opportunity for a lucrative career outside of academia, such as medicine or engineering, have more choices. Also, they typically get paid more in their adjunct role than adjuncts in the humanities, for example.

To summarize and further describe the findings of this research, I created an illustration (Figure 1). In the illustration, the three ovals at the top depict the three themes and Challenges of Structure, Neglect, and Building a Community. The horizontal bar, Institution Environment, acknowledges the different ways that adjuncts experience their adjunct role based upon the environment of their department or their interaction with the IHE. The horizontal bar labeled Personal acknowledges the differences that individual adjuncts have in their experience of the role based upon their personal life experiences and world views. The arrows from the three themes indicate what type of challenge, adaptive or technical, primarily exist as a result of the challenge theme. The theme of Community has both adaptive and technical challenges as discussed in the chapter. The final oval at the bottom, Opportunities for Growth in the Adjunct Role, indicate which of the challenges hold the greatest opportunity for growth without requiring a significant system change.
**Research Findings**

*Figure 1. Illustration of research findings*

**Implications**

The implications of this research are most significant for IHEs stakeholders and for researchers in higher education. While this study was conducted at one university and qualitative research does not offer generalizability, perhaps it might be utilized for theory-building, based on the findings. For this particular institution, there are a few implications of this study. First, social justice, solidarity, and inclusivity are valued religious teachings and are upheld at this institution, and community is explicitly stated as a core belief of this IHE. Many adjuncts in this study had experiences that did not reflect those beliefs; therefore there is significance in investigating how to live what is valued and espoused. The desire for social justice could guide policy changes in how adjunct faculty are treated, both in terms of compensation and acknowledgement. For participants who did not express a need or a desire for community, I would argue that having every
member of a community aware of the benefits and engaged in the community strengthens the community at large. Second, because there are challenges related to the adjunct condition in general, a conversation when an adjunct is hired might go a long way in explaining and understanding whether it or not an individual understands and accepts that current condition. For example, a question could be asked about whether an adjunct understands and feels comfortable with the structure of part-time, including the low pay and instability. Also, for challenges such as time, a conversation could be had about whether an adjunct is interested in building connections at the IHE, and whether the IHE is willing and able to foster that relationship. Third, some supports listed in this chapter are technical and could be a relatively easy way to offer support to adjunct faculty. For the adaptive problems, perhaps some critical reflection on the part of administrators, with input from adjuncts, could present creative supports and solutions. Adjuncts are a significant subset of the faculty group, for which there exists an opportunity to be strengthened if they work as a unified group. Fourth, and most specific for technical problems, adjuncts in this study expressed that a mentoring program, a clear and structured communication system, the opportunity to teach more credit hours at one institution, departmental meetings to get to know adjunct faculty, a survey at the beginning and end of each semester for adjuncts to provide feedback to the IHE, and a document outlining the details of their role would all be helpful.

Discussion

Consistencies with literature. Constructive Developmental Theory provided an underpinning for this study. Adjuncts are employees of IHEs, and in simplistic terms, it benefits the employer and institution if its employees are able to fulfil the mental
demands that the job requires. Of course, being consumed with financial stress or lacking the information of how to do one’s job would compete with higher level occupational tasks. In addition, Kegan (1994) explained that employees need the capacity to own their own work; it would be a detriment if employees had to rely upon someone else to complete every task. According to Kegan (1994), employees need to both own their work and to see the organization as a whole; they need to hold two concepts, seeing themselves as a “hired hand” and a “master of fate” (p. 157). He linked the demands of owning ones’ work, self-evaluation, self-correction, and being guided by one’s vision to fourth order consciousness. Baxter Magolda (2007) built upon Kegan’s concept of self-authorship found within his fourth order. She explained that self-authorship is the capacity to define one’s own identity, including beliefs and relationships.

There have been several notions on how to promote self-authorship. Kegan (1994) used the building a bridge metaphor to illustrate the need for challenge and support to encourage development. Examining challenges and appropriate supports in this study helped to situate the findings in terms of promoting growth to develop the capacity in the adjunct role. Baris Gunersel et al. (2013) had a more specific finding that providing space and time for interactions with diverse colleagues encouraged self-authorship. Both space and time were noted as lacking and listed as challenges by the participants. I could not help to wonder if respect may also increase if colleagues had an opportunity to work with and get to know adjunct faculty on campus.

