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Toward Fostering A Sense Of Community Among Online Adjunct Faculty: Strategies Of Selected Higher Education Administrators

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ONLINE ADJUNCT FACULTY: STRATEGIES OF SELECTED

HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS

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By

Alexandra Catherine Blankinship

September 2021

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Dedication

To my loving husband, best friend, and soulmate, Russell Blankinship.

Thank you for your pep talks, patience, and support during my time as a doctoral student.

I could not have completed this dissertation without you.

I love you and cherish the life we have built together!

To my beloved brother, Eric Briggs.

I am so grateful for our memories and miss you more than words can express.

I know you are rocking out in heaven! May your soul rest in peace.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my husband, parents, family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me throughout my doctoral journey. You know this has been a long haul, and I am so grateful for your words of encouragement. I look forward to making new memories with you all!

Thank you to my dissertation chair and program advisor, Dr. Judi Harris, for your guidance over the past 7 years. I am so appreciative of your feedback, advice, and support. You extended grace when I needed it most, and I will never forget your kindness and encouragement. I am also grateful to my committee members, Dr. Mark Hofer and Dr. Pam Eddy, for their time and expertise. Several School of Education alums told me I had a "dream team" dissertation committee, and I could not agree more!

Thank you to my brilliant professors and classmates at William & Mary's School of Education. I always left class feeling energized and excited to be part of a fantastic school. I am grateful to have learned from you and alongside you.

Thank you to my amazing participants for your willingness to participate in my study. I was worried no one would volunteer to participate, but that was not the case! You were so generous with your time and the information you shared. I hope my work resonates with you. It has been an honor and a pleasure speaking with you!

Finally, thank you to the researchers who paved the way for me and those following in my footsteps. I am humbled to contribute to this body of knowledge and invite others to continue the conversation. If you are a graduate student reading this late at night, feeling lost, stressed, and tired, know you are not alone. You are one step closer to your goal with every sentence you write. You are not an imposter, and what you are doing matters! Keep going!

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are increasingly turning to adjunct faculty to teach online courses to accommodate online course enrollment growth. While many adjunct faculty are attracted to the flexibility of online teaching, they also face several challenges, such as feelings of isolation and disengagement, negative stereotypes, and lack of professional development opportunities. These challenges can be detrimental to their instructional performance and, therefore, the student learning experience. Thus, fully integrating online adjunct faculty into an institution's community and creating an environment in which they feel supported is critical to the success of an institution's online programs.

Research suggests that higher education administrators are responsible for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty, yet their approaches to fulfilling this responsibility remain largely unknown. Hence, the purpose of this study was to learn more about the strategies higher education administrators use to cultivate community among online adjunct faculty. Data were generated and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach to understand the practices, influences, and challenges of 17 higher education administrators from different 4-year public and private institutions who reported fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Results indicated that the participants fostered a sense of community through intentional inclusion, operationalized by four interconnected processes: socialization, communication, participation, and recognition. Multiple contextual factors and challenges influenced participants' community-building practices. The findings from this study

provide a framework for creating inclusive working environments for online adjunct faculty and

recommendations for further research to explore their nature and efficacy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ali, I just wanted to say thank you for today's session. I heard you say that you're trying to connect adjuncts to the full-time staff and faculty through these sessions and I want you to know it's very appreciated. I feel more connected to [this institution] than I do [another institution] and I've taught there for 10 years.

I received the message above from an online adjunct instructor following a workshop I hosted for faculty at the school where I work. All full- and part-time faculty who teach for the school were invited to the workshop. A virtual attendance option was available to anyone who could not attend in person. When I received the note, I had already decided to study higher education (HE) administrators' strategies for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty, but I was second-guessing my decision. The online adjunct instructor's message confirmed the importance of my topic and motivated me to continue forward.

In my current position, I am responsible for strategically developing my school's network of online adjunct faculty to support the growth of the school's online graduate programs. I create and manage processes and policies for hiring, onboarding, training, and evaluating the school's online adjuncts. I also work to strengthen their connections with the school's mission, history, and values and enhance their relationships with the school's students and faculty. When I started working in my position, I met individually with the school's full-time faculty who teach online as well as the school's online adjuncts, asking them for feedback about what my team could do to better support our online adjuncts. I also examined each step of the school's adjunct

employment process, identifying areas for improvement. Additionally, I reviewed journal articles on best practices for supporting online adjuncts, determining which practices might work well within the school's context.

Through this process, I implemented several strategies to support and engage our online adjunct faculty throughout their employment cycle. I have received positive feedback about these strategies from the full- and part-time faculty who teach online, such as the note shared earlier in this chapter. However, faculty, staff, and administrators who are not involved with our online programs tend to forget about our growing population of online instructors. Moreover, I have interacted with a few colleagues who questioned the credentials of our online adjuncts and their ability to provide high-quality instruction.

These challenges highlight the need to better integrate our online adjunct faculty into the school's culture. Yet, I struggle to find meaningful ways to connect them to a tightly knit, highly residential campus community beyond the methods I have already implemented. I believe that as the school expands its program offerings, delivering high-quality student learning experiences will continue to be of prime importance. Subsequently, the qualifications of our online adjuncts will continue to be scrutinized, especially if they remain unknown to those outside of our online programs. I also recognize that I will not be able to manage a large population of online adjuncts effectively without implementing a more comprehensive and scalable strategy for engaging, supporting, and developing them. My desire to learn more about the ways to integrate online adjuncts into the campus community serves as the inspiration for this dissertation study.

Overview

In this chapter, I will provide context for the importance of intentionally integrating online adjunct faculty into the institutions they serve so that they experience a sense of

community. First, I will briefly describe the growth of online learning and the increased use of online adjuncts. Then, I will discuss the rhetoric surrounding the increased use of online adjuncts and some of the challenges they face. Finally, I will provide an overview of why it is crucial to engage online adjuncts with their colleagues and institution and that those responsible for doing so are HE administrators.

Growth of Online Learning

Online education provides HE institutions with opportunities to reach new markets of students (Betts et al., 2013) and has become a multi-billion-dollar industry in the U.S. (Bouchrika, 2020). Since 2002, HE online course enrollments in the U.S. have more than tripled. In 2002, fewer than 10% of students, or 1.6 million, were enrolled in at least one online course (Sener, 2010). By the fall of 2018, the number of students enrolled in at least one online course grew to 34.7%, or 6.9 million. The majority of these students, approximately 5 million, were enrolled at a 4-year degree-granting institution at the undergraduate or post-baccalaureate level. Of these students, nearly 2.5 million were enrolled exclusively in online courses (Lederman, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Online courses use digital technology to deliver instruction and learning experiences to students who are physically separated from their instructors. In this mode of learning, digital technology supports regular and substantive synchronous and asynchronous interactions between students and their instructors (Seaman et al., 2018).

To accommodate the growth of online learning, HE institutions are increasingly turning to adjunct faculty (Magda, 2019; Magda et al., 2015; Mandernach et al., 2015). Adjunct faculty, also referred to as adjunct professors, adjunct instructors, and adjuncts, are temporary, non-tenure-eligible faculty who are employed on a part-time basis at a HE institution, in either

workload or length of time in a given position (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Halcrow & Olson, 2008). Adjunct faculty fall into a broader category often referred to as contingent faculty, which includes full- and part-time non-tenure eligible faculty appointments (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013).

Recent data indicate that the professorate at 4-year postsecondary institutions comprises 44% part-time faculty (NCES, 2020). While the NCES does not report how many part-time instructors teach online courses, a 2018 survey of 95 chief academic officers at state colleges and universities revealed that 31% of online courses offered at their institutions were taught by adjunct faculty (Magda, 2019). In a 2015 survey of 202 deans, directors, and provosts at 2- and 4-year HE institutions, 56% reported an increase in the percentage of adjunct faculty who teach online at their institution from the prior year. Of those institutions, 25% reported an increase of more than 5% (Magda et al., 2015). These surveys highlight the interrelated trend between the rise in online learning enrollments and the increased use of adjunct faculty at 4-year postsecondary HE institutions. Understanding the differences between academic appointment types provides context for the reasons why HE institutions use adjunct faculty to teach online.

Academic Appointment Types

Higher education academic appointment types in the U.S. vary depending on the institution. Generally, they fall into two broad categories: tenure/tenure-eligible (TTE) and non-tenure-eligible (NTE) appointments (AAUP, 2014). Tenure in academia is the permanent or continuous employment of a faculty member at an institution. Tenure is a means of protecting freedom of teaching and research, commonly known as academic freedom. Tenured faculty can only be terminated for adequate cause or under extraordinary circumstances because of financial exigencies (AAUP, n.d.).

Within the TTE category is an ascending hierarchy of academic positions in which tenure-eligible faculty work toward tenure. Faculty in tenure-eligible positions at 4-year postsecondary institutions must make significant contributions in research, teaching, and institutional service within a defined number of years to receive tenure. Once tenured, faculty might be promoted further in rank according to their institution's promotion process. At most institutions, the highest-ranking academic appointment type is a distinguished, endowed, or university professor (AAUP, 2014).

All other academic appointment types fall into the NTE category. Commonly referred to as contingent faculty, faculty in NTE appointments lack the benefits and protections of tenure and a planned long-term relationship with an institution. NTE appointments include full- and part-time positions, such as teaching assistants, postdoctoral researchers, clinical faculty, emeritus faculty, lecturers, instructors, and adjunct faculty. They may receive a renewable multi-year or annual contract or a nonrenewable fixed-term contract. These contracts are contingent upon various factors, such as funds or enrollment. Individuals in contingent roles usually have different teaching loads, expectations, and responsibilities than those in TTE appointments. For example, full-time NTE faculty commonly have higher teaching loads than TTE faculty but are generally not expected to conduct scholarly research, though many still engage in scholarly activities (AAUP, 2014; Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016).

These differences in faculty appointment types, expectations, and responsibilities have evolved into an established hierarchy among faculty on many campuses, with TTE over NTE faculty and full-time over part-time NTE faculty (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Sam, 2013). This hierarchy often dictates faculty voting rights and governance involvement at most institutions. Faculty in TTE appointments usually have full voting privileges, whereas full-time

NTE faculty often have limited voting privileges, and part-time NTE faculty typically have no voting privileges. Still, full-time NTE faculty tend to have more influence on faculty and academic affairs than adjunct faculty. Thus, the faculty governance structure is such that NTE part-time faculty, including adjunct faculty, often do not vote on matters related to their roles, such as academic policies, curriculum, and faculty evaluation (AAUP, 2014). Based on the current faculty governance structure just described, it is not surprising that adjunct faculty feel like the academic underclass (Childress, 2019).

Institutional Benefits of Using Online Adjunct Faculty

Understanding the differences between academic appointment types provides context for why HE institutions benefit from using adjunct faculty to teach online courses. Reduced budgets and financial support for state and private institutions have been cited as causes for the increased use of adjunct faculty (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014). Because of their part-time status, adjunct faculty do not typically receive the same employee benefits as full-time faculty, providing significant financial savings to HE institutions (Halcrow & Olson, 2008; Magda et al., 2015). Adjunct faculty also receive lower wages per course than full-time faculty and get little to no wage premiums based on their credentials. These factors make it possible for HE institutions to employ several adjunct faculty for the same amount as one full-time faculty member (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012; Halcrow & Olson, 2008).

While the primary responsibility of adjunct faculty is to teach, full-time faculty have several duties in addition to teaching. Such duties include advising students, participating in departmental and university activities, developing curricula, conducting and publishing research, and serving on committees. Given these additional responsibilities, the number of classes a full-time faculty member teaches must be within the bounds of their annual teaching load. Any

teaching assignment that exceeds their annual teaching load is usually compensated as an overload payment at a similar or higher rate than that of adjunct faculty. There are also a limited number of full-time faculty positions in any given department, making it necessary to hire adjunct faculty to teach when the demand for courses exceeds the number of full-time faculty available to teach them (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Halcrow & Olson, 2008).

The availability and flexibility of faculty in terms of course scheduling becomes even more critical with online course offerings. Higher education institutions do not have to be limited by physical space or class times in the online environment, making it easier to add more course sections and hire more online adjunct faculty as needed (Magda et al., 2015; Tipple, 2010). Similarly, HE institutions can cancel courses and adjunct contracts when enrollments are low more easily than shifting the teaching assignments of full-time faculty (Mueller et al., 2013). Additionally, HE institutions may reassign a course from an online adjunct to a full-time faculty member if they need the course credits as part of their teaching load. When this occurs, adjunct faculty do not typically receive compensation for any preparatory work they completed, thus financially benefiting the institution (Rhoades, 2017).

The availability and flexibility of scheduling adjunct faculty, coupled with the administrative and financial benefits, contribute to the reasons why HE institutions are using adjunct faculty to teach online courses at increasing rates. Furthermore, many HE institutions develop online programs with the intent of using mostly adjunct faculty to scale instruction while reducing instructional costs. The way many institutions do this is through a master course model for online course development and delivery. In this model, a full-time faculty member collaborates with an instructional design team to develop a master course. The master course is copied into multiple course sections with each offering. The faculty member who designed the

master course may facilitate one or more course sections; however, adjunct faculty facilitate most sections (P. Hill, 2012; Magda et al., 2015; Moon, 2019).

Course facilitators (i.e., online adjunct faculty) can usually add supplemental materials. However, they are not typically allowed to add or alter the content or modify the learning outcomes, activities, assignments, and assessments, ensuring a certain level of quality and consistency between course sections. The master course model allows institutions to offer more course sections at a lower cost to the institution, thus contributing to the increasing use of adjunct faculty across HE (P. Hill, 2012; Magda et al., 2015; Moon, 2019).

Debates Over the Use of Adjunct Faculty

Given the factors previously described, academia's reliance on adjunct faculty is unlikely to change (Bedford & Miller, 2013). The rhetoric surrounding the increased use of adjunct faculty is emotionally charged and has been a popular topic of debate for decades. Many have argued that adjunct faculty are exploited for their cheap labor, comparing their annual salary and job security to fast-food workers (Kezar et al., 2019). Others have compared the practice of using high rates of adjunct faculty to Wal-Mart's employment model of retaining a minimum number of full-time employees while hiring many part-time employees with low pay, no benefits, and no job security (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018; Hoeller, 2014). Some have put the onus on adjunct faculty to affect systemic change, telling them that if they refused this type of labor, institutions would be forced to adjust their hiring practices (The Review, 2018). Organizations like the Service Employees International Union's Faculty Forward have formed local unions in response to the inequitable treatment of adjunct faculty, advocating for more job security with fair wages and benefits for adjunct faculty (Faculty Forward, 2021).

Others have questioned the effectiveness of adjunct faculty, claiming that they are less educated, dedicated, and engaged than full-time faculty and, therefore, negatively impact student learning (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Shakeshaft, 2002; Shelton & Saltsman, 2006). Several researchers have attempted to address this contentious topic by examining the effectiveness of adjunct faculty. For example, one study explored the effectiveness of adjunct faculty by comparing student performance in online courses when taught by either an adjunct faculty or a full-time faculty member (Mueller et al., 2013). Student performance indicators included completion, failure and withdrawal rates, course grade and grade variance, continued enrollment rates, and end-of-course satisfaction rates. The courses' core content under examination was identical; however, the findings revealed a significant main effect for all student performance indicators, favoring courses taught by full-time faculty.

Mueller et al. (2013) stressed that their study's comparative framework was not intended to criticize the quality of online adjunct faculty. Instead, the results were more likely a by-product of the working conditions unique to online adjuncts. The authors explained that the full-time faculty taught online from the same location as one another, while the online adjuncts were geographically separated from the institution and their colleagues. The authors posited that, unlike the online adjuncts, the full-time faculty may have been able to share ideas and resources and had access to instructional support. This study's findings highlight the need to focus not on which group of faculty is more effective, but on how to engage, support, and develop online adjuncts so that students' learning experiences are of similar quality regardless of whether a faculty member works full- or part-time.

The Mueller et al. (2013) study also illuminates a significant challenge faced by online adjunct faculty: physical distance. Working in isolation from their peers, online adjuncts often

experience a sense of disconnection from their colleagues and the institution, which has been found to negatively impact job performance (Benton & Li, 2015; Dolan, 2011). While many adjunct faculty are attracted to the flexibility and autonomy of teaching online and derive job satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards of teaching (Maguire, 2005), they also express feelings of isolation, marginalization, and frustration from the lack of support provided by the institutions they serve (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006).

Dolan (2011) investigated the isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on their performance. The main issues of concern to the online adjuncts studied were lack of communication, lack of recognition of their value to the institution, and lack of opportunities for skill development. The online adjuncts believed increased opportunities to interact with their colleagues would strengthen their bond with the institution. They also thought that such interactions would help them develop their skills and improve their teaching, enabling them to serve their students better. Dolan noted that by not making an effort to improve online adjuncts' sense of affiliation and loyalty to the institution, HE administrators run the risk of negatively affecting both instructor and student retention. To address the challenges faced by online adjuncts, such as feelings of isolation, HE administrators must understand the characteristics and motivations of this population of faculty as well as the best practices for supporting them (Tipple, 2010).

Engaging and Integrating Online Adjunct Faculty

Extant literature contains several examples of programs designed to support online adjunct faculty, such as orientation, mentorship, professional development, and evaluation, discussed in Chapter 2. While these programs typically provide online adjuncts with a deeper understanding of their institutions and help to improve their teaching performance, research

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indicates that online adjuncts also desire a greater sense of community and collegiality (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dolan, 2011; LaPointe Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Research also suggests that HE administrators are responsible for fostering a sense of community among adjunct faculty. HE administrators can provide online adjuncts with superior support by implementing programs designed to maximize their instructional effectiveness and integrate them into the institution, ultimately contributing to their ongoing retention at the university (Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017; Tipple, 2010).

Fully integrating online adjunct faculty into an institution's community and creating an environment in which they feel inspired and supported is critical to instructional quality and the student learning experience, and therefore, the success of an institution's online programs. HE administrators need to be visionary, motivational, and supportive of their workforce, especially with those in direct contact with students, which increasingly include online adjuncts (Tipple, 2010). Motivated and inspired faculty are associated with higher levels of student satisfaction and retention (Brindley et al., 2006; Dolan, 2011; Tipple, 2010). High-quality instructors are retained by excellent faculty support (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). Without committed, high-quality online adjuncts, the educational quality of online programs could decrease, putting an institution's reputation at risk. HE administrators must be aware of strategies they can use to foster a sense of community among this population of faculty as a way to increase their engagement and commitment to the institution (Tipple, 2010).

Research Focus

There are a variety of research-based strategies that online instructors can use to foster a sense of community in an online course; however, little is known about the strategies HE administrators use to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Even less is

known about the challenges HE administrators encounter when trying to implement these strategies. Exploring these strategies and their use could provide HE administrators with a better understanding of ways they can support and engage online adjunct faculty and prepare for the obstacles they may face when implementing these strategies.

Thus, the focus of this dissertation study was to explore the strategies current HE administrators use to cultivate a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. The challenges HE administrators encounter when implementing these strategies were also investigated. As such, the following questions guided this study:

- What strategies are used by selected HE administrators who purport to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions?

- What are the various factors that influence their decisions and actions regarding using these strategies?

- What challenges do they face, if any, as they implement these strategies?

In Chapter 2, I will examine the nature of this topic through a review of extant literature directly related to this research focus.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

As the demand for online courses continues to grow, so does the demand for qualified instructors who can teach them. As a result, many higher education (HE) institutions hire adjunct faculty to accommodate increasing online enrollments (Magda, 2019). It is essential to understand how to effectively lead this population of faculty in order to maximize educational quality and institutional effectiveness. This literature review will examine challenges unique to online adjunct faculty and best practices for supporting them. Adjuncts' motivations for teaching online will be discussed, followed by an examination of the challenges they face. Proposed frameworks and institutional examples of programs for supporting, developing, and engaging online adjunct faculty will be described. The roles that educational leaders and administrators serve in supporting online adjunct faculty will also be explored. Gaps in extant literature related to online adjuncts will be highlighted, including the need for additional research on the strategies HE administrators use to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjuncts and the obstacles they face when implementing these strategies.

Categories of Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct faculty are a subset of a broader category of faculty often referred to as contingent faculty. Recall from Chapter 1 that contingent faculty appointments are non-tenure eligible full- and part-time roles. This review of the literature focuses specifically on adjunct faculty, or temporary, non-tenure-track eligible faculty. Adjunct faculty are a heterogeneous population with differing professional backgrounds, educational experiences, and reasons for

pursuing adjunct work. As such, it is essential to understand the characteristics and motivations of this group of faculty and how to best support their specific needs (Mandernach et al., 2015; Roueche et al., 1996; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013). Tuckman (1978) was the first researcher to describe the motivations of adjunct faculty, whom he referred to as part-timers, through the identification of seven categories:

1. **Semiretired:** former full-time faculty members and individuals who are retired from fields outside of HE; less concerned about their future job prospects.

2. **Students:** graduate students who teach part-time at an institution other than the one at which they are seeking a degree in order to gain experience and/or supplement income.

3. **Hopeful Full-Timers:** individuals working part-time to gain experience in the hope of eventually working full-time or individuals who cannot find a full-time position; also includes individuals who work enough part-time hours at one or more institutions to be considered full-time.

4. **Full-Mooners:** individuals who hold a full-time job and teach part-time for a variety of reasons.

5. **Homeworkers:** individuals who have home responsibilities, such as caring for children and/or relatives, placing a limit on the number of hours they can work; may teach part-time to supplement income.

6. **Part-Mooners:** individuals who hold another part-time job and teach part-time for a variety of reasons.

7. **Part-Unknowners:** everyone else that does not fall into the other six categories.

These categories were modified over time, most notably by Gappa and Leslie (1993), who used Tuckman's (1978) seven categories as a foundation for researching adjunct faculty employment experiences and motivations. Their findings indicated that Tuckman's categories were too narrow, so they regrouped them into four more inclusive categories: (a) *career-enders*; (b) *specialists, experts, and professionals*; (c) *aspiring academics*; and (d) *freelancers*.

Gappa and Leslie (1993) renamed Tuckman's *semiretired* category to *career-enders*, noting the individuals in this category pursue adjunct work as a way to maintain connections to their career field. They also renamed Tuckman's *full-mooners* category to *specialists, experts, and professionals*. The individuals in this category are employed full-time outside of HE and have advanced training and education in their chosen career field. They teach more for the love of teaching than any other factor and tend to remain employed as adjuncts at an institution longer than adjuncts in other categories.

Gappa and Leslie (1993) combined Tuckman's *hopeful full-timers* and *students* categories into one category, naming it *aspiring academics.* The individuals in this category teach on a part-time basis in the hope of attaining a full-time faculty position. Gappa and Leslie also combined Tuckman's *homeworkers*, *part-mooners*, and *part-unknowners* categories into one category called *freelancers*. Adjuncts in this category work part-time for reasons other than those previously stated. In sum, Gappa and Leslie's four categories of adjunct faculty are as follows:

1. **Career-Enders:** former full-time faculty members and individuals who are retired from fields outside of HE.

2. **Specialists, Experts, and Professionals:** individuals employed full-time outside of HE who have advanced training and education in their chosen career field.

3. **Aspiring Academics:** individuals who teach part-time in the hope of attaining a full-time faculty position.

4. **Freelancers:** individuals who have home responsibilities that limit the number of hours they can work, individuals who hold another part-time job, and everyone else that does not fall into the other three categories.

Gappa and Leslie's (1993) categories apply to adjunct faculty who teach on-campus and online; however, a new type of adjunct faculty has emerged due to increased opportunities to teach online (Mandernach et al., 2015). Referred to as *full-time part-timers* (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003) or *professional adjuncts* (Bedford, 2009), this new category of adjunct faculty capitalizes on the geographic flexibility of online teaching (Carnevale, 2004; Hollman, 2013; Mandernach et al., 2015). Before the rise of online education, adjunct faculty were limited to teaching at nearby institutions. In contrast, the physically remote nature of the online classroom, combined with the part-time, contractual aspect of the adjunct role, presents virtually no limits to when and where adjunct faculty can teach (Starcher & Mandernach, 2016). Thus, professional adjuncts can take a unique entrepreneurial approach to their role by teaching several online courses per term simultaneously at multiple institutions throughout the year so that their overall teaching load and wages are similar to that of full-time faculty (Carnevale, 2004; Hollman, 2013; Mandernach et al., 2015).

Research on professional adjuncts indicates that they are highly educated and have several years of online teaching experience as well as non-academic professional working experience. They also have a high-level understanding of online education and the technologies used to facilitate it (Hollman, 2013; Mandernach et al., 2015). Though they do not usually receive employee benefits, such as health insurance and retirement, those who serve as

professional adjuncts are motivated by the flexibility of teaching online at multiple institutions. They can still pursue scholarly activity and engage in professional learning without the institutional pressure they might experience in tenure-eligible positions (Bedford, 2009; Hollman, 2013). Similar to professional adjuncts, the flexibility of online teaching serves as a motivating factor for other categories of adjunct faculty (Rich, 2016; Shiffman, 2009; Wolf, 2011). The motivations of adjunct faculty who pursue online teaching positions will be explored in the following section.

Motivations of Online Adjunct Faculty

Several researchers have studied the motivations of online adjunct faculty, reporting similar findings. Shiffman (2009) used Gappa and Leslie's (1993) categories to examine the teaching motivations of online adjuncts in her dissertation study. Nearly 700 online adjunct faculty were asked to self-identify as specialists, freelancers, career enders, aspiring academics, or other. The *other* category was used to describe online adjunct faculty who did not fit into one of Gappa and Leslie's four categories. Approximately 43% identified as specialists, 27% as freelancers, 9% as career enders, 8% as aspiring academics, and 13% as other. Across all online adjunct faculty studied, the top three motivating factors that influenced adjunct instructors' decisions to teach online included the joy of teaching, personal satisfaction, and a flexible work schedule, with a flexible work schedule ranking the highest. Hopkins (2013) came to a similar conclusion in her dissertation study that explored the motivations of online adjunct faculty. The flexibility and convenience of teaching online, coupled with the rewards of teaching, were the top two motivating factors of the online adjunct faculty studied.

Researchers who have used Herzberg's dual-factor theory of job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959) to examine the motivations and job satisfaction of online adjunct faculty further

support the findings of Shiffman (2009) and Hopkins (2013). Herzberg's dual-factor theory classifies work dimensions into motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are intrinsic factors that make employees feel satisfied, including achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. The absence of motivators does not lead to job dissatisfaction; however, the only way to improve job satisfaction is to increase the motivating factors. Hygiene factors are extrinsic factors needed so employees are not dissatisfied with their jobs, including company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationships with peers, personal life, relationships with subordinates, status, and security. The absence of hygiene factors leads to job dissatisfaction but increasing them will not result in job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Rowley, 1996; Smerek & Peterson, 2006).

In her dissertation study, Wolf (2011) used Herzberg's dual-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) and several other motivation theories to examine the motivating and demotivating factors of online adjunct undergraduate instructors. Wolf defined motivation as factors that cause an individual to take or change an action, and demotivation as factors that reduce an individual's enthusiasm, intention, or action. Her research revealed that online adjunct faculty were not demotivated by the absence of achieving full-time employment at their institutions. Instead, they were highly motivated by having the opportunity to teach on a part-time basis and being able to do so from a distance. Wolf argued that university leaders should understand the motivating and demotivating factors of online adjunct faculty so that they can cultivate positive environments that stimulate online adjunct faculty to higher levels of performance.

A flexible work schedule also proved important to the online adjunct faculty studied by Rich (2016). Similar to Wolf (2011), Rich used Herzberg's dual-factor theory (Herzberg et al.,

1959) to examine the extrinsic factors that influenced the workplace experiences of 27 online adjunct faculty. The results pointed to three emergent factors that influenced the online adjuncts' workplace experiences: professional inclusion, work schedule, and resources. The participants expressed overwhelming job satisfaction regarding their work schedule and the flexibility of teaching online. They said their online teaching schedule allowed them to spend more time with family, explore other work opportunities, and pursue personal endeavors.

Conversely, they said they did not feel like integral faculty members, emphasizing a lack of inclusion, support, and resources from their administrators. However, they made a concerted effort to forgo becoming dissatisfied with their work by collaborating with other online adjuncts to ensure they had the essential resources to perform their duties (Rich, 2016). Rich's findings highlight the enthusiasm and dedication of the online adjunct faculty studied and their desire to be included in faculty meetings and other faculty-related matters. Rich's research, along with the studies conducted by Shiffman (2009), Wolf (2011), and Hopkins (2013), suggest that online adjunct faculty are often highly motivated by the rewards of teaching as well as the flexibility of teaching online. Despite these motivating factors, online adjuncts often encounter challenges that discourage them, such as limited resources and lack of inclusion. These challenges will be explored in more detail in the following section.

Challenges Online Adjunct Faculty Encounter

Adjunct faculty face numerous challenges, some of which stem from being a part-time employee. For example, they do not typically receive health insurance, retirement, sick leave, or paid vacation. Additionally, they are compensated on a term-by-term basis at rates much lower than full-time faculty. They also have fewer chances for salary increases or professional advancement. Though some adjunct faculty teach at the same institution for multiple years, they

are viewed as temporary employees, receiving less support and recognition for their teaching, scholarship, and service than full-time faculty. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they often have a limited voice in the policies and procedures that affect their work due to the faculty governance structure at most institutions (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006; Halcrow & Olson, 2008). Because of these factors, adjunct faculty often feel underappreciated and undervalued (Benton & Li, 2015; Dolan, 2011).

Many adjunct faculty also encounter negative stereotypes about their part-time positions, further contributing to their feelings of underappreciation (Bedford, 2009; Dolan, 2011; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006). They have been called "academic gypsies" because of their term-to-term status and have been accused of degrading the academic quality of the institutions they serve (Dolan, 2011, p. 65). Even though many adjunct faculty have multiple years of teaching experience, their teaching skills are often seen as inferior to faculty who teach full-time. Those who question the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty claim that they are less educated, less dedicated, and less engaged than full-time faculty and, therefore, negatively impact student learning (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Shakeshaft, 2002; Shelton & Saltsman, 2006). Negative statements from senior leadership exacerbate these feelings, such as a provost who compared adjunct faculty to "fine wine at discount prices" that can be "poured down the drain" if there are any issues (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 141). Although these words were spoken over 25 years ago, more recent research suggests that the marginal status of adjunct faculty has not improved (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Rhoades, 2017).

The challenges adjunct faculty face may be intensified in the online environment because of the physical distances that separate them from their institutions, colleagues, and students. Feelings of isolation increase because they have limited interactions with their colleagues and

have limited opportunities to participate in on-campus activities (Mueller et al., 2013; Puzziferro-Schnitzer & Kissinger, 2005). When teaching an online course, faculty are physically separate from their students. Lackey (2011) quoted a faculty member as saying, "One of the problems with online teaching is that you feel kind of isolated. It's just like you and the computer out there" (p. 13). Compared to their full-time peers, online adjunct faculty have fewer interactions with their colleagues, intensifying their feelings of isolation. Moreover, most of the communication between online adjuncts and administrators, other faculty, and students is written and asynchronous, making it difficult to form and nurture meaningful relationships (Dolan, 2011).

Limited opportunities for personal interaction can lead to feelings of isolation, negatively affecting online adjuncts' morale and performance. Physical distance can make it more difficult for online adjuncts to stay informed about policy changes and issues affecting students because they are not physically present at the meetings where these changes and issues are discussed (Benton & Li, 2015; Dolan, 2011; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). Online adjuncts may also lack the opportunities, motivation, and/or incentives to become involved with on-campus activities, such as curriculum development, committee meetings, and professional learning (Barnett, 2018; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006). Although video conferencing technology makes it possible to attend on-campus meetings from a distance, many online adjuncts hold full-time positions elsewhere and cannot participate in meetings held during traditional business hours. Moreover, online adjuncts may live in different time zones than the institutions for which they are teaching, making it even more challenging to interact regularly with full-time faculty (Slade et al., 2017). Even if they could be present, online adjuncts are often not invited to faculty meetings or other meetings that impact their role due to the faculty governance structures described in the previous chapter.

Some still choose to attend faculty meetings to stay informed but have reported feeling like intruders. Others have reported feeling disconnected from their departments and being treated differently from full-time faculty and staff (Rich, 2016).

In addition to feelings of isolation, online adjunct faculty have also expressed being taken for granted. They believe they are not recognized as valuable sources of knowledge, claiming that their talents, skills, and experience are underappreciated (Bedford, 2009; Dolan, 2011; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006). For example, online adjuncts do not typically receive compensation for preparing to teach a course that gets canceled due to low enrollment or that has been reassigned to a full-time faculty member (Levin & Hernandez, 2014). When they design and develop a course, the materials become the institution's intellectual property, allowing the institution to reassign the course to someone else the following term (Mandernach et al., 2015).

Some online adjunct faculty have spoken about being contacted by administrators only when there are issues to address and rarely receiving praise. Others have said that administrators do not take the time to get to know them. Many online adjuncts feel like non-entities within the faculty body, even within their departments. Furthermore, they have reported that few colleagues request their input on matters of academic concern, even though they teach a significant number of students (Dolan, 2011). Additionally, they often do not receive materials necessary to teach, such as access to electronic textbooks or an institution-issued email address (Rich, 2016). Given these challenges, online adjunct faculty need dedicated training, development, and support, as well as frequent communication, to ensure they are well-informed and prepared to teach online.

Best Practices for Supporting Online Adjuncts

Although online adjunct faculty encounter multiple challenges, there are a number of ways to help them overcome these obstacles so they can be successful in their roles. Several

researchers have recommended implementing a comprehensive plan for recruiting, hiring, and developing online adjuncts to support them and ensure quality teaching. These plans can be segmented into smaller steps, such as recruiting, hiring, orienting, mentoring, developing, and evaluating online adjuncts (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003; Sixl-Daniell et al., 2006; Tipple, 2010). Each of these steps provides an opportunity to nurture the relationship between the online adjunct and the institution, helping these instructors overcome some of the challenges previously mentioned (Roueche et al., 1996; Tipple, 2010). When reviewing the literature on ways to support online adjuncts, four best practices were consistently identified: orientation, mentoring, professional development, and evaluation. These best practices will be examined in the following sections, including examples applied in practice.

Orientation

Orienting adjunct faculty to the institution and their role within it has been a recommended practice for more than 25 years (Gappa & Leslie, 1993) and is viewed as an essential step in making adjunct faculty feel welcomed and connected to the organization (Green, 2007; Tipple, 2010). Adjunct faculty teaching in an online environment are vulnerable to feeling disconnected from the institution, especially those who are physically removed from campus. Orientating online adjunct faculty is essential in preparing them for their role and integrating them into the institution (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003; Tipple, 2010). According to two recent surveys of HE senior leaders, most institutions that employ online adjuncts require that they participate in some type of training before teaching their first course at the institution (Magda, 2019; Magda et al., 2015). This training usually involves an orientation to academic and student policies as well as the institution's support services. In most cases, online adjuncts must complete technology training before the course starts (Magda, 2019; Magda et al., 2015;

Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003; Tipple, 2010). Extant literature contains several examples of institutions that have implemented orientation programs for online adjunct faculty, which will be described in the following paragraphs.

Brannagan and Oriol (2014) developed the online adjunct faculty mentoring model (OAFMM) for orienting and mentoring online adjuncts. The OAFMM orientation is a 3-week, asynchronous course delivered through the institution's learning management system. The course introduces online adjuncts to the university and program mission statements, policies, and procedures. The course also covers best practices for communicating and engaging students in an online environment. Online adjuncts learn about the resources available to faculty and students and the technical elements of teaching online. At the conclusion of the orientation, online adjuncts meet their mentors, who have received extensive training to prepare for their role, thus initiating the formal mentoring process.

An orientation program containing elements similar to the OAFMM was implemented for online adjuncts in the field of nursing (Slade et al., 2017). Nursing education programs often hire individuals with extensive nursing experience but minimal teaching experience, especially in online environments (Blodgett, 2008). These individuals would be labeled as *specialists, experts, and professionals* according to Gappa and Leslie's (1993) categories previously mentioned. To support this population of adjunct faculty, Slade et al. (2017) developed a course site that provided ongoing orientation and encouraged informal mentoring relationships using the institution's learning management system. Participants who completed the course were surveyed ($n = 7$), and the results revealed that 88% of the participants felt better prepared in their role and thought the course improved departmental communication.

Additional examples of online adjunct faculty orientation programs mentioned in extant literature include those at Florida Community College Jacksonville (FCCJ), Belmont Technical College, and Golden Gate University. FCCJ and Belmont Technical College require newly hired online adjuncts to complete an online orientation course. At FCCJ, the orientation course includes several modules that provide information regarding administrative tasks and other technical functions for which adjunct faculty are responsible. A mentor, who is also a full-time faculty member at FCCJ, leads the course (C. Hill, 2009; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). Similarly, the orientation course at Belmont Technical College helps online adjuncts become familiar with the learning management system and introduces them to a virtual faculty lounge that contains training, resources, and information related to online teaching and learning (C. Hill, 2009; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005).

Golden Gate University also created a self-paced online orientation for online adjunct faculty that included videos and other information; however, instructors were not required to complete the course, and few ended up participating. As a result, the course was revised from a self-paced video course to a synchronous webinar offered every trimester. New adjunct faculty were encouraged to attend, and more than 90% participated in the webinar the first few terms. Student course evaluation data and anecdotal comments indicated that the course resulted in positive outcomes, such as increased comfort with technology and the ability to engage online students more effectively (Gomez, 2015).

Lewis and Wang's (2015) research serves as the final example of an orientation course for online adjunct faculty that resulted in positive outcomes. Similar to the orientations implemented at FCCJ and Belmont Technical College, the orientation in the study addressed institutional policies, how to use the learning management system, and best practices for facilitating an online

course. The need for the orientation arose from issues related to hiring adjunct faculty with varying teaching experiences as well as student complaints about current adjunct faculty. The goal of the orientation was to prepare adjunct faculty to teach online, thereby helping improve student retention. The study evaluated the effectiveness of the design of the orientation course. The adjunct faculty were most engaged in the online discussion forums and reported that they were surprised by the level of instructor-to-student and student-to-student interactions that can take place online. Overall, participants felt the experience was valuable and requested ongoing professional development. The study highlights the benefits of developing an orientation for online adjuncts and the importance of evaluating the orientation's effectiveness to make improvements.

Mentorship

In addition to orientation, mentorship programs are a recommended best practice for supporting online adjunct faculty because they can help online adjuncts feel better prepared to function in their role (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). The traditional notion of mentorship involves a relationship between two faculty members that forms organically through professional conversations, activities, and other interactions. This type of relationship occurs when there is a good rapport between the faculty member who wants mentoring and the faculty member who wants to provide it (Kiel, 2019). Though online adjuncts have described informal mentorships as beneficial, these relationships cannot form unless online adjuncts have opportunities to interact with their colleagues (Higgins & Harreveld, 2013; Slade et al., 2017). Because online adjuncts generally have limited interactions with their colleagues, formal mentorship programs are the preferred strategy for integrating online adjuncts into their respective departments (Tipple, 2010).

Formal mentorship programs for online adjunct faculty often include experienced faculty members who mentor one or more online adjuncts. These mentors communicate regularly with their mentees, providing personalized support and regular feedback (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014; Puzziferro-Schnitzer & Kissinger, 2005; Rogers et al., 2010). A formal mentorship offers the opportunity for frequent interaction between online adjuncts and full-time faculty, helping to form a peer-based relationship that breaks down barriers between these two groups of faculty. These relationships can help online adjuncts feel more connected to the institution's community, thereby increasing collegiality and improving communication channels.

Formal mentorships also engage full-time faculty members by making them more invested in the success of their mentees and online learning as a whole (Lyons, 2007; Puzziferro-Schnitzer & Kissinger, 2005; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). Mentorships can be particularly beneficial to online adjuncts from clinical and corporate settings with little to no teaching experience (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014; Slade et al., 2017). Moreover, mentorships help provide online adjuncts with a deeper understanding of institutional culture and departmental policies and procedures (Lyons, 2007; Tipple, 2010).

An essential component of mentorship is the mentor's commitment and willingness to serve as a mentor. Not all faculty are interested in being mentors, and those interested need to be sufficiently prepared to act in this capacity. For example, in the OAFMM introduced in the previous section of this chapter, potential mentors are assessed for their prior experience and knowledge about mentoring as well as their readiness to take on a mentee. Through an educational session, the mentors learn the qualities of a good mentor, stages of a mentorship, communication strategies, mentoring resources, and institutional expectations (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014).

In addition to a mentor's willingness to serve as a mentor, compatibility between the mentor and mentee is critical to mentorship. In the OAFMM example, mentors and mentees are paired based on their educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and course assignments. Their communication styles and preferences are also assessed and used to form pairs. Pairing mentors and mentees based on these factors ensures they receive personalized collegial support. Once paired, the mentors introduce their mentees to the content and materials of the course they will teach. As the mentee teaches the course, the mentor provides the mentee with feedback on grading and communication techniques. Interactions between the mentor and mentee become less frequent as the adjunct becomes more comfortable with the course content and materials (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014).

A comprehensive formal mentorship program such as the OAFMM prepares online adjunct faculty for their teaching role and provides full-time and part-time faculty with opportunities to engage in collegial relationships. These relationships can enhance both the mentor and mentee's personal and professional growth, thereby benefitting the institution. Formal mentorships also help an institution maintain instructional quality by providing new online adjuncts with guidance and feedback, enabling an institution to scale instruction to support enrollment growth without degrading the student learning experience (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014; Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005).

Professional Development

In addition to orientation and mentorship, providing online adjunct faculty with ongoing professional development can ensure quality teaching while preparing them to adapt to change and meet future organizational needs. Professional development for online adjuncts should focus on general learning theory and the knowledge and skills needed to teach online so they

understand how to design and facilitate engaging online courses. Because online adjuncts are a heterogeneous population with differing professional and academic experiences, schedules, and external obligations, these development opportunities should be structured in ways that meet their individual needs rather than using a one-size-fits-all strategy (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Mandernach et al., 2015). These development opportunities should also be offered in various formats, such as self-paced or facilitator-led courses, synchronous webinars, peer observation, and individual consultation (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Mandernach et al., 2015; Tipple, 2010).

Professional development of contingent faculty, including online adjuncts, indicates their full integration into the campus community (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Kezar, 2013). Several HE institutions have implemented ongoing professional development for online adjuncts. For example, Ashford University provides online adjuncts with ongoing support, including technical and policy assistance and instructional coaching based on observation (Hope, 2014). Other institutions, such as FCCJ and Pima Community College, have implemented online teaching certification programs for online adjuncts (Carter, 2009; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). FCCJ's online certified professor program includes a series of workshops offered onsite and online, as well as a peer-mentoring component. The program provides adjunct faculty with an opportunity to improve their online teaching skills, network with full-time faculty and other adjunct faculty, and earn a certificate and stipend upon completion (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). A stipend is a fixed amount of money paid to an individual who performs tasks for which they would not otherwise receive payment (Glassdoor Team, 2021). Pima Community College's certificate program differs from FCCJ's in that it includes a series of three required online courses plus one elective and does not contain a peer

mentoring aspect (Carter, 2009). These certificate programs illustrate the various ways institutions can provide additional growth opportunities to online adjuncts.

Professional development opportunities for online adjunct faculty should also be tailored to online adjuncts' specific needs, thus treating them as a heterogeneous group (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006; Puzziferro, 2004; Shattuck & Anderson, 2013). In an effort to better understand the unique professional development needs of online adjunct faculty, Dailey-Hebert et al. (2014) surveyed more than 600 online adjuncts about their preferred professional development formats. Their five most preferred professional development formats included: (a) self-paced online modules with threaded discussions; (b) static best practice examples; (c) static multimedia presentations; (d) archived recordings of webinars; and (e) facilitator-led asynchronous online modules with lectures, interactive components, and threaded discussion.

Although the online adjunct faculty surveyed preferred mostly independent, asynchronous opportunities that they could consume based on interest, the majority found it important for faculty development opportunities to involve collaboration and conversations with other faculty. The online adjuncts surveyed were also more likely to engage in faculty development offered through their school's online learning office or academic department than a centralized center for teaching and learning (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014). These findings highlight the need for HE institutions, specifically units or departments that administer online programs, to provide online adjunct faculty with various asynchronous online professional development opportunities. These opportunities should involve meaningful peer-to-peer interactions, enabling online adjuncts to develop connections with their colleagues.

Evaluation

Although professional development can help to improve online adjuncts' teaching effectiveness, online adjunct faculty also need mechanisms for measuring their teaching effectiveness related to student outcomes (Mandernach et al., 2015). Tipple (2010) recommended a holistic evaluation of online adjunct faculty that includes reviewing the instructor's syllabus, teaching pedagogy, clarity of instruction, content value, classroom activity, responsiveness to students, and grading practices. The evaluation should also include constructive developmental feedback, thus treating the evaluation process as a tool to help online adjunct faculty improve their instructional abilities rather than as a means of reprimanding and terminating them.

Though a holistic evaluation of online adjunct faculty is a recommended best practice, more research is needed on this topic. Extant literature contains little information about implementing a holistic evaluation of online adjunct faculty and the effectiveness of such an approach. Unfortunately, the existing research on this topic indicates that most online adjuncts are evaluated exclusively through student course evaluations. The relevant literature also suggests that online adjuncts are more susceptible to losing their jobs due to poor student ratings. On the other hand, full-time faculty are evaluated on a combination of factors, such as their teaching, their institutional and community service, and their research activity (Heller, 2012; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017). Establishing a feedback cycle that includes multiple sources of feedback can help online adjuncts continually improve and incorporate new techniques into the online learning environment (Magda et al., 2015).

Tipple (2010) asserted that effective leadership of online adjunct faculty requires regular evaluation of their teaching as well as developmental feedback for continuous improvement (Tipple, 2010). A recent dissertation study provides evidence that online adjunct instructors view

evaluative processes as valuable and necessary. The results also indicated a strong positive association between online adjuncts' perceptions of the quality of evaluations they receive and their willingness to seek professional development (Heard, 2018). Developing an evaluation process in collaboration with online adjuncts that focuses on their growth and development ensures positive outcomes for them and their students. Moreover, involving online adjunct faculty in decisions that impact their work can help to foster a sense of community and collegiality (Roueche et al., 1996; Tipple, 2010), which will be explored in the next section.

Fostering Community and Collegiality

While orientation, mentoring, professional development, and evaluation are critical aspects of supporting online adjunct faculty, research suggests that online adjuncts desire greater community and collegiality beyond programs focused on improving their instructional and technical skills (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dolan, 2011; LaPointe Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Collegiality is the cooperative relationship of professionals that can lead to genuine collaboration and mutual respect (Delgadillo, 2018). In HE, collegiality is an essential element for effective faculty work, regardless of their full- or part-time status (Gappa & Austin, 2010; Gappa et al., 2007). Aspects of collegiality include trust, shared purpose, and cooperative effort (Alleman & Haviland, 2017). Faculty members benefit from participation in respectful academic communities and are more likely to thrive in a context where they feel cared about and valued for their unique contributions (Gappa & Austin, 2010; Gappa et al., 2007). Similar to collegiality, a sense of community is feeling part of and mattering to a larger, mutually supportive group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). Given the focus of this study, I will provide a brief overview of the sense of community theory in the following section (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Sense of Community Theory

There are two primary uses of the term community: the geographic notion, focusing on locations such as a neighborhood, town, or city, and the relational notion, focusing on the quality of human relationships without reference to location, such as a professional or spiritual group (Gusfield, 1975). Building on initial studies that focused on sense of community, McMillan and Chavis (1986) developed a theoretical framework applicable to both the geographic and relational notions of community. They defined sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs with be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). Their theory of sense of community includes four elements: (a) *membership,* (b) *influence,* (c) *integration and fulfillment of needs,* and (d) *shared emotional connection.*

Membership. Membership is the feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness. McMillan and Chavis (1986) posited that membership has five attributes that work together to contribute to an individual's sense of community: (a) *boundaries,* (b) *emotional safety,* (c) *a sense of belonging and identification,* (d) *personal investment,* and (e) *a common symbol system.* Membership has boundaries, meaning that there are people who belong and people who do not, providing members with a sense of safety, belonging, and identification. Members must feel emotional safety in order to express feelings and develop close bonds. These bonds foster a sense of belonging and identification in which members feel like they fit in with and are part of the group. Members also share a common symbol system, such as rituals, rites of passage, ceremonies, and holidays. Understanding these symbols is a prerequisite for membership. Working for membership provides a feeling that one has earned a place in the

group, and as a result of this personal investment, membership will be more meaningful and valuable.

Influence. Influence is a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group, and of the group mattering to its members. McMillan and Chavis (1986) posited that it is a bidirectional concept. On the one hand, members are attracted to a group in which they feel they have some influence over what the group does. On the other hand, group cohesiveness is contingent on the group's ability to influence its members to conform to group norms. To some, conformity has a negative connotation synonymous with loss of personal choice and identity. McMillan and Chavis explained that studies on consensual validation demonstrate that the force toward uniformity is transactional. The consensual validation construct "assumes that people possess an inherent need to know that the things they see, feel, and understand are experienced in the same way by others" (p. 11). They argued that if people choose freely to conform, their need for consensual validation will strengthen community norms. The more a community provides opportunities to validate its members, the stronger the community norms become.

Integration and Fulfillment of Needs. Integration and fulfillment of needs is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The individual-group association must be rewarding for its members to maintain a positive sense of togetherness. These rewards include the status of membership, the success of the community, and the competence or capabilities of other members. There are many documented and undocumented needs that communities fill. Ultimately, people do what serves their needs based on their individual values. The extent to which individual values are shared among members determines the ability of a community to organize and prioritize its need-

fulfillment activities. Strong communities fulfill individual needs while also meeting the needs of the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Shared Emotional Connection. Shared emotional connection is the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. McMillan and Chavis (1986) posited that not all members need to have participated in the history, but they must identify with it. Two concepts undergird shared emotional connection. The first is the contact hypothesis, which states that the more people interact, the more likely they will become close. The second is the quality of interaction, which is the notion that the more positive the experience, the greater the bond. High-quality interactions include events with successful closure and events with elevated importance. Additionally, honor or humiliation in the presence of the community can impact a member's sense of community.

Dynamics Between Elements. McMillan and Chavis (1986) noted that the elements of membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection work together to create and maintain a sense of community for a community's members. They posited that the sense of community theory applies to all types of communities; however, each element will vary in importance depending on the community and its members.

Links Between Sense of Community, Collegiality, and Faculty Engagement

Using the sense of community theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and Herzberg's dual-factor theory of job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959), Ferencz (2017) investigated the experiences of online adjunct faculty who have a high sense of community at their respective institutions. One of the study's key findings suggests that online adjuncts view leaders, particularly administrators of online programs, as responsible for initiating connections among online faculty. Similarly, LaPointe Terosky and Heasley (2015) examined the experiences of

full- and part-time online faculty around online course development and teaching using the sense of community theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and the concept of collegiality (Gappa et al., 2007) to guide their inquiry. The participants in their study reported that their sense of community and collegiality around online course development and teaching was lacking, especially for the part-time instructors, and that they desired greater community and collegiality.

Gappa and Austin (2010) claimed that a sense of community and collegiality among faculty can be cultivated in "simple and modest ways," such as regular communication that expresses appreciation or recognition of faculty members' contributions (p. 18). Special events and professional development activities that bring faculty together and physical spaces that encourage faculty interaction can foster a sense of community and collegiality. Gappa and Austin posited that institutional leaders have an essential responsibility in establishing opportunities for faculty to interact and create a respectful environment in which all faculty and administrators are valued.

Extant literature supports Gappa and Austin's (2010) claims that those in leadership positions are responsible for providing opportunities for faculty to connect and build community in an online environment (Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017). Although a plethora of research exists on ways instructors can foster a sense of community among online students, less is known about how educational leaders can intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. When reviewing extant literature, the concept of adjunct faculty engagement appears to be closely tied to the notion of fostering a sense of community among them. Two existing models for engaging adjunct faculty will be described and compared in the following sections: the orientation and engagement program (Ridge & Ritt, 2017) and the part-time faculty integration model (Roueche et al., 1996).

Orientation and Engagement Program. In an effort to address the dearth of literature related to online adjunct engagement, Ridge and Ritt (2017) shared the orientation and engagement program (OEP) for online adjunct faculty that was developed and implemented at a mid-sized, faith-based HE institution. The main goal of the OEP was to embrace adjunct faculty as key stakeholders in distance education by including them in the decision-making process. As shown in Figure 1, the OEP consists of four strategies for engaging online adjunct faculty: (a) establishing teaching and disciplinary competence, (b) promoting and modeling effective communication, (c) creating opportunities for intentional collaboration, and (d) fostering sustainable collegiality.

Figure 1

Orientation and Engagement Program (OEP)
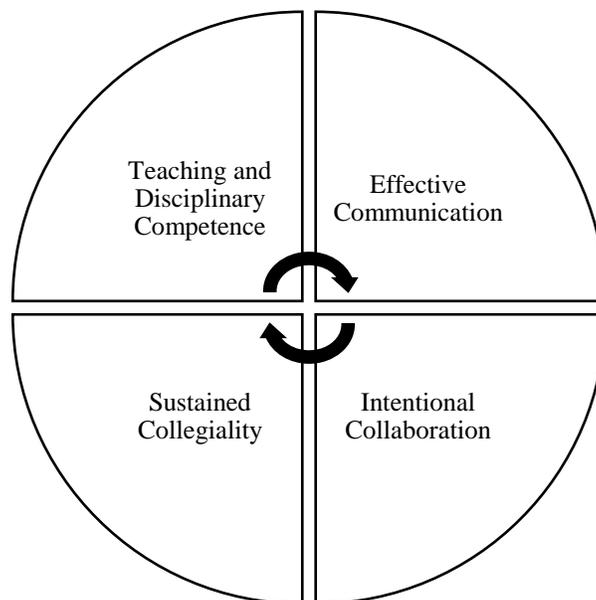
Note. From "Adjunct Faculty as Stakeholders in Distance Education," by A. Ridge and E. Ritt, 2017, *The Journal of Faculty Development*, *31*(2), p. 58 (https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/magna/jfd/2017/00000031/00000002/art00007). Copyright 2017 by the New Forums Press.

The lower half of the OEP contains strategies closely tied to the focus of this dissertation study (see Figure 1). For example, in the OEP, online adjunct faculty engage as key stakeholders in decisions regarding the online program for which they teach through an intentional, collaborative process. Online adjuncts are expected to participate in a minimum of two of the six online program meetings held throughout the year. The meetings provide online adjuncts with an opportunity to give feedback, engage in decisions, make recommendations for improvement, and collaborate with other faculty. As a result of these meetings, the online adjunct faculty consistently express a sense of belonging and enthusiasm about participating. Online adjunct faculty are also invited to participate in workshops, program planning, and curriculum meetings, fostering sustained collegiality (Ridge & Ritt, 2017).

The OEP has helped form a cohesive faculty committed to the success of their students and programs. An increased number of online adjunct faculty engage in activities beyond their teaching assignments, and the online program has experienced less than 5% faculty turnover (Ridge & Ritt, 2017). Although Ridge and Ritt (2017) did not provide comparative data, 31% of the institutions surveyed by Magda et al. (2015) reported online adjunct faculty turnover rates of more than 10%. For these institutions, implementing a model resembling the OEP could increase online adjunct faculty retention. Likewise, Ridge and Ritt urged leaders to consider engaging online adjunct faculty as key stakeholders and decision-makers by utilizing or adapting the OEP, noting that doing so has the potential to improve outcomes for both faculty and students.

Part-Time Faculty Integration Model. Roughly two decades before the creation of the OEP, a similar model for engaging adjunct faculty was developed using a combination of organizational identification research and broader research on part-time employment and job satisfaction. Known as the part-time faculty integration model (PFIM), the goal of the model is

to improve part-time faculty organizational integration through organizational identification, which is viewed as both a process and product. The process of organizational identification occurs during various interactions between an individual and an organization, such as socialization, communication, and decision-making. The resulting product is organizational identification, or an individual's attachment and attitudinal commitment to an organization (Roueche et al., 1996).

As shown in Figure 2, the PFIM moves from left to right, taking into account the process and product aspects of organizational identification. The part-time faculty member brings a unique history, personal expectations, and motivations for pursuing an adjunct position at the institution. These individual characteristics act and are acted upon by the organization's use or lack of concertive strategies. Organizations that involve their employees in the planning and decision-making process are thought to be concertive. In the PFIM, concertive strategies include socialization, communication, and participation. Depending on organizational culture and dynamics, the interplay of these strategies either reinforces or hinders integration. The resulting identification with the organization can be observed through personal outcomes, such as feelings of loyalty and belongingness, as well as organizational outcomes, such as organizationally oriented decision making (Roueche et al., 1996).

Figure 2

Part-Time Faculty Integration Model (PFIM)

Note. From "Identifying the Strangers: Exploring Part-Time Faculty Integration in American Community Colleges," by J. E. Roueche, S. G. Roueche, & M. D. Milliron, 1996, *Community College Review*, *23*(4), p. 37 (https://doi.org/10.1177/009155219602300404). Copyright 1996 by the SAGE Journals.

The PFIM guided a two-stage quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis conducted by Roueche et al. (1996), which explored the strategies administrators used to integrate adjunct faculty into community college organizational cultures. The first stage involved a survey that was administered to a broad-based stratified random sample of colleges and districts in the American Association of Community Colleges. The survey generated a purposive sample of colleges with strong programs and policies for using and integrating part-time faculty. Next, various administrators at these colleges were interviewed about their processes for recruiting, selecting, orienting, developing, evaluating, and integrating part-time faculty. Roueche et al. (1996) created clustered tables that summarized integration strategies for each process. They also

described how the various integration strategies align with the concertive socialization, communication, and participation strategies.

The results indicated that although part-time faculty were not being integrated on a grand scale, some community colleges were implementing strategies to integrate part-time faculty into the institution. The community colleges profiled in the study demonstrated that part-time faculty integration could be woven into the various processes that already connect part-time faculty to the institution, such as during hiring and onboarding (Roueche et al., 1996). Roueche et al. (1996) recommended that administrators make a concerted, institution-wide effort to improve part-time faculty integration, noting that senior leadership must support these efforts at the highest levels.

Though their study was conducted before the rapid growth of online learning, many strategies described by Roueche et al. (1996) are still relevant today and could be applied to the online environment. For example, "involve part-time faculty in planning and delivering orientation" and "move beyond one-shot workshops to ongoing staff development programs to build part-time faculty relationships" could be used as strategies for integrating online adjunct faculty (p. 41). Despite the applicability of the PFIM to the online environment, the work of Roueche et al. (1996) is not heavily cited in extant literature related to supporting and engaging online adjunct faculty. This observation could suggest general unawareness of the PFIM in the online education field as well as a potential area for future research.

Commonalities Between the OEP and PFIM. While the OEP (Ridge & Ritt, 2017) and PFIM (Roueche et al., 1996) emerged from two different contexts, they share commonalities that provide HE administrators with strategies for intentionally engaging and integrating adjunct faculty. The concertive strategies of socialization, communication, and participation in the PFIM

can be found in the OEP. For example, communication is a vital component of the OEP, as is the idea of allowing online adjunct faculty to participate in decision-making. Additionally, the OEP includes orientation and mentorship, socializing online adjunct faculty to the institution and their role. The OEP also provides online adjunct faculty with various opportunities to collaborate with other faculty, fostering a sense of belonging and intentionally integrating them into the organization.

Though neither model explicitly states the leader's role in the process, Ridge and Ritt (2017) and Roueche et al. (1996) urged leaders to consider enacting strategies that integrate and engage adjunct faculty. Ridge and Ritt (2017) asserted: "An institution that embraces the engagement of adjunct faculty as key stakeholders and decision-makers has the potential to increase adjunct faculty retention, expand academic capacity, and thereby address the needs of future students, employers, and the broader community" (p. 62). The roles of leaders in supporting online adjuncts will be examined in the following section, starting with an overview of leadership in distance education, then presenting a discussion of the most effective leadership styles for leading online adjuncts.

Leadership for Supporting Online Adjunct Faculty

During the 1990s and early 2000s, researchers began examining leadership in the field of distance education, a term that encompasses online education. Pahal (1999) argued that the changing nature of the workforce requires a new type of leader: one who is mindful of the affordances and constraints of working in a more diverse, rapidly evolving, and increasingly borderless environment brought about by advances in technology. Beaudoin (2002, 2003) asserted that distance education leaders need to create conditions for innovative change, enable stakeholders to move toward a shared vision, and contribute to the management and

operationalization of ideas. At the same time, they need to determine stakeholders' readiness for moving in a new direction given the organization's current state. Thus, Beaudoin contended that transformational leadership fused with situational leadership is the most suitable style for distance education leaders.

Transformational leadership is the process in which a leader engages and creates connections with followers in ways that raise their levels of motivation and morality. This type of leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing them to their fullest potential. Situational leadership is based on the premise that different situations demand different kinds of leadership, and being an effective leader requires adapting to the demands of different situations (Northouse, 2016). Merging these two approaches enables a leader to diagnose each situation's unique challenges and opportunities and implement change through collaboration as necessary, helping to foster a climate more receptive toward the change (Beaudoin, 2002, 2003).

As our understanding of distance education leadership evolves, research specific to leading online adjunct faculty is beginning to emerge. This research suggests that online adjuncts have a strong preference for transformational leaders. For example, Barnett (2018) examined leadership styles and the overall job satisfaction of online adjuncts, concluding that online adjuncts benefit from transformational leadership, as it was a significant predictor of overall job satisfaction. Similar to Barnett (2018), Krintzline (2016) examined the relationships between leadership styles and online adjuncts' sense of belonging, performance, involvement, and overall satisfaction. The findings showed that transformational leadership was a significant positive predictor of sense of belonging compared to other leadership styles. Krintzline asserted that

administrators who implement transformational leadership with their online adjunct faculty would see a greater sense of belonging than when implementing other leadership styles.

Additional research specific to leading online adjunct faculty indicates that the most effective way to leverage their skills, expertise, and motivation is through a combination of transformational and situational leadership (Harrison, 2011), reinforcing Beaudoin's (2002, 2003) earlier claims. These findings also support the theoretical underpinnings of Tipple's (2010) leadership framework of online adjunct faculty, which suggests that transformational and situational leadership are the most effective styles for leading online adjuncts. Developed from a review of distance education literature, Tipple's (2010) framework includes specific guidance for hiring, training, and retaining high-quality online adjunct faculty and managing the organizational systems that support them and their students. As shown in Figure 3, transformational leadership is used to lead online adjunct faculty, and situational leadership is used when managing the organizational systems that support their roles.

Figure 3

Leadership Framework of Online Adjunct Faculty
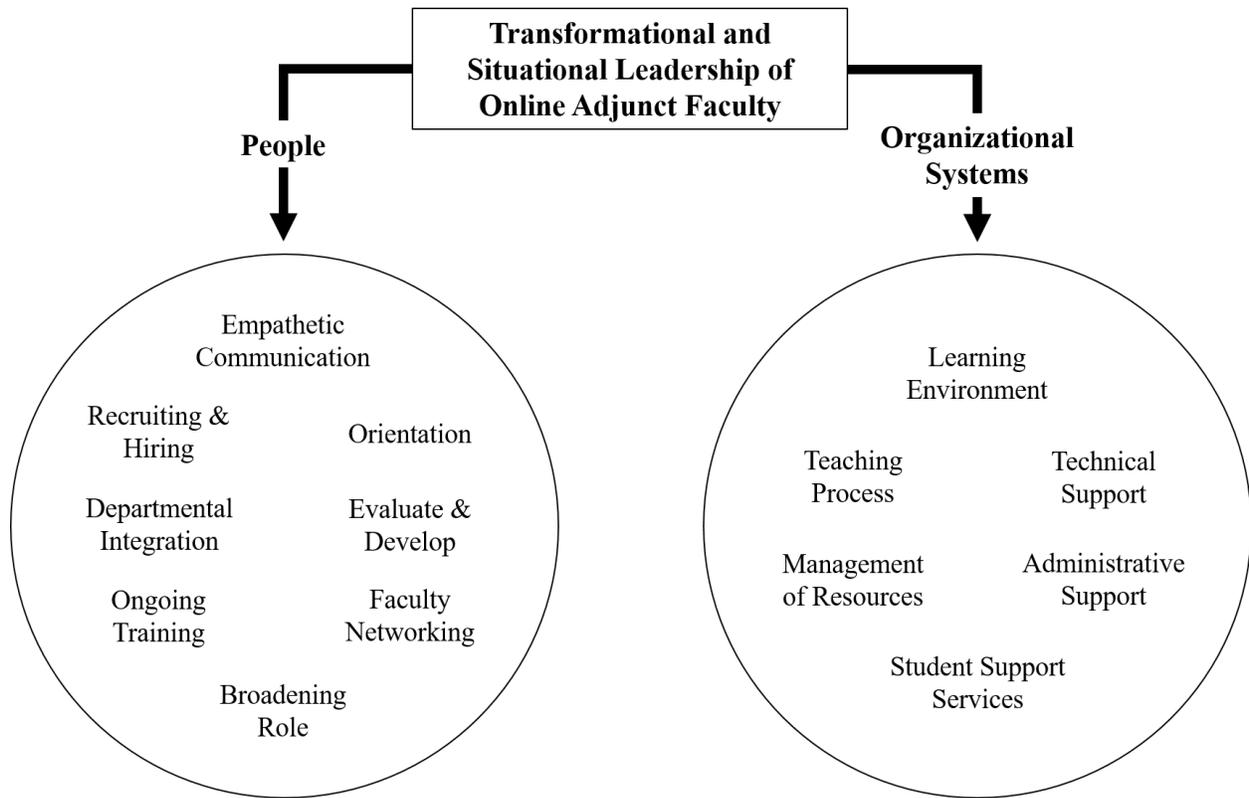
Note. From "Effective Leadership of Online Adjunct Faculty," by R. Tipple, 2010, *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, *13*(1), (https://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring131/tipple131.html). Copyright 2010 by the University of West Georgia.

Following the principles of transformational leadership, educational leaders can create environments in which online adjunct faculty feel motivated and inspired. They can achieve this using an empathetic communication approach throughout the online adjunct's academic career, such as recruiting and hiring, orientation, departmental integration, ongoing training, evaluation and development, faculty networking, and broadening their role. Educational leaders can also use situational leadership to manage the systems online adjuncts need to teach, such as the online

learning environment, teaching process, management of resources, and technical, administrative, and student support services (Tipple, 2010).

As Tipple (2010) stated, the leader's ability to integrate online adjuncts into the institution is vital to their success:

> The successful implementation of the institutional vision is dependent on educational leaders creating an environment in which adjunct faculty members feel inspired to achieve the prescribed goals and objectives, and have the skills and support systems in place to meet students' needs. Thus the ability of educational leadership to fully integrate adjunct faculty into the institution's community, and to train them to be highly effective online instructors is critical to the success of the institution's mission. (p. 3)

The leadership framework of online adjunct faculty has the potential to improve the teaching performance of online adjuncts and foster their sense of community, placing the responsibility of community building on the leader (Tipple, 2010). Therefore, the leader's role in fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty should not be underestimated.

In HE, two tiers of leaders have been identified: senior and mid-level leaders. Senior leaders are typically those who occupy positions within the presidential cabinet. They are the strategic decision-makers who work collectively to achieve the institution's goals. Mid-level leaders hold administrative positions outside the senior leadership team, such as deans, associate/assistant deans, department chairs, division heads, and directors (Amey & Eddy, 2018). Extant literature suggests that administrators serving in mid-level leadership positions are often responsible for leading online adjunct faculty (Benton & Li, 2015; Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017). However, their approaches to cultivating community among online adjunct faculty need investigation, supporting the focus of this study.

Summary of Literature Review

Online adjunct faculty face many challenges inherent in the nature of their work, such as feelings of isolation, negative stereotypes, and lack of training and development opportunities. To help online adjuncts overcome these challenges, researchers recommend implementing programs aimed at supporting online adjuncts, such as orientation, professional development, mentorship, and evaluation, as well as leaders responsible for managing these programs (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006; Mandernach et al., 2015; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003; Tipple, 2010). Though these programs typically provide online adjuncts with a deeper understanding of their institutions and help to improve their teaching performance, extant literature suggests that online adjuncts also desire a greater sense of community and collegiality (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dolan, 2011; LaPointe Terosky & Heasley, 2015).

As discussed in this chapter, the leader's role is vitally important to engaging and supporting online adjunct faculty (Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017; Gappa & Austin, 2010; Tipple, 2010). However, the majority of existing research focuses on the experiences and perspectives of online adjunct faculty and not on those of the people who lead them: HE administrators. The relevant literature also suggests HE administrators are responsible for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty (Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017), yet their approaches to fulfilling this responsibility remain largely unknown. More research is needed on the specific strategies HE administrators use to cultivate a sense of community among the online adjunct faculty at their institutions and their challenges when trying to implement these strategies. Fully integrating online adjunct faculty into an institution's community is essential to ensuring instructional quality and student engagement (Tipple, 2010). Exploring the strategies to achieve

this could provide HE administrators with a better understanding of ways to support and engage online adjunct faculty, contributing to the success of an institution's online programs.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

As illustrated in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, most online adjunct faculty desire a greater sense of community with the higher education (HE) institutions they serve (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dolan, 2011; LaPointe Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Online adjunct faculty who experience a sense of community with their respective institutions feel safe and supported by the administration. These experiences often result in positive outcomes, such as increasing online adjuncts' motivation, loyalty, and desire to engage with the institution. They feel empowered to engage in dialogue with their peers, helping to improve their job performance, ultimately benefitting the students they teach (Dolan, 2011; Ferencz, 2017).

Additionally, many online adjunct faculty believe that HE administrators can cultivate a sense of community through intentional leadership (Ferencz, 2017). However, the majority of extant literature about online adjunct faculty focuses on their perceptions and experiences. More research is needed to address the HE administrators who are directly responsible for engaging and integrating online adjunct faculty into their institutions' communities of faculty, staff, and students. This study aimed to address this need.

Research Focus

The following questions guided this study's focus: What strategies are used by selected HE administrators who purport to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions? What are the various factors that influence their decisions and actions regarding using these strategies? What challenges do they face, if any, as

they implement these strategies? In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will describe the approach I used to address these research questions.

Research Approach

To seek answers to the research questions, I used a constructivist approach to grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2014). Rather than testing established theories, grounded theory aims to develop a substantive theory from generated, analyzed data. A "theory" in this sense "states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 228). Unlike formal theories, which apply to a broader range of social concerns and problems, substantive theories are specific to a group or place. Grounded theory enables researchers to examine topics and related behaviors from many different angles. It can be used to uncover the beliefs and meanings that underlie action and examine how logic and emotion influence how people respond to events or handle problems (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

An essential aspect of my research focus is intentionality, meaning deliberately or on purpose (Oxford, n.d.-a). I wanted to understand the strategies that selected HE administrators use to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty and the various factors that influence their decisions as they implement these strategies. Therefore, I believe grounded theory was an appropriate fit for this study as I aimed to uncover the HE administrators' beliefs and meanings that underlie their actions. In the following two sections, I will provide a brief overview of the origin and evolution of grounded theory. Then, I will describe constructivist grounded theory in more detail, explaining my justification for using a constructivist ontology and epistemology with this particular research approach.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) were the first to define grounded theory in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* now considered a seminal text. During a period in which positivistic research was the expected norm, Glaser and Strauss emphasized the need for a more systematic and thorough way to generate theory in social science research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Positivistic research operates from the assumption that physical and social reality is independent of those who observe it and that observations of this reality, if unbiased, constitute scientific knowledge (Gall et al., 2007). Positivistic researchers believe that reality can and should be studied empirically and scientifically (DeCarlo, 2018). Glaser and Strauss (1967) aimed to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theory (Charmaz, 2014). They believed that theory should be "grounded" in generated data, meaning that theory should emerge from concepts derived, developed, and integrated based on actual data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 6). They did not write about grounded theory as a methodology, but rather as the "beginning venture in the development of improved methods for discovering grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). A methodology is a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena, whereas methods are techniques and procedures for gathering and analyzing data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Glaser and Strauss elaborated on their ideas in the decades that followed the publication of their first book, eventually disagreeing about the meaning and procedures of grounded theory. Strauss (1987), separately, and together with co-author Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) developed grounded theory into a methodology, which Glaser (1992) criticized as too prescribed and structured (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2018). At about the same

time in the 1990s, grounded theory evolved in other ways, most notably with the development of constructivist grounded theory (Bryant, 2017; Charmaz, 2014).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

First introduced and articulated by Charmaz (2000), constructivist grounded theory adopts a constructivist paradigm (Bryant, 2017). A paradigm is a basic set of beliefs a researcher has about the world and how it should be studied and understood. These beliefs are based on ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions. The constructivist paradigm assumes that individuals seek to understand the worlds they live in; therefore, they develop complex, subjective meanings for their experiences. Multiple realities exist, individually and socially constructed through experiences and interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms (Creswell, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Constructivist research aims to interpret the meanings of experiences, situations, and/or processes concerning a specific research focus within participants' historical and cultural settings, developing a substantive theory or patterns of meanings from these interpretations. Researchers with a constructivist worldview recognize the need to acknowledge how their values shape their interpretations of their findings (Creswell, 2018). Similarly, the constructivist approach sheds the notion that researchers are neutral observers or value-free experts. Instead, they must examine how their previous experiences shape their analyses (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) chose the term "constructivist" for her form of grounded theory to acknowledge subjectivity and the researcher's role in the construction and interpretation of data (p. 14). Constructivist grounded theory assumes that "any theoretical rending offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17).

Using a constructivist grounded theory approach to examine my research focus was

appropriate for two reasons. I believe that having and fostering a sense of community is an

individually and socially constructed concept based on our experiences with others. Therefore, I

believe that my participants' knowledge around my research focus is individually and socially

constructed. I worked with my participants to co-construct an understanding of what it means to

them to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty, nested within

their institutions' contexts and their prior experiences. Because my professional experience

directly relates to my research topic, I needed to position myself within the research, regularly

examining how my experiences shaped my construction and interpretation of the data.

Considering participants' specific contexts and a concern for the researcher's role in interpreting

those experiences and contexts are well aligned with the characteristics of constructivist

research.

Charmaz's (2014) approach to grounded theory emphasizes flexible guidelines, treating

grounded theory methods as aspects of a craft that researchers practice. She views the primary

versions of grounded theory as a "constellation of methods," noting that all variants offer helpful

strategies for generating, managing, and analyzing qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14). I

used grounded theory methods as articulated by Charmaz, which I will delineate in this chapter.

Before doing so, I will describe the role of a theoretical framework in this study.

Theoretical Frameworks in Grounded Theory

In a research study, a theoretical framework usually provides structure and support for

how a researcher thinks about and approaches the research problem, informing the design and

doing of the study. Some argue that the theoretical framework is one of the most critical aspects

of the research process because it is meant to structure all aspects of the study (Grant & Osanloo,

2014). However, traditional grounded theorists discourage the use of theoretical frameworks in grounded theory studies. They argue that the purpose of grounded theory is to develop a substantive theory grounded purely in the analysis of generated data. Because grounded theory emphasizes theory construction, they say that applying existing theories is contradictory to this research approach. Furthermore, they advocate delaying the literature review until the end of data analysis to avoid forcing data into pre-existing theoretical concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Thornberg, 2012).

On the other hand, contemporary grounded theorists recognize the need to engage with extant literature to identify a research focus, which may also result in a theoretical orientation obtained from reading literature relevant to a particular research focus. They argue that familiarity with prior empirical scholarship and existing theories can be useful when conducting grounded theory research, provided the researcher remains open to the data:

> The key premise of grounded theory is remaining open to the portrayals of the world as encountered and not forcing data into theoretical accounts. This can be done with awareness to existing theories. Indeed, we argue that this can be done more productively with such awareness. (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 4)

They contend that with this awareness, grounded theory can be used to deepen and/or broaden existing theoretical insights (Timonen et al., 2018).

Charmaz (2014) supports the notion that grounded theory can be used to refine, extend, challenge, or supersede extant concepts, but advises against using a theoretical framework to inform an entire research project. She recommends returning to relevant literature during data analysis to compare emerging codes and concepts to existing theories. Through this process, researchers can use existing theories to develop conceptual logic, explain the significance of

original concepts, and position the new grounded theory in relation to existing theories. Similarly, Thornberg (2012) advocates for an ongoing literature review because it can help the researcher be more sensitive to data, elaborate on constructed themes, concepts, and ideas, and offer new insights into questions and issues.

Charmaz (2014) then recommends revising the literature review and writing the theoretical framework in relation to the grounded theory constructed by the researcher after data analysis is complete. She argues that the constant comparative method in grounded theory does not end with data analysis:

> The literature review and theoretical framework can serve as valuable sources of comparison and analysis. Through comparing others' evidence and ideas with your grounded theory, you may show where and how their ideas illuminate your theoretical categories and how your theory extends, transcends, or challenges dominant ideas in your field. (p. 305)

Following Charmaz's (2014) recommendations, I did not use a theoretical framework to guide the initial stages of this dissertation study. Instead, I returned to relevant literature during data analysis, comparing my codes, categories, and core concept to existing theories. I also continued to search for and review literature related to the emerging core concept. I will locate my grounded theory within extant literature in Chapters 5 and 6, explaining how it "refines, extends, challenges, or supersedes" existing concepts (Charmaz, 2014, p. 310).

Participants

The participants in this study were 17 HE administrators who reported using strategies to intentionally foster a sense of community among the online adjunct faculty at their institutions. I selected HE administrators responsible for supervising, supporting, developing, and/or engaging

online adjunct faculty at public, private not-for-profit, or private for-profit HE institutions in the U.S. In the following sections, I will describe my sample size and method for recruiting and selecting participants.

Sample Size

Local theory construction is the primary goal of grounded theory research. As such, it is important to gather enough information to fully develop the theory. Creswell (2018) says this process could involve up to 60 interviews with individuals, but more often, it involves 20 to 30 interviews. Charmaz (2014) argues that researchers should keep sampling until their theoretical categories are saturated; that is, the time when gathering more data about a category reveals no new properties or theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory. Thus, there is no predetermined minimum or maximum number of participants in grounded theory research. However, identifying an anticipated number of participants before the inquiry process was necessary to get this study approved according to Federal guidelines for research involving humans (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Given this, I planned to recruit 10 to 30 participants for this study and ended up with 17 participants. As discussed later in this chapter, I interviewed eight of these participants once and nine of them twice, yielding 26 interviews. This total falls within the common range of 20 to 30 interviews for grounded theory research identified by Creswell (2018).

Recruiting Participants

I recruited participants from several online learning professional communities who met the criteria using purposeful sampling followed by snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling involves intentionally selecting individuals and sites to research based on characteristics central to the study's objectives. The snowball sampling technique helps identify additional research

participants by asking current participants to recommend their acquaintances for participation (Creswell, 2018).

I used purposeful sampling by sharing an invitation to participate in my study (see Appendix A) with the following online learning professional communities for HE administrators of which I am a member:

- **Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) – Online Learning Affinity Group:** The Online Learning Affinity comprises faculty, administrators, learning designers, and educational technologist from AACSB member schools. The group was created as a way for members to share best practices, challenges, and innovation related to online and blended business education. The group also conducts webinars and other events for interested members.

- **EDUCAUSE – Blended and Online Learning Community Group:** EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association and community of technology, academic, industry, and campus leaders advancing HE through the use of information technology. The Blended and Online Learning Community Group is geared towards HE administrators of online and blended learning programs, providing a space for the exchange of ideas related to programs, practices, and policies.

- **Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education – Open Discussion Google Group:** The POD Network is devoted to improving teaching and learning in HE. The network has a Google Group open to the public in which members and non-members can exchange information and ideas.

- **University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) –**

  Collaborative Online Relationships (CORe): UPCEA is an association for

  professional, continuing, and online education at HE institutions in North America.

  CORe is UPCEA's online community space where members can ask questions and

  share ideas.

These organizations have discussion forums members can use to ask questions, share

information, and exchange resources. I posted my invitation to each forum twice. My first post

served as the original invitation (see Appendix A), followed by a reminder post two weeks later.

Before posting my invitation to the AACSB Online Learning Affinity Group and UPCEA CORe

membership discussion forums, I had to request permission. However, I did not need to request

permission to post my invitation to the EDUCAUSE Blended and Online Learning Community

Group or the POD Network.

Within the invitation (see Appendix A), I asked candidates to indicate their interest in

study participation by completing a short recruitment survey (see Appendix B). I provided the

link to the survey with the invitation. The survey asked candidates to provide their contact

information, a summary of their educational and professional experience, and general

information about their role, the institution they work for, and the institution's online programs

and associated faculty. I received several survey responses each time I sent the invitation.

I posted the same invitation (see Appendix A) to my LinkedIn

(https://www.linkedin.com/) profile. LinkedIn is a social media site that focuses on professional

networking and career development. The post stated:

Seeking higher education administrators who use strategies to intentionally foster a sense

of community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions to participate

in my dissertation study. Interested? Read the attached file for participation details.

I attached a downloadable file of the invitation to the post. I set the viewing permissions so that

anyone on or off LinkedIn could see the post and share it with others outside of my professional

network. I do not believe my LinkedIn post generated many survey responses compared to

posting invitations to online learning professional communities. If I were to use this sampling

strategy in the future, I would post a visually appealing graphic with a link to the invitation to

catch more people's attention rather than posting a text-heavy downloadable file.

In addition to sharing the invitation with members of various professional organizations, I

used purposeful sampling by contacting HE administrators who have given Online Learning

Consortium conference presentations on how they support and engage online adjuncts at their

respective institutions. The Online Learning Consortium is a professional organization for HE

administrators, faculty, and staff in online education. The Online Learning Consortium hosts

annual conferences in which members and non-members are invited to present. I reviewed the

Online Learning Consortium's conference archives dating as far back as 2016, noting

presentation titles and descriptions related to my research focus. I searched for each presenter on

their institution's website to ensure their current job title and responsibilities aligned with my

participant qualifications. Based on this review, I sent five individuals an email message using

the email address available on their institution's website. In my message, I stated that they might

be a good fit for my study (see Appendix C). I invited them to complete the recruitment survey

(see Appendix B) if they felt they met the criteria and were willing to participate. Three of the

individuals completed the recruitment survey based on this recruitment strategy.

I also attempted to use the snowball sampling technique by including an optional question in the recruitment survey (see Appendix B) that asked candidates to recommend and share the contact information of a peer in their professional network whom they felt was an ideal participant for my study. Only one of the survey respondents recommended a peer. I sent a message to the peer (see Appendix C), inviting them to fill out the recruitment survey (see Appendix B) if they felt they met the criteria and were willing to participate. They responded that they were interested but did not complete the survey. Thus, I was not able to successfully recruit participants using the snowball sampling technique.

Participant Selection

After I established a pool of at least five participants, I began the participant selection process. Recall that participants needed to be HE administrators who work for a public, private non-profit, or private for-profit HE institution in the U.S.; are responsible for supervising, supporting, developing, and/or engaging online adjunct faculty; and claim to use strategies to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions. A total of 31 individuals submitted the recruitment survey. I reviewed their survey responses before selecting participants to ensure they met the criteria. I also used the survey responses as a mechanism for selecting as heterogeneous a sample as possible. Based on my review of survey responses, 24 individuals appeared to meet the participant criteria.

Originally, I planned to give preference to HE administrators who work for online graduate degree programs in business, education, and health professions. In 2016-17, more than half of the master's degrees conferred were concentrated in business, education, and health professions (NCES, 2020). A plethora of public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit HE institutions offer online graduate degree programs in these three fields of study (U.S. News Staff,

2020). These three fields are also among the top 10 disciplines taught by online adjunct faculty in HE institutions (Magda et al., 2015). More than half of the participants I selected work for online graduate degree programs. However, I did not have enough participants in my recruitment pool to give preference to those who work specifically for business, education, and health professions programs.

I reached out to each qualified and willing participant by email, telling them that they were selected as a participant for my study. I asked them to review and sign the consent form if they were still interested in participating (see Appendix D). I also asked participants whether I needed to secure permission from their institutions for them to participate in my study. Of the 24 individuals I contacted, two said they no longer had the time to participate. One of the 24 said their institution did not permit them to participate, and four of the 24 did not respond to my invitation. The remaining 17 individuals signed and returned their consent forms. None of the participants informed me that I needed to secure permission from their institution for them to participate in my study. I moved forward with data generation as soon as my first participant signed the consent form. I continued gaining permissions from other participants while generating data with those who had already granted permission. My process for generating data is described in the following section.

Data Generation

Strong grounded theories are generated from rich data. Obtaining rich data means seeking detailed, focused, and full descriptions of the "participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" as it relates to the topic being studied (Charmaz, 2014, p. 23). In grounded theory research, intensive interviews serve as the primary form of data generation. Other forms of data generation include, but are not limited to, elicited

documents, extant documents, and/or observations. (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2018). In this study, data were generated from each participant through semi-structured interviews and extant documents. In the next three sections, I will explain how I generated data using these methods.

Initial Interviews

Interviews served as the primary form of data in this study. Each participant was interviewed one to two times through Zoom (https://zoom.us/), a video conferencing platform. The initial interviews were semi-structured, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. In semi-structured interviews, some of the discussion topics are selected in advance, but the order in which topics are presented is not structured (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I prepared and followed an interview guide that outlined the topics I addressed during each initial interview (see Appendix E).

First, I asked participants to briefly summarize their educational and professional backgrounds leading up to their current roles. Next, I asked them to describe their current role and responsibilities. I also asked them several questions about the online programs at their institution, such as full- and part-time faculty roles related to online course development and facilitation. Additionally, I asked them to share details about the online adjunct recruiting and hiring process and their role in that process. Then, I asked them about incentives used to attract and retain online adjunct faculty and why an online adjunct might be motivated to teach at their institution. This portion of the interview took an average of 20 minutes for each participant. I was flexible in skipping questions or asking them differently depending on each participant's response.

During the second portion of the first interview, I asked participants how they define "sense of community" and why it is essential to foster it among online adjunct faculty. Then, I asked participants to describe their strategies for intentionally fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty throughout their employment cycle. I prompted participants as needed, addressing topics such as online adjunct orientation, mentoring, ongoing training and development, evaluation, and contract renewal/termination. I also asked them to describe online adjunct networking opportunities, how online adjuncts can broaden their roles within the organization, and the awards and recognition that online adjuncts can receive.

Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to maintain some consistency in the topics discussed while also asking follow-up questions as participants shared their approaches. Asking follow-up questions helped me obtain detailed responses and better understand my participants' perspectives, meanings, and experiences. Example follow-up questions included:

- Why do you feel this [strategy/program] was/is important?

- Who was/is involved in the development and implementation of this [strategy/program]?

- What challenges did you face, if any, while implementing this [strategy/program]?

- How was/is this [strategy/program] communicated to online adjuncts?

- How have online adjuncts received this [strategy/program]?

I engaged in member checking frequently during each interview by asking questions to check my understanding of what the participants discussed. At the end of each interview, I asked participants to share anything else they felt was relevant to our discussion but had not been addressed. Thus, the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews provided participants with opportunities to address the research focus in the ways that their own experiences and

perceptions dictated (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I used the final few minutes of the interviews to tell participants that I would send them an interview summary for their review and asked them to send me three extant documents, which I will discuss in the next section. I also told them I would contact them if I needed to request a second interview.

The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim using Temi (https://www.temi.com/). Temi is a web-based service for transcribing audio using advanced speech recognition software. The participants' names were not used during their interviews to protect their identities. I reviewed each transcript for accuracy as I listened to the audio recording, making corrections as needed. Following each interview, I performed an additional round of member checking by writing an interview summary and sending it to each participant through email, requesting that they review the summary for accuracy and make corrections or clarify as necessary. Every few weeks, I sent an email reminder to those who did not respond to my initial request. I also tried calling three of these participants, leaving each of them a voicemail message. Eleven of the 17 participants, or 65%, responded after my first or second request to let me know they reviewed the summary. Of these 11, five returned the summary with minimal annotations, and six said no corrections were needed. I made the necessary corrections noted by the participants.

I did not receive a response from six participants, though I interviewed one of them a second time and asked clarifying questions during the second interview. Losing participants to follow-up is a limitation of the member checking method. Ethically, after following up with a participant and receiving no response, researchers must accept that the participant chooses not to be further involved in the study (Birt et al., 2016). Because the interview summaries were based on verbatim transcripts and any corrections I received from participants were very minimal, I

believe the data generated with each participant is an accurate reflection of their thoughts, experiences, and strategies related to my research focus.

Extant Documents

Extant documents are another form of data qualitative researchers can gather to understand their research focus better. Unlike data gathered during interviews, the researcher does not affect their construction. Such items may include but are not limited to emails, newsletters, policies, handbooks, workshop materials, websites, videos, or survey results (Charmaz, 2014). At the end of the initial interview, I asked each participant to send me a minimum of three extant documents, also referred to as artifacts, demonstrating how they purposefully foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. I also asked them to write a summary paragraph about why they believe the artifacts demonstrate how they foster a sense of community and any other relevant information they wanted me to know. Thirteen of the 17 participants sent me three or more extant documents and summary statements for a total of 50 artifacts and 13 summaries. The extant documents participants submitted were as follows:

- Ten digital newsletters intended for adjunct faculty, eight of which were specifically for online adjunct faculty.

- Six formal email messages written by the participants to online adjunct faculty, including two welcome emails.

- Ten documents related to the online instructor onboarding process, such as an orientation course syllabus and faculty handbook.

- Six screenshots of online courses or webpages used to share information and resources with online adjunct faculty.

- Three artifacts related to adjunct faculty learning communities.

- Six materials from professional development offerings for adjunct faculty, such as a slide deck and adjunct faculty conference website.

- Four artifacts related to recurring online program faculty meetings, such as slide decks and meeting notes.

- Five miscellaneous artifacts, including two pictures of online adjunct faculty, a screenshot of a Facebook group for online adjunct faculty, a conference proposal, and a reflection paper from a leadership fellowship program.

I reviewed the artifacts and participants' written summaries as I received them. I asked participants any questions I had about their extant documents during their second interview. If I did not interview a participant a second time, I asked the participant any questions about the artifacts through email.

Second Interviews

I interviewed nine of the 17 participants a second time. The participants I chose for a second interview were those whom I thought might provide additional information about a particular category. I made this determination based on what we discussed during their first interview, the extant documents they provided, and/or their role and responsibilities. For the second round of interviews, I prepared a list of follow-up questions unique to each participant based on the contents of the initial interview and extant documents that they provided. During the second interview, I asked clarifying questions to verify or correct my understanding of what the participants said during the first interview, serving as another instance of member checking.

Each interview lasted between 30–60 minutes, averaging 45 minutes. Like the initial interviews, I recorded the audio and sent it to Temi.com for transcription, reviewing and correcting each transcript for accuracy. After the interview, I conducted additional member

checking by sending participants interview summaries through email for their review and correction. Eight of the nine participants, or 89%, responded after my first or second request to let me know they reviewed the summary. Of these eight, two returned the summary with minimal annotations, and six said no corrections were needed. I made appropriate corrections for the interview summaries returned with annotations. A third round of interviews was not necessary based on data analysis as described in the following section.

Data Analysis

In keeping with Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory approach, I began data analysis as soon as I generated the first piece of data, conducting several phases of coding using the constant comparative method throughout the analytic process. The constant comparative method involves examining and comparing current data against earlier data for similarities and differences. Conceptually similar data are grouped under the same conceptual labels, enabling researchers to reduce and differentiate concepts addressed in the data. The constant comparative method is critical in grounded theory research because it allows researchers to uncover each concept's different dimensions and properties that emerge as analysis continues (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

I also wrote memos and developed diagrams during data analysis. Memo writing is an integral part of grounded theory research, prompting the researcher to record thoughts and ideas about the codes, categories, concepts, and the evolving theory during the analytic process (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2018). Additionally, diagrams are valuable analytic tools for visually depicting relationships among analytic concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I will discuss how I implemented these data analysis methods in the following paragraphs.

In qualitative research, coding is an interpretive process in which the researcher assigns a word or short phrases to individual segments of data. The portions of data that can be coded range in magnitude from a single word to an entire page. Codes function to classify and later reorganize each datum into emergent categories for further analysis (Saldaña, 2011). Coding in grounded theory is "the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). I used initial and focused coding to aid in developing categories, which I will describe in the next two sections (Bryant, 2017; Charmaz, 2014). I used constant comparative methods to examine my codes, looking for similarities and differences and reflecting on each code's meaning. I carried out each phase of coding using Dedoose (https://www.dedoose.com/). Dedoose is a web-based application that can assist with analyzing qualitative research data by organizing data segments according to codes assigned and facilitating the viewing of analyzed data in different configurations.

Initial Coding. Called open coding by Corbin and Strauss (2015), initial coding involves carefully examining words, lines, and segments of data for their analytical import relative to the focus of the study. Charmaz (2014) recommends looking for actions or processes in each line or segment of the data and coding them with gerunds, referred to as process coding by Saldaña (2011). A gerund is formed by adding "-ing" to the base of a verb but functions as a noun (Bryant, 2017). Coding data with gerunds helps the researcher avoid making conceptual leaps before doing the necessary analytic work:

> We gain a strong sense of action and sequence with gerunds. The nouns turn these actions into topics. Staying close to the data and, when possible, starting from words and actions of your respondents, preserves the fluidity of their experience and gives you new ways of

looking at it. These steps encourage you to begin analysis from their perspective.

(Charmaz, 2014, pp. 120–121)

Many grounded theorists begin initial coding by coding each line of the data, called line-by-line coding. Line-by-line coding works well when studying detailed processes (Charmaz, 2014). This research study focused on the strategies selected HE administrators use to intentionally foster community among online adjuncts. Strategies involve plans of action to achieve a goal (Bryson, 2011). Processes are woven into strategies, which made line-by-line coding an appropriate unit of analysis during initial coding.

Originally, I planned to conduct line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts, extant documents, and participant summaries about the extant documents. I also planned to remain flexible, coding smaller or larger segments of data as appropriate. I conducted line-by-line coding for the first two interviews using gerunds but found the process inefficient. Line-by-line coding produced too many codes and prevented me from understanding the full context of each code when reviewing code excerpts. Instead, I found it more effective to code one or more sentences at a time, capturing each action or process described by participants using gerunds. I re-coded the first two interviews using sentences as my unit of analysis. I continued using sentences as my unit of analysis when coding the remaining interview transcripts.

Focused Coding and Categorizing. After initial coding, I engaged in focused coding, the second major phase of coding in constructivist grounded theory. During focused coding, initial codes that appear to have overriding significance, common themes, or patterns are categorized and used to sift, sort, synthesize, and analyze larger amounts of data, thus focusing analysis early in the research process. The researcher determines the most significant codes as codes with the greatest analytic power and conceptual strength (Charmaz, 2014). I used the

reporting tools in Dedoose to help me compare codes and determine which appeared most frequently. I began clustering codes with common themes or patterns, establishing potential theoretical categories and concepts related to my research focus. Engaging in focused coding also revealed gaps in the data, helping me determine whether I needed to continue generating data around a particular category. As such, I chose to interview selected participants a second time whom I thought might provide additional information about a particular category based on what we discussed during their first interview, the extant documents they provided, and/or their role and responsibilities.

Memos and Diagrams

Memos and diagrams are essential aspects of the analytic process, helping researchers develop concepts and identify relationships among concepts as they interact with data. Memos are records of analysis that vary in content, degree of conceptualization, and length depending on the researcher and stage of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). While no rules govern the writing of memos, Corbin and Strauss (2015) recommend writing memos after the first analytic session and continuing throughout the inquiry process.

Similar to memo writing, researchers create diagrams to facilitate the analytic process. Diagrams are conceptual visualizations of analyzed data that depict relationships among concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As I coded the data, I wrote memos and developed diagrams to capture my thoughts about the concepts derived from the data and their inter-relationships. I wrote and saved my memos directly in Dedoose. Initially, I used a pen and paper to draw my diagrams. As I got further along in the analysis process, I used a whiteboard and dry erase marker to fine-tune my diagrams. Once I was satisfied with a diagram's general form, I re-created it in Microsoft PowerPoint using a template, continuously refining the diagram until I

completed my analysis. I refined the diagram several times as I wrote Chapters 5 and 6, ensuring the diagram depicted the substantive theory that emerged from my data analysis.

Constructing a Substantive Theory

The ultimate goal of the analytic process described in the preceding paragraphs is to construct a substantive theory to explain the data (Charmaz, 2014). Through coding, memoing, and diagraming, I developed theoretical categories. I used theoretical sampling until my theoretical categories were saturated. Theoretical sampling is a data generation method specific to grounded theory involving the purposeful sampling of people, events, and information to maximize opportunities to develop categories and identify relationships among theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014).

For example, several theoretical categories began to emerge after interviewing about half of my participants and analyzing the data. I observed differences in the strategies participants used to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty based on their role and organizational unit. During the remaining initial interviews, I spent more time on specific topics to clarify relationships among emerging categories. I purposefully requested a second interview with participants who spoke directly about topics related to the theoretical categories in question to discuss those topics in more depth. I refined my theoretical categories during the second round of interviews. As such, the number of interviews I conducted with each participant was based on the method of theoretical sampling.

I knew my theoretical categories were saturated when no new properties of those categories emerged when gathering fresh data (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I developed one of the categories into the core concept, supported by four theoretical categories with specified relationships among categories. Thus, I constructed a substantive theory grounded

in theoretically sampled, generated data to explain the participants' strategies to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Chapter 5 of this document describes my emergent substantive theory.

Engaging in Reflexivity

Every researcher has experiences, interests, and assumptions that they cannot ignore or eliminate when doing qualitative research (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1989) noted that a researcher's values inevitably enter the inquiry process:

> Inquirers are human and cannot escape their humanness. That is, they cannot by an act of will set aside their own subjectivity, nor can they stand outside the arena of humanness created by the other persons involved (p. 88).

However, researchers can become self-aware of how their experiences, interests, and assumptions influence the inquiry process by engaging in reflexivity (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Reflexivity is the notion that the researcher influences knowledge construction, and thus, researchers should examine their presuppositions, experiences, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring them into the research process (Charmaz, 2014).

Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life, paying "close attention to empirical realities and our collected renderings of them—and locating oneself in these realities" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). Constructivist grounded theory assumes that researchers enter the research scene with presuppositions that influence the inquiry process. These influences are not problematic in constructivist grounded theory, provided the researcher has grappled with them and acknowledges they cannot be set aside (Charmaz, 2014; Gibbs, 2015).

As such, I practiced reflexivity before the inquiry process by writing a Researcher as Instrument statement (see Appendix F). In qualitative research, the researcher generates data by interviewing participants, examining documents, and observing behavior, and thus, the researcher is the key research instrument (Creswell, 2018). Because the researcher is the primary instrument, it is crucial to examine how the researcher's background, culture, and experiences influence the inquiry process (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2018). Through my Researcher as Instrument statement (see Appendix F), I reflected on how my experiences and values could have potentially shaped the inquiry process.

In addition to writing the Researcher as Instrument statement (see Appendix F), I practiced reflexivity during data generation and analysis by maintaining a reflexive journal. Engaging in reflexive journaling is a strategy researchers can use to record their actions, thoughts, and feelings, articulate the reasoning behind their decisions, and examine and acknowledge how their experiences and values influence the inquiry process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ortlipp, 2008). Using a dedicated notebook in Microsoft OneNote, a web-based application for notetaking, I logged my decision-making process as well as my reactions to and thoughts about data generation and analysis. For example, following each week of interviews, I reflected on the exchange that occurred between the participants and myself, noting how my personal characteristics influenced my interactions with and understanding of participants.

Quality Criteria

Engaging in reflexivity is a critical component of constructivist grounded theory and is an indicator of a high-quality qualitative study (Creswell, 2018). There are varying perspectives regarding the validation and evaluation of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2018). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness remain among the most

popular: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Creswell, 2018). Other qualitative methodologists suggest criteria for "goodness" tied to specific theories, paradigms, or qualitative communities (Tracy, 2010). Charmaz (2014) and Corbin and Strauss (2015) agree that each qualitative approach is based on a different theoretical foundation with differing procedures. Therefore, each method deserves its own set of judgment criteria.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) were the first to establish criteria for evaluating the credibility and applicability of grounded theory research, including fit, work, relevance, and modifiability. Charmaz (2014) offers four criteria for evaluating grounded theory research: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Charmaz (2014) lists a series of questions researchers can use to assess their research and theory development for each criterion. Constructivist grounded theory aims to create a theory with credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness (Bryant, 2017; Charmaz, 2014). Because I am using a constructivist grounded theory approach, I used Charmaz's criteria to evaluate my study's quality, as described in the following sections.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and plausibility of the research findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Tracy, 2010). Charmaz (2014) notes that the credibility of a study's results begins with the data. There must be sufficient data in terms of range, amount, and depth to merit a researcher's claims. In grounded theory research, theoretical saturation is the benchmark for when to stop generating data. Theoretical categories are saturated with data when new data "no longer sparks theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 213). I generated data from 17 participants in two ways: in-depth interviews and extant document analysis. Including two data types ensured an appropriate range, amount,

and depth of data to support my resulting claims. I continued to gather data until I reached

theoretical saturation.

The credibility of a study's findings also rests on the quality of the methods used. I

attained credibility in this study using constructivist grounded theory methods, as asserted by

Charmaz (2014). I made constant comparisons throughout the inquiry process. I conducted initial

and focused coding and engaged in memo writing during data analysis. Additionally, I created

diagrams to identify relationships among categories, thus aiding theory construction. Member

checking served as another means of attaining credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered

this technique to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" because participants

are asked to provide feedback on the accuracy and credibility of the findings and interpretations

of the data (p. 314). I engaged in member checking during each interview by asking clarifying

questions. Following each interview, I wrote an interview summary and sent it to the participant,

asking them to verify and/or correct my interpretations. Of the 26 interview summaries sent, 19

were returned by participants with minimal or no corrections, for a total of 73%. I made any

necessary corrections to the interview summaries based on participants' feedback.

In addition to following the rigorous methods of grounded theory research, conducting an

ethical study contributes to the credibility of its results. I maintained high ethical standards by

maintaining strict confidentiality at all times. Participants' names, institutions, and other

identifying information were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identities. All raw data

were stored in my personal Box folder (https://www.box.com/), a password-protected, web-

based storage solution available to faculty, staff, and students at my institution. I accessed the

data from a password-protected computer kept in my possession at all times. I submitted this

study's proposal to my university's Education Institutional Review Committee (EDIRC) for

approval in accordance with standard procedures for research with human subjects before inviting participants. No incentives were provided for participating in this study, and participants were permitted to stop participation at any time. Participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating in this study and received a copy for their records (see Appendix D).

Originality

Originality is another quality criterion of grounded theory research, referring to whether the research challenges, extends, or refines existing ideas, concepts, and/or practices (Charmaz, 2014). Recall from Chapter 2 that best practices for supporting online adjunct instructors include orientation, mentorship, professional development, and evaluation. While these best practices are critical in acclimating and integrating online adjuncts into the institution, research suggests that online adjuncts desire greater community and collegiality (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dolan, 2011; LaPointe Terosky & Heasley, 2015). Research also indicates that online adjuncts believe HE administrators are responsible for fostering community and connecting online adjuncts (Ferencz, 2017).

Online instructors can use various research-based strategies to foster a sense of community in an online course; however, little is known about HE administrators' strategies to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Even less is known about the challenges HE administrators face when trying to implement these strategies. The results of this study refine existing ideas and practices, providing educational leaders with a better understanding of ways they can support and engage online adjunct faculty. The results also shed light on the challenges HE administrators encounter when trying to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. As such, the results meet the specifications of originality as described by Charmaz (2014).

Resonance

A combination of strong credibility and originality increases the resonance and usefulness of a study's results. Resonance occurs when the theoretical categories formed through in-depth data analysis portray the fullness of the studied experience, thus offering profound insights into the lives and worlds of the participants (Charmaz, 2014). Resonance also occurs when research meaningfully influences, affects, or moves an audience through aesthetic merit (Tracy, 2010). An evocative and artistically written research study makes it more compelling, giving it aesthetic merit (Charmaz, 2005). My study offers a deeper look into the thoughts and actions of HE administrators who work to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their institutions. I aimed to tell their stories in a compelling manner.

The other portion of a study's resonance is the transferability and naturalistic generalization of its findings. Naturalistic generalization refers to a study's potential to be useful in other settings, populations, or circumstances. Similarly, transferability is achieved when readers can relate to the participants and feel the researched experiences are similar to their own situations. Readers can then transfer the research findings to their lives intuitively and apply similar ideas to their work or elsewhere (Tracy, 2010). The findings of my study may be of value to HE administrators and others who support online adjuncts and are searching for ways to cultivate a sense of community among them. These individuals might be able to apply the study's findings to their institution or share the study with colleagues to spark conversation about what they can do differently to better support online adjuncts. The findings may also be of value to anyone who supports full-time online instructors. Additionally, the findings may be resonant with other researchers exploring topics related to online adjunct faculty.

Usefulness

Usefulness is the degree to which a study improves practice and extends current knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). A study is deemed useful if it makes a significant contribution to a field, such as shedding light on a contemporary problem or empowering participants to see the world in a different way (Tracy, 2010). My study may help to improve practice by providing a set of strategies the participants use to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their institutions that other HE administrators could choose to implement at their institutions. Tipple (2010) argued that the ability of educational leaders to integrate online adjunct faculty into the institution's community and create an environment in which they feel inspired is critical to the success of the institution's mission. Motivated and inspired faculty lead to higher levels of student satisfaction and retention (Brindley et al., 2006; Tipple, 2010). My study could assist HE administrators who want to foster a sense of community among online adjuncts at their respective institutions with the potential to contribute positively to student learning and engagement. My study also sheds light on the challenges HE administrators face when implementing strategies to support online adjuncts, thus highlighting issues that need to be addressed at the university level.

Summary of Research Design

Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, I generated and analyzed data to understand the strategies of HE administrators who purported to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their institutions. I examined the various factors they described that influence their decisions and actions regarding using these strategies. I also examined the challenges they encounter when implementing these strategies. Participants were volunteer HE administrators responsible for supporting online adjunct faculty at their respective

institutions. Data were generated with participants using multiple interviews and analysis of extant documents that the participants selected as relevant to the focus of this study. I engaged in initial and focused coding, wrote memos, and developed and revised diagrams, making constant comparisons throughout the inquiry process. Using the rigorous methods of grounded theory research, I constructed a substantive theory grounded in the generated data to explain how selected HE administrators intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXTS

It is essential to understand participants' backgrounds and contexts as these factors influence how they foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Before reporting my primary findings, I will introduce readers to the higher education (HE) administrator participants in this study, providing summaries of their professional backgrounds, current roles, and institutions. I will also describe online adjunct faculty recruiting practices and associated characteristics at participants' respective institutions, as well as faculty roles in online course development and instruction. Additionally, I will provide an overview of a global event that occurred when this study was conducted, impacting the participants' practices related to this research.

Participant Characteristics and Contexts

The 17 HE administrator participants were diverse in terms of their educational backgrounds, professional experience, job titles, and institutional contexts, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. They work for 17 different institutions in 13 states across the U.S. Each institution is located in one of the following accreditation regions as defined by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2018): New England, Middle States, North Central, Southern, and Northwest. Ten participants work for private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, and seven work for public 4-year institutions. These institutions range in size, from small, highly residential to large, primarily nonresidential campuses.

According to the 2018 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (CCIHE), 10 of the institutions are classified as R1 (very high research activity) or R2 (high research activity) doctoral universities. Six institutions are classified as M1 (larger programs) or M2 (medium programs) master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, and special focus 4-year institutions (CCIHE, 2018). CCIHE does not classify one institution because it is a collaborative, state-run online campus comprising several public institutions.

Eleven of the participants hold a doctoral degree, two of whom also hold post-doctoral certificates. The remaining six participants hold master's degrees. They average 23 years of professional experience, ranging from 10–40 years. The majority of the participants have been working in HE for most of their careers, averaging 19 years. Twelve of the participants have been with their current institution for 5 or more years. Three of those participants were promoted into their current position within the last 2 years. The other five participants have been with their current institution for less than 5 years.

The participants can be grouped into three general categories: online programs administrators, faculty development administrators, and center for teaching and learning administrators. Participants in the first two categories work most closely with online adjunct faculty. Participants in the third category work with large populations of adjunct faculty, some of whom teach online. Next, I will define these categories and provide a brief overview of the participants in each category.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics – Background and Institution Information

Participant's pseudonym	Participant's educational and professional background							Participant's institution
	Position level	Highest education level completed	Years in higher education	Years in current position	Institutional control (all 4-year)	CHEA accreditation region	Carnegie classification: Basic	Carnegie classification: Size and setting
Online programs administrators								
Anita	Dean and Director	Doctoral degree	24	5	Private	North Central	M1	Small, highly residential
Casey	Assistant Dean	Master's degree	12	6	Private	Middle States	R1	Large, highly residential
Katie	Dean	Doctoral degree	15	3	Private	North Central	Baccalaureate college: arts & sciences focus	Small, highly residential
Kerri	Associate Dean and Director	Doctoral degree	22	14	Public	North Central	R1	Large, primarily residential
Lex	Assistant Dean	Master's degree	11	5	Private	North Central	Baccalaureate college: diverse fields	Very small, primarily nonresidential
Pattie	Dean	Doctoral degree	34	1.5	Private	New England	R1	Large, highly residential
Regina	Assistant Dean	Master's degree	6	6	Private	Middle States	R1	Large, highly residential
Tamara	Assistant Dean	Doctoral degree	25	4.5	Private	North Central	R1	Large, primarily residential
Faculty development administrators								
Chris	Director	Post-doctoral certificate(s) or degree(s)	>25	2	Private	Middle States	M2	Small, highly residential
Dawn	Online Faculty Mentor	Doctoral degree	25	2	Public	Southern	Not applicable	Not applicable
Marie	Associate Director	Master's degree	15	3	Public	Middle States	R2	Large, primarily nonresidential
Symone	Associate Director	Doctoral degree	25	1	Public	Northwest	R1	Large, primarily nonresidential

Participant's pseudonym	Participant's educational and professional background						Participant's institution	
	Position level	Highest education level completed	Years in higher education	Years in current position	Institutional control (all 4-year)	CHEA accreditation region	Carnegie classification: Basic	Carnegie classification: Size and setting
Center for teaching and learning administrators								
Deanna	Associate Director	Master's degree	8	2	Private	Southern	Special focus 4-year: other technology-related school	Medium, primarily nonresidential
Kayla	Interim Administrative Director	Master's degree	16	6	Public	Northwest	R2	Large, primarily nonresidential
Madison	Associate Director	Post-doctoral certificate(s) or degree(s)	20	6	Public	Southern	R2	Large, primarily residential
Stephanie	Assistant Director	Doctoral degree	>20	1	Public	North Central	R2	Medium, primarily nonresidential
Tom	Director	Doctoral degree	21	8	Private	North Central	Special focus 4-year: faith-related institution	Small, highly residential

Note: CHEA = Council for Higher Education Accreditation; R1 = Doctoral universities – Very high research activity; R2 = Doctoral universities – High research activity; M1 = Master's colleges and universities – Larger programs; M2 = Master's colleges and universities – Medium programs.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics – Online Programs Information

Participant pseudonym	Position level	Type of online programs participant supports	Academic level	Total faculty teaching in online programs participant supports	
				Full-time	Adjunct
Online programs administrators					
Anita	Dean and Director	Online education programs	Graduate	11	15
Casey	Assistant Dean	Online business programs	Graduate	30	60
Katie	Dean	Continuing, graduate, and online programs	Graduate	30	50
Kerri	Associate Dean and Director	Online health sciences and psychology programs	Undergraduate and graduate	Unknown	Unknown
Lex	Assistant Dean	Online and executive programs	Graduate	15	150
Pattie	Dean	Part-time programs	Undergraduate and graduate	0	25+
Regina	Assistant Dean	Online social work programs	Graduate	20	50
Tamara	Assistant Dean	Professional studies programs	Graduate	3	250
Faculty development administrators					
Chris	Director	All programs and modalities	Undergraduate and graduate	30	65
Dawn	Online Faculty Mentor	Online courses (all subjects)	Undergraduate	4-5	500
Marie	Associate Director	Professional studies programs	Undergraduate and graduate	20	~250
Symone	Associate Director	Online courses (all subjects)	Undergraduate and graduate	Unknown	Unknown
Center for teaching and learning administrators					
Deanna	Associate Director	All programs and modalities (predominantly online)	Undergraduate and graduate	120 (all modalities)	1,200 (all modalities)
Kayla	Interim Administrative Director	All programs and modalities	Undergraduate and graduate	Did not report	750 (all modalities)
Madison	Associate Director	All programs and modalities	Undergraduate and graduate	1,000 (all modalities)	400 (all modalities)
Stephanie	Assistant Director	All programs and modalities	Undergraduate and graduate	410 (all modalities)	384 (all modalities)
Tom	Director	All programs and modalities	Undergraduate and graduate	20	125

Eight of the participants serve as the dean, associate dean, or assistant dean of a college, school, or unit that offers one or more online programs: Anita, Casey, Katie, Kerri, Lex, Pattie, Regina, and Tamara. I categorized these participants as online programs (OP) administrators. They are directly responsible for administering online programs, including hiring, onboarding, developing, and evaluating online adjunct faculty. As shown in Table 2, most faculty who teach for the online programs they administer are online adjunct faculty, ranging from 15 to 250 adjuncts. I will describe each participant in alphabetical order according to their pseudonym, beginning with Anita.

Anita. Anita serves as the dean of the school of education at a small, highly residential private university in the North Central region of the U.S. The university is a liberal arts institution with a religious affiliation. Anita also serves as the program director for the school's online programs. She has worked in HE for more than two decades, spending the last 5 years in her current position.

Anita received her bachelor's and master's degrees in special education. She started her career as a K-12 special education teacher, strengthening her collaboration, problem-solving, and advocacy skills. Anita transitioned into a HE role in the mid-1990s, working as a statewide program director helping adult learners get certified in special education. She also started teaching undergraduate and graduate courses around the same time. In the early 2000s, she began working for a teacher education program, becoming department chair after finishing her Ph.D.

Several years later, Anita began working at her current school, starting as a department chair before becoming dean and director. She has a long history of working with and supporting faculty and has been responsible for hiring them in most of the roles she has held. She said her

role as the program director for the school's online programs was most relevant to the focus of this dissertation study and was what she spoke about in the most depth. Anita reported that 11 full-time faculty and 15 adjunct faculty teach for the school's online programs at the time of this study. She referred to adjuncts as "part-time faculty."

Casey. Casey is an assistant dean for a school of business at a large, highly residential private institution in the Middle States region of the U.S. She started her career as an engineer, completed a master's degree in business administration (MBA), and then worked in marketing for a major organization. About halfway into her career, she transitioned into HE, becoming a director at her current institution.

As time passed, Casey took on additional responsibilities, becoming the assistant dean for online master's programs. She is responsible for all aspects of the university's online business programs, including processes for hiring, supporting, developing, and engaging online adjunct faculty. The school has several online master's programs taught by 30 full-time faculty and 60 adjunct faculty. Casey has served as an adjunct faculty member for their online MBA program, providing her with an understanding of the role and expectations.

Katie. At the time of this study, Katie was the dean of continuing, graduate, and online programs for a small, highly residential institution located in the North Central region of the U.S. The institution is a private liberal arts college with a religious affiliation. About a month after her second interview, Katie said she was leaving the institution to serve in a position for the state's department of education. I will continue referring to her as a dean since that was her role at the time of this dissertation study.

Katie holds a bachelor's degree in sociology, a master's degree in public policy, and a doctorate in HE administration. She started her career as an administrative assistant for a

continuing education division at a university in the Northeast. Katie worked her way up within that division and helped build an infrastructure for online programs. After earning her doctorate, she worked for a continuing education division at another institution in the same region. She stayed with that institution for several years before taking on the dean role.

Katie was hired to launch the college's online programming. She helped take the institution through the accreditation process so they could offer online programs, which required implementing several faculty and student support structures. As the dean of continuing, graduate, and online programs, Katie oversaw three graduate programs, including an online program she launched and the college's evening degree completion programs for adult learners. She was also responsible for hiring online adjunct faculty and implementing processes to support and develop them.

The continuing education division does not have its own faculty, so she partnered with the college's academic departments on campus to design and develop programs for the adult market. About half of the college's online courses are taught by 30 full-time faculty teaching on overload, and the other half are taught by 50 adjunct faculty. The continuing education division also provides faculty with training on best practices for online teaching and learning and educational technology.

Kerri. Kerri serves as an associate dean and director for a large public institution in the North Central region of the U.S. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and occupational therapy, a master's degree in teaching and learning with an emphasis on special needs students, and a Ph.D. in education with an emphasis on organizational leadership. Kerri started her master's degree on-campus and ended up transferring to an online program, which is when she "fell in love" with online education. She liked being able to fit her studies into her professional

and personal life. She completed her Ph.D. online for similar reasons. Her dissertation research focused on servant leadership and virtual teams, and her findings from that study have influenced her work.

Kerri began her career as a registered occupational therapist. After having a baby, she decided to teach part-time for the institution where she currently works. She continued teaching at the institution for several years and inherited the program when her supervisor left. She began working for the institution's online school of health sciences, which evolved into a global university system. Kerri was charged with developing the clinical and practicum programs for the school's online programs. Since then, she has had several responsibilities. She has chaired a program and has been in charge of program and course development as well as faculty development. In those roles, she worked closely with online adjunct faculty.

As associate dean and director, Kerri ensures students in health, science, and psychology programs have a clinical or practicum experience. Just before the time of this study, she was charged with increasing faculty and employee engagement for the school of health sciences. She had also been tasked with several diversity and inclusion initiatives. Additionally, she was working on partnership development with various organizations and community colleges. Like Anita, Kerri seems to enjoy having multiple responsibilities, commenting that most people in HE tend to hold several roles.

Lex. Lex works for a small, private university with a religious affiliation. The university has two campuses. Lex is located at the main campus in the North Central region of the U.S. The university started its online unit in 2008. Lex was hired the following year to help grow online enrollment and has been with the university ever since. She holds a bachelor's degree in communication studies, a master's degree in education with a concentration in curriculum and

instruction, and is pursuing a doctorate in HE administration. Her first few jobs out of college were in retail before she transitioned into HE. In addition to enrollment, Lex has worked in academic advising and as an administrative coordinator. She serves as an assistant dean for the institution's online unit and executive international MBA program. Approximately 15 full-time faculty and 150 adjunct faculty teach for the unit's online programs.

Lex is responsible for course scheduling and instructional staffing for the programs she administers. Additionally, she manages adjunct faculty hiring, onboarding, and evaluation. Lex is also responsible for scheduling and distributing course evaluations and reviewing the data for trends and issues. Based on her review, she determines whether adjuncts need coaching and connects them with a mentor or lead faculty member as applicable. She also schedules professional development workshops and communicates policies and curriculum updates to everyone affiliated with the online unit.

Pattie. Pattie has more than 40 years of professional experience, spending 34 of those years in HE. Like Anita, Pattie started her career as a special education teacher and then served in two different administrative roles at a community college: accessibility services and continuing education. The adjuncts who taught for the college unionized while she was there, and she managed the adjunct contract. Soon after, she took a position for a nonprofit organization facilitating K-12 professional development. The role involved many "one-and-done" workshops, and she did not feel like she was making an impact. After 2 years, she worked as the head of continuing education for a small, private university in New England. While there, she built the school's online programs from three classes to 33 online degree programs. She also oversaw 700 adjunct faculty.

The school's president, who acted as her mentor, encouraged Pattie to pursue a Ph.D. She enrolled in a HE administration doctoral program nearly 100 miles away from her home and commuted to class once a week. That experience helped her identify and understand the needs of continuing education students. Her dissertation research was on adjunct faculty, which is why she wanted to participate in this dissertation study. While pursuing her doctorate, the school she worked for changed presidents. The new president wanted to turn the school's online programs into a large online university with a separate governance structure. She did not share the president's vision, so she took a position for another university as the head of online and educational technology. In that role, she oversaw a mix of full-time faculty teaching on overload and adjunct faculty. She said most of the adjuncts worked full-time outside of academia and referred to them as "practicing professionals."

Pattie eventually earned her Ph.D. and then took a position at a small professional school where she ran online and continuing education. The school had a small group of full-time faculty. Almost all of the courses were taught by adjuncts who were practicing professionals. She eventually left to run online graduate programs at a medium-sized research institution. The online graduate programs were in subjects not offered by the rest of the institution and taught by adjunct faculty who unionized while she was there. After serving in that role for several years, she ended up in her current position, which is the same institution where she received her Ph.D.

Pattie serves as the dean for a school that is part of a large, highly residential private institution in New England. She had been in the role for about a year and a half at the time of this study. She oversees several part-time graduate and undergraduate programs for adults students, both on-campus and online. Approximately 25 adjunct faculty teach most of the school's courses, but some are taught by non-tenure eligible faculty, whom she calls "contract faculty."

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As evidenced by her professional background, Pattie has in-depth experience managing online programs and the faculty who teach for them, including online adjuncts.

Regina. Regina works as the assistant dean of online education for a school of social work at a large, highly residential private research university in the Middle States region of the U.S. She is responsible for administering the school's online campus, including recruiting and training online instructors. Approximately 20 full-time faculty and 50 adjunct faculty teach for the online campus. She also oversees a large part-time technical support team comprising alums who have gone through intensive training. Each technical support team member is assigned to one course for the semester and works closely with the instructors.

Regina holds a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in social work. Before going to graduate school, she worked in grant writing. Upon graduating, Regina worked for a nonprofit organization and an educational technology company and then transitioned into a role at her current institution. She first worked for the school of professional studies and then moved to the school of social work. Regina helped launch the school's online campus, which she compared to working for a startup company. Since completing her master's degree, Regina has taken a few online courses and completed a business certificate. The online courses gave her a sense of what it is like to be an online student and allowed her to see how other schools deliver their online courses.

Tamara. Tamara holds a Ph.D. in English. Her first three jobs after graduate school were for academic writing programs. She then became an administrator of a writing program and was responsible for hiring faculty to teach topic-driven writing seminars. In that role, she also facilitated faculty development on how to teach writing. Her family moved, and she took a job in faculty development at a teaching and learning center at a private arts and media college. Tamara

supported faculty and curriculum development during her 9 years at the center, working with predominantly adjunct faculty and some full-time faculty. She collaborated with many artists, which she found interesting and different from the more academic contexts she worked in previously.

About 4 and a half years ago, Tamara took a position as the assistant dean of graduate programs for a school of professional studies at a large, private university in the North Central region of the U.S. Through this role, she has learned a lot about master's programs geared toward working professionals and thinks there are similarities between faculty development and adult education. As the assistant dean, Tamara manages all of the school's graduate degree programs and certificates, most of which are delivered entirely online. Approximately 250 adjunct faculty and three full-time faculty teach for the school's graduate degree program. Tamara is responsible for maintaining high-quality courses with high-quality instructors. She also works with their marketing and enrollment teams to ensure their enrollments are healthy and stays abreast of industry trends to see what educational programs could meet market demand.

Faculty Development Administrators

As shown in Table 2, four of the participants are administrators who provide faculty training and development outside of a center for teaching and learning at institutions that offer one or more online programs: Chris, Dawn, Marie, and Symone. I categorized these participants as faculty development (FD) administrators. Chris serves as a director for faculty development for the institution's library, supporting on-campus and online faculty. Dawn serves as an online faculty mentor at a collaborative, state-run online campus. Marie and Symone serve as associate directors for units that directly support their respective institution's online programs. I will describe each participant in more detail in the following sections.

Chris. Chris serves in a director-level position at a small, private university in the Middle States region of the U.S. She has worked in HE for more than 25 years, holds a doctoral degree, and has completed post-doctoral certificates. She has spent her career working at the university level and was promoted into her current position 2 years ago. Chris is responsible for leading two units: the university's library and the faculty resource center within the library.

The faculty resource center supports all faculty members and teaching modalities. It was established to provide faculty development and to centralize and standardize adjunct faculty support services. The institution currently has several online programs taught by approximately 30 full-time faculty and 65 adjunct faculty. Chris is the only administrator of the center, though she said she works closely with colleagues in the library and other units to accomplish the center's goals.

Dawn. Dawn has been teaching as an online adjunct since the late 1990s. In 2014, she took a position as a director of online faculty development for a university in the Southern region of the U.S. However, she did not get to work directly with faculty as much as she liked. She stepped down to become an online faculty mentor for a collaborative, state-run online campus comprising several public 4-year institutions located in the same region. The collaborative offers students an opportunity to complete their undergraduate requirements online. The courses are taught predominantly by full-time faculty from the various 4-year institutions who serve as online adjuncts for the collaborative. Retired faculty and working professionals also work as online adjuncts for the collaborative.

As an online faculty mentor, Dawn is responsible for observing, developing, and mentoring more than 500 online adjunct faculty who teach for the collaborative. For example, Dawn checks the courses to see if instructors post announcements and create a welcoming

environment. She also checks whether the instructors participate in discussions, grade assignments on time, provide detailed feedback to students, and respond to student emails promptly. Additionally, she examines learning analytics and student success data to identify trends related to instructors or courses. Dawn provides individual and group faculty development based on her course observations and analysis of available data.

Marie. Marie works as the associate director for an office of faculty development and instructional technology at a school for professional studies. The school is part of an extensive university system in the Middle States region of the U.S. The school offers various on-campus and online undergraduate and graduate programs, though most of the school's courses are delivered online. Marie called the school a "finishing school" because they have primarily adult learners who have already earned a certain number of college credits and come back to school to complete their degree. The university system consists of several campuses in the same area. Similar to the collaborative Dawn works for, the full-time faculty from the various campuses teach for the school of professional studies as part of their load or on overload as an adjunct. The school also employs adjuncts who work full-time outside of academia as well as graduate students and individuals who teach part-time at several different schools.

Marie started working in the faculty development and instructional technology office as an instructional technology fellow during graduate school. She also works for the institution as an adjunct. In her administrative role, she oversees course design and development. She supervises one full-time and three part-time employees who help manage course development projects. Marie also collaborates with several other staff to plan and facilitate faculty training sessions and workshops. Additionally, she provides day-to-day faculty support and has become the resident accessibility expert. She completed an advanced certificate in disability studies about

2 years before this study. She said she has always been interested in social justice and equality and is naturally drawn to accessibility.

Symone. Symone has worked at several institutions during the past 25 years, mostly in the for-profit sector. She has held roles in enrollment, business development, and administration. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and management, a master's degree in business administration, a master's degree in organizational management, and a doctor of education in organizational leadership. She also has considerable experience teaching as an online adjunct.

Symone currently works as the associate director for an office of online education at a large public university in the Northwestern region of the U.S. She is responsible for a team of instructional technologists, designers, and programmers who support online teaching and learning, including faculty development. Her office is considered a support unit to the various colleges at the university. The colleges oversee their online programs. Her office was created to develop master copies of online courses for use within the colleges. Symone's team works with subject matter experts identified by each college. Similar to Anita, she referred to adjuncts as "PTIs," her university's acronym for part-time instructors.

Center for Teaching and Learning Administrators

The remaining five participants serve as a director, associate director, or assistant director for a center for teaching and learning at institutions that offer one or more online programs: Deanna, Kayla, Madison, Stephanie, and Tom. I categorized these participants as center for teaching and learning (CTL) administrators. They provide faculty training and development on all modes of instruction but are not responsible for administering their institution's online

programs. As shown in Table 2, most of these participants support several hundred full- and part-time faculty. Next, I will describe each participant's role and background.

Deanna. Deanna has worked in education her entire career. Her undergraduate and graduate studies focused on psychology and education. Like Anita and Pattie, Deanna started her career as a secondary school teacher and then held various positions in HE. Prior to her current role, Deanna was a state-wide administrator for an education program with multiple centers. She and her team traveled to the various centers to provide professional development. She helped them transfer some of their professional development to an online format. After 7 years in that role, Deanna and her family moved, and she began working for her current institution located in the Southern region of the U.S. The institution is a private, two-campus institution with a worldwide campus. The worldwide campus has multiple locations, and the majority of its courses are delivered online.

Deanna works for the worldwide campus, serving as the associate director for a teaching and learning center. She began as a faculty development instructor and was responsible for the training and professional development of approximately 1,200 adjunct faculty and 120 full-time faculty. As associate director, Deanna supervises three teams, each supporting one of the institution's three colleges. The teams consist of a team lead, a faculty developer, and two faculty quality managers. The faculty quality managers observe online courses, and the faculty developers provide training and development. Deanna also oversees the center's projects and products and serves on several university-wide committees. Additionally, Deanna serves as an adjunct faculty member for the institution.

Kayla. Kayla received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in theater. She held various positions outside of academia before working as an adjunct faculty member for a branch

campus at a large public institution. Her family moved, and she became an adjunct faculty member for a large public institution in the Northwestern region of the U.S. She started attending workshops at the university's center for teaching and learning and was eventually hired as the center's part-time faculty associate. She was charged with developing programs to support adjunct faculty in professional development and institutional change initiatives. Her role has expanded during the 6 years leading up to this study. She serves as the full-time interim administrative director for the center. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member for the institution.

As shown in Table 2, the university employs more than 700 adjunct faculty across its various schools and programs. In addition to Kayla, several staff members at the institution are responsible for coordinating and supporting adjunct faculty for their respective units. The assistant vice provost, for example, is also responsible for supporting faculty across all ranks. Kayla meets with the assistant vice provost regularly to discuss university-level considerations for supporting adjunct faculty. Over the past 2 years, Kayla has also been working with the university's online unit to identify ways the center can better support online adjunct faculty regarding their professional development and advocate for them at the university level.

Madison. Madison holds a Ph.D. in French. She taught French for several years and then worked in instructional technology support in a language resource center. Madison received a master's degree in information science and continued working in instructional technology support. Eventually, she moved into library services and became a professor and head of research services and then professor and head of digital scholarship for a large, public university in the Southern region of the U.S. She then became the associate director of the university's center for teaching and learning. She oversees a team of instructional designers and technologists who

support teaching and learning. They offer one-on-one consultations, workshops, multi-week programs, and learning communities. They also run a scholarship of teaching and learning grants program and support active learning spaces.

Three of the university's colleges offer online graduate degree programs and certificates. The center works closely with the distance education office to develop online courses. The distance education office identifies the courses needing development and the faculty members who will serve as course authors. The center pairs those faculty with an instructional designer who works with them to design and develop the online courses. Full-time faculty develop and teach most of the online courses. However, the institution employs more than 400 adjuncts who teach on-campus and online.

Stephanie. Stephanie has worked in HE for more than 20 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in information systems, a master's degree in education administration, and a Ph.D. in educational psychology. Her dissertation study focused on building community in online faculty development. She has held several roles related to supporting faculty and has developed a passion for assisting adjunct faculty.

Stephanie is an assistant director for the center for teaching and learning at a medium-sized public university in the North Central region of the U.S., where she supports faculty in all disciplines and modalities. The university is part of a multi-campus university system that Stephanie referred to as "system." Each campus has its own entity and culture. Stephanie started working for the center as an instructional designer, helping faculty build online courses. The center went through a restructuring at about the same time that she was completing her Ph.D. The university system took over online learning, and the instructional designers transitioned from the center to the university system. A new director was hired to lead the center, and

Stephanie was promoted to assistant director, giving her an opportunity to take on new projects. She has been learning about the curriculum alignment process and is helping build a new teaching effectiveness measurement tool. Like Anita and Symone, Stephanie referred to adjuncts as "part-time faculty."

Tom. Tom works for a private, faith-based institution in the North Central region of the U.S. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in Christian education and a doctorate in teaching and learning. He did his undergraduate studies at the school where he now works. He began his career as a youth pastor and then a school counselor for children with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities. At the same time, he taught as an adjunct at the college level, including the institution where he currently works.

The institution has a long history of offering correspondence courses dating back to the late 1800s. The school first went online 12 years ago. The courses were developed and taught by adjunct faculty who had never taken or taught an online course. They treated the online courses more like correspondence courses, and many students were not satisfied with their educational experience. The institution asked Tom to teach hybrid classes. He was then hired as an external contractor to provide faculty development for the school's online instructors. He soon realized faculty needed more opportunities to learn how to teach online. He helped develop a robust online training program for faculty to help them feel prepared to teach online. The training program also helped faculty build relationships with other faculty.

Eventually, the program evolved into a unit that focused on instructional quality for online courses. The unit has grown into a full center for teaching, learning, and assessment that helps faculty with courses in all modalities. Tom has been promoted several times and is the director of the center. He oversees all aspects of faculty training and development, assessment

and accreditation, and institutional research. He works to equip faculty to teach in different modalities and helps them adapt as time changes. He also collaborates with the assessment team to identify areas where faculty need additional development, curating and developing resources as appropriate. Additionally, Tom is responsible for the hiring and rehiring of online adjunct faculty.

Online Adjunct Faculty Recruiting Practices

The previous section provided an overview of each participant's professional and educational backgrounds as well as their institutional contexts. Next, I will summarize the online adjunct faculty recruiting practices at the participants' institutions. These practices influence the characteristics of the adjunct faculty who teach for the participants' online programs.

Anita, Casey, Katie, Lex, Regina, and Tom are responsible for recruiting and hiring online adjunct faculty. Pattie and Tamara supervise staff members responsible for recruiting and hiring online adjuncts. The remaining nine participants do not have a role in the recruiting and hiring process, though they could describe it in some detail. At all but Deanna's institution, online adjuncts are recruited and hired through the school or online program office in collaboration with the academic department associated with the program or course the online adjunct will teach. At Deanna's institution, a human resources staff member is responsible for hiring all faculty, staff, and students who work for the worldwide campus.

The online adjunct faculty recruiting process varies depending on the participant's institution. A few participants who work at private institutions do not post openings because their institutions have strong interpersonal networks that bring in qualified candidates. However, these participants mentioned that their institutions are moving toward formalizing the adjunct recruitment process for equity purposes. Others post openings to their institution's human

resources website and recruit through their faculty networks and national job advertising outlets. A few participants shared that they are trying to increase the diversity of their faculty and are intentional about where they post positions to attract a more diverse candidate pool.

The minimum requirements for online adjunct faculty positions commonly reflect the school's accreditation standards. The majority of participants, regardless of their role in the hiring process, said adjuncts are usually chosen for their professional experience, especially at the graduate level. Adjuncts also have to have degrees and certifications reflective of the programs they teach in, especially in programs that prepare students for professional licensures, such as nursing and counseling. Additionally, online teaching experience is preferred but not typically required for online adjunct positions.

The participants who are directly responsible for online adjunct faculty hiring almost always work with the faculty program director, department chair, or course lead during the screening and interview process. The faculty member helps to ensure the adjunct meets the minimum requirements and has the appropriate professional experience in the subject matter. The interviews usually take place through a video conferencing platform. In some cases, such as in Pattie's and Casey's schools, candidates must model how they would lead a synchronous discussion germane to the course they would teach during the interview. Casey said this allows them to assess how well the adjunct speaks and engages with others in a synchronous format.

Online Adjunct Faculty Characteristics

The online adjunct faculty recruiting practices at each participant's institution shape the characteristics of this group of faculty. These characteristics closely align with the categories of adjunct faculty described in Chapter 2: *career-enders*; *specialists, experts, and professionals*; *aspiring academics*; *freelancers*; and *professional adjuncts* (Bedford, 2009; Gappa & Leslie,

1993). Many participants said that most of their online adjuncts are working professionals who have full-time jobs outside academia with significant experience and expertise in their chosen career field (i.e., specialists, experts, and professionals). Some participants also mentioned that they have retired faculty and other retired professionals teaching as adjuncts in their online programs (i.e., career-enders). A few said that doctoral students (i.e., aspiring academics) and individuals who teach for multiple institutions (i.e., professional adjuncts) also teach for their online programs. A large portion of the online adjuncts at Dawn's and Marie's institutions are full-time faculty who work for other schools within the organization and teach for the online programs as an adjunct, receiving overload pay. These faculty could be loosely labeled as "freelancers" since they do not fall into the other categories (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

A few participants mentioned that most of their online adjunct faculty live within driving distance of their respective institutions. Some of those adjuncts also teach courses offered on-campus. However, the vast majority of participants said their online adjuncts are dispersed across the U.S. A few commented that some of their online adjuncts live abroad. Most participants said they think online adjuncts are motivated to teach for their institutions because they want to engage and share their knowledge with learners in their field. Several of the participants work for well-known, prestigious institutions. They believe many online adjuncts are drawn to their institutions' reputations. Other participants believe adjuncts are motivated to teach at their respective institutions because they connect with its mission and the students it serves. Several participants said adjuncts have told them they receive better support and feel more connected to their institution than at other places where they have taught. Hence, participants believe the adjuncts are drawn to the community the institution offers.

Faculty Roles in Online Course Development and Instruction

Understanding the roles faculty serve in online course development and instruction and institutions' instructional approaches provides context for how online adjunct faculty are utilized at participants' institutions. Participants were asked to describe faculty members' roles in these processes at their respective institutions. I discovered differing approaches and varying levels of full- and part-time faculty involvement in online course development and facilitation. I will provide an overview of these variations to illustrate participants' institutional contexts and the online adjunct faculty they support.

Most of the participants' institutions have a department or unit for online or distance education responsible for online course design, development, and management. This unit is separate from the institution's center for teaching and learning in all but one instance, though these two units often collaborate. Four participants mentioned that their institutions use an online program management (OPM) provider for one or more of their online programs. OPM providers are companies that partner with HE institutions to develop and deliver online programs. They provide services like market research, student recruitment and enrollment, program and course design, student support and retention, and faculty technical support (Hodge, 2020). Only one of the participants discussed the role of their school's OPM provider in detail. Based on my conversations with participants, using an OPM does not seem to impact their ability to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

The department chair or faculty program director oversees the online program curriculum at most participants' institutions. Full-time (FT) faculty are responsible for developing and managing online courses. The majority of participants said their institutions use a master course model in their online programs or are moving toward using a master course model. Recall from

Chapter 1 that a master course is a standardized version of an online course. Due to organizational restructuring, two participants said they were unsure whether their institution would continue using a master course model or which unit would be responsible for developing and maintaining them.

Most of the participants who work in institutions that utilize a master course model said their FT faculty develop the master courses in collaboration with an instructional designer. Although their FT faculty are the primary course authors, a few participants said they have hired external subject matter experts to develop courses on specialized topics. The titles of the faculty who oversee individual master courses vary. Participants used terms such as "course lead," "instructional lead," "course steward," or "course convener" to describe this role. I will refer to this role as "course lead" in this document. The course lead is responsible for updating course content, assignments, and materials between each offering. In most cases, the course lead is also responsible for ensuring course facilitators, who are typically adjunct faculty, understand the learning objectives, learning activities, and assignments. At several institutions, the course lead asks the course facilitators for suggestions to improve the course after each course offering, operating as a collaborative team.

Some participants said that course facilitators could modify their course sections, such as updating discussion prompts, provided they do not change the overall learning outcomes that have been specified for the courses. Other participants said that course facilitators could not make any changes to ensure consistency across the multiple course sections. Casey (OP administrator) commented that this could be challenging for some adjunct faculty, especially if they have experience developing and teaching their own courses at another institution. Those individuals are used to being the subject matter expert and may disagree with how the content is

presented in the online course. She tries to mitigate this challenge by clearly communicating the roles and responsibilities of the course facilitator during the interview process, making sure candidates know that what they can and cannot change in their course section.

While using a master course model was the most common course development and delivery approach among participants, three participants said the online programs they administer do not use master courses. Instead, their adjunct faculty receive the most recent copy of an online course within the learning management system that they can customize. If no copy of a course exists or the current course is outdated, the adjunct develops a new online course following a standard syllabus, learning objectives, and quality standards. In both cases, adjuncts receive course design and development support from an instructional designer. This approach most closely mirrors the traditional HE course delivery method in which individual faculty are responsible for the design and delivery of their courses term-to-term (P. Hill, 2012). These various online course delivery approaches and instructional roles are necessary to understand as they impact the strategies HE administrators use to foster a sense of community among adjuncts on which I will expand in Chapter 5.

External Contextual Factors

It is essential to acknowledge that this dissertation study took place in 2020 during the height of a significant global event: the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This event impacted some of the participants' strategies to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. COVID-19 is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), a new virus in humans causing respiratory illness. The first known case of COVID-19 was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The virus spread worldwide and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. By mid-March

2020, COVID-19 cases had been confirmed in all 50 states in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; World Health Organization, 2020). By early April 2020, more than 310 million people were under some form of lockdown in the U.S., or approximately 94 percent of the nation's population (USA Today, 2021).

As COVID-19 cases spread across the U.S., more than 1,300 HE institutions canceled or shifted in-person classes to online synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction. The majority of faculty, students, and staff worked, taught, and learned from home during the spring and summer months. By the fall semester of 2020, many campuses developed plans to offer multiple modes of instruction, including in-person classes with social distancing (Smalley, 2021). I started interviewing participants in September 2020 and completed interviews at the end of December 2020. During those months, several of the participants who normally work on campus were working remotely.

The majority of the participants spoke about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as budget cuts, increased workload, stress, and fatigue. Several participants also shared that they felt a decline in their sense of connection to the rest of campus with each passing month. Many participants described how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the pace of long-term projects, such as launching online programs earlier than planned or converting in-person training and workshops to an online format. In Chapter 5, I will highlight the challenges and opportunities the participants encountered related to the strategies they use to foster a sense of community due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary of Participants and Contexts

The 17 HE administrators who participated in this study have a wide range of educational and professional experience preceding their current position. Some share similar beginnings,

such as starting their career in K-12 education (Anita, Deanna, Pattie, and Tom) or working in a different field for several years before transitioning into HE (Casey, Kayla, Kerri, Lex, and Regina). Based on their current roles, I categorized them into three groups: OP administrators, FD administrators, and CTL administrators. Although the participants have varying titles, they share similar responsibilities within and across each of these categories. Their roles shape some of their practices for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty, which I will describe in Chapter 5.

Participants' institutions also impact the ways they cultivate community. In this chapter, I summarized key aspects of participants' institutional contexts related to the focus of this study, including common online adjunct faculty recruiting practices and related characteristics, as well as faculty roles in online course development and instruction. I also provided an overview of the COVID-19 pandemic, a global event that impacted this study. In Chapter 5, I will report the primary findings of this study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This study's focus was to explore how higher education (HE) administrators cultivate a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. The following questions guided this study:

- What are the strategies used by selected HE administrators who purport to foster a sense of community intentionally among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions?

- What are the various factors that influence their decisions and actions regarding using these strategies?

- What challenges do they face, if any, as they implement these strategies?

To answer these questions, I interviewed 17 HE administrators about their community-building practices for the online adjunct faculty they serve. Of those participants, 13 also submitted three or more extant documents and a written statement explaining how their documents demonstrate the ways they intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, I analyzed a total of 26 participant interviews, 50 extant documents, and 13 written summaries to uncover their strategies.

A core concept with supporting categories emerged through this analysis to produce a substantive theory that explains how the selected HE administrators intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. I will present these emergent findings in this chapter, using summaries, quotes, and examples from the data to support my findings. I will also report the factors that influence participants' decisions and actions and their challenges in

creating community for the online adjunct faculty they support. Recall from Chapter 4 that participants were grouped into three general categories based on their positions at their respective institutions: online programs (OP) administrators, faculty development (FD) administrators, and center for teaching and learning (CTL) administrators. As a reminder, I will insert the appropriate category in parentheses next to a participant's name the first time I introduce the participant in a section.

Participants' Definitions of Sense of Community

Knowing how participants define "sense of community" helps explain why they think it is essential to foster it among online adjunct faculty and their practices for cultivating it. As such, participants were asked to define "sense of community." Each of their definitions included one or more of the following ideas:

- feeling a sense of belonging,

- understanding how one's role contributes to the larger institutional mission,

- feeling valued and supported,

- having access to resources and information,

- having opportunities to learn and grow, and

- feeling connected to colleagues personally and professionally.

Some participants acknowledged that each online adjunct faculty member might experience a sense of community differently depending on what they seek from the community and the nature of their interactions with other community members. Those same participants spoke about the importance of providing multiple pathways for adjuncts to engage and connect with others based on their motivations and interests.

Feeling a sense of belonging was one of the most frequently appearing ideas in participants' definitions of sense of community. For example, Kerri (OP administrator) said, "I think that sense of community is feeling like you are a part of and accepted by a particular group." I commented on the "accepted by" portion of her definition, to which she elaborated:

Sometimes you feel like you're a part of it, but you don't really feel accepted by it. So it doesn't feel very community-ish, right? It feels like you're sort of there, but not. Just kind of on the outside, kind of an outsider, you know?

Kerri's definition aligns with the formal definition of sense of belonging, which is the feeling, belief, and expectation that an individual fits in a group. It also involves a feeling of acceptance by the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Tamara (OP administrator) also connected her definition of a sense of community to a sense of belonging, saying:

Most of our faculty are not on campus, they're dispersed all over. But still, having a sense that you belong to this larger institution, right? That has a certain set of goals, a certain set of values and priorities, and having a sense of where we fit