Levine and Hernandez (2014) found that it is indeed possible for adjuncts to self-author and that when they enacted their agency, which the study said they do in certain situations, they were also making strides towards developing identity. In many of the
challenges that adjuncts faced, there were participants who used their agency in creating a solution or who had a desire to do so. Those adjuncts tended to be ones who felt secure in their place and role at the university. They had one or a combination of the following factors: had another career, had previous familiarity with the university, or had education and experience that helped them feel qualified. In terms of whether a bridge was constructed for the other adjuncts, this study found that many times there was not or that adjuncts were not able to utilize it. Looking at the interactions of challenges and supports, examining whether space and time are available and enacting agency are all critical elements of development and growth.

Another line of research that resonates in this study is that the participants, despite the challenges that they faced, indicated a desire to keep their position. Some were hopeful of a full-time position, but they did not state that they were currently planning on leaving their adjunct position if that did not happen. However, if their challenges grew or sustained, I am not certain that that would still be true for all of the participants. Therefore, I found Process Theories of Motivation, particularly Expectancy Theory, introduced by Vroom (1964) to be of interest in looking at what brings them back into an adjunct position semester after semester. Process theories go beyond a hierarchy of needs, such as presented in Content Theories of Motivation. While Process theories were what I initially focused on, it was somewhat surprising to me that some adjuncts at this IHE struggled with basic needs, like making enough money to cover basic living expenses. It was equally surprising that they also simultaneously struggled with more complex needs, such as respect.
Process theories attempt to explain the process that people go through as they obtain a goal;

In the technical language of expectancy theory, motivation is derived from the expectancy that the amount of *effort* (force) you exert will lead to a high level of task *performance*…*Instrumentality* is the perceived likelihood that your high level of *performance* will lead to your desired *outcome*…*Valence* is the degree of *value* you place on the *outcome* (Hanson, 2003, p. 199)

There is a clear concern, when considering the instrumentality, for adjuncts whose desired outcome was to move into a full-time faculty position on campus but who did not realize that high performance level does not lead to that desired outcome. Several adjuncts in this study were dealing with that reality. There was also concern for adjuncts who had expected high effort to lead to high performance but who then discovered that they lack access to appropriate supports when needed.

In both Constructive Developmental and Motivation Theories, challenges are significant to the process. When examining attempts to provide an appropriate support for challenges participants faced, Heifetz’s research (1994) offered a way to unpack, what he labeled, “problems.” He made a distinction between technical problems, which have known solutions, and adaptive problems, for which there is not a solution yet. While it may seem that technical problems found in this study would be easy to solve, there would still need to be a decision by the IHE that they want to solve the problem, while they consider competing priorities. For the adaptive problems, some ideas for broad, system changes came up in my interviews, which I have noted throughout, but clearly they would need more study. Discovering or implementing appropriate supports for adjuncts is
critical for growing capacity in the role and benefitting the IHE, adjuncts, and students.

**Notable experiences in conducting the study.** In the process of conducting this research study, there were several instances when I took pause. What surprised me the most was the number of adjuncts who said that one of their biggest challenges was the changing student demographic. I did not anticipate that. It was not the case in my own experience, and I did not find it prevalent in the research. However, once I gave it some thought, it made sense. The university wants to grow, in part to increase financial stability, and part of that growth has included international students. Previously, I had researched and worked on projects concerning English Learners. For one particular project, I had worked with a colleague and to prepare a presentation on strategies used for teaching English Learners at the K-12 level that could translate to teaching in higher education. However, that research focused on full-time faculty, and I failed to recall the connection that emerged from my literature review indicating that adjunct faculty may also face what full-time faculty were currently struggling with. Also, I did not anticipate it would rank as high as it did amongst their challenges.

Counter to my expectations were the commitment level, the amount of work, and the effort put forth by the adjunct faculty group. Adjuncts are taking additional classes, writing their own student reading materials, creating new courses, and spending much more time than that required by their teaching assignment. For a faculty group that has no commitment from the university and who eventually come to have a low expectation that it could end up as a full-time job, the participants have been a dedicated group. Finally, it surprised me how open participants were in the interviews. I had expected a good rapport due to my role as an adjunct, but they shared intimate details about their jobs and about
their lives. It made me even more committed to protecting their identities and to telling their stories. I concluded my interviews feeling very emotional. I was affected because of what all I learned about their struggles and because of the future of teaching at this university.

In addition to the times when I was caught off guard, what I learned by engaging in this research made me think about alternative research strategies. If I were to conduct the study again, I would make a few alterations. First, I would ask additional specific questions, such as their ages and their specific career plans. I think the human aspects, the motivational ones, are intrigu

ing. I expected that motivation would play a part, and I included a review of several studies and research, but I now believe that it may perhaps be more significant than I had originally thought. Second, I think that I would interview fewer participants but go into more depth on a few questions to hear more story. To make that fruitful, I would need to administer a survey beforehand to uncover background information. I would also plan for follow-up questions. Third, I would spread out the interviews. As I mentioned in Chapter III, I decided to finish my interview sessions before the adjunct faculty left campus for summer. However, conducting the interviews close together rushed my time for reflection.

**Suggestions for further research.** There are many possible directions for further study. It would be interesting to have the results of this study carried out at different campuses to compare the findings. In addition to different campuses, findings from studies within individual departments might reveal how adjuncts view challenges and supports given similar environments. An ethnographic study could bring insightful elements and richness to the adjunct experience. A grounded theory study might help
researches come up with a framework for supporting adjunct faculty. In the process of my study my findings were steering towards that endeavor.

This final chapter is devoted to the discussion of my research study to understand the experience of growth for adjunct faculty, specifically to uncover the interaction of challenges and supports and whether sufficient time is allotted for reflection. While the adjunct role is not an easy one, they are performing vital work at IHEs, and they may depend on the support of administrators. If adjunct faculty are a reality at most IHEs, then there is great benefit in realizing how the role is viewed and considered by adjunct faculty, in articulating what is working well, and in unleashing the potential found within.
REFERENCES


http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=qualitative&pageid=icb.page340911


APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

Research Project Title: Growth Within the Adjunct Faculty Role: An Interaction of Challenge, Support, and Context

You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by Carrie Rogan from the University of Dayton, in the Department of Educational Leadership.

The purpose of the project is to explore how adjuncts experience growth within their role and how that growth can be appreciated and realized within the higher education context.

You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

• Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop participating at any time for any reason. Answering the questions will take about ---- minutes.

• You will not be compensated for your participation.

• All of the information you tell us will be confidential.

• If this is a recorded interview, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the recording and it will kept in a secure place.

• If this is a written or online survey, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to your responses. If you are participating in an online survey: We will not collect identifying information, but we cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and our data collection point. We urge you to consider this carefully when responding to these questions.

• I understand that I am ONLY eligible to participate if I am over the age of 18.
Please contact the following investigators with any questions or concerns:

Carrie Rogan  
roganfloomc1@udayton.edu  
856-305-4567

Joseph Watras  
jwtras1@udayton.edu  
937-229-3328

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Candise Powell, J.D., Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Dayton, IRB@udayton.edu; Phone: (937) 229-3515.
Dear fellow adjunct faculty member,

Thank you for your time in reading and considering this invitation; I know that your time is of value. I am writing a dissertation on a topic that is close to my heart—adjunct faculty. I have been an adjunct faculty member for well over a decade at several institutions. I have found that it is a significant role that is well deserving of attention. I would love to interview you and hear about your experience in the adjunct faculty role. My only research criterion for a participant is that you have been an adjunct faculty member for a minimum of two years, at least one year of which has been at UD. I am collecting interview data as part of a research study to increase understanding of how the adjunct role functions and promotes growth through the challenges and supports found within the role. I also have a vested interest in giving adjuncts a voice and celebrating the valuable work that you all do.

The interview will take about 60 minutes and is informal. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being an adjunct and what you view as challenges and supports. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. There is not any compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research, and findings could lead to greater public understanding of the role of adjunct faculty members. If you are willing to participate please suggest a day, time, and place that is convenient for you, and I'll do my best to be available.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.
Thank you again for your time and interest,
Carrie Rogan Floom
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

What is your current role at the University?
--job search process, how long in this position
--any other roles at the University

Tell me about the factors that led you to this role.

How would you describe your role at the University?
--do the courses you teach change each semester
--responsibilities, professional activities, committees

Describe what kind of teacher you are or who you are as a teacher.
--values, goals
--perspective about students, learning, teaching

What have been your achievements?
--skills, items produced
--awards, degrees

Is change inherent in your role, and if so how do you feel about that change?
--what type of change/ how frequent is change
--are some changes easy than other types

What roles do you have outside of the university?

Describe what a typical week looks like for you.

What are some challenges that you have faced? Tell me the story of your experience.
--most difficult part of your job
--in university role, as a result of or connected to your university role
--in other role(s)

What has been most helpful to you when you face a particular challenge?
--courses/workshops/professional development
What did the process of dealing with a challenge look like? Describe some examples.

Has how you felt about challenges changed over time?

What would be helpful to you when you face various challenges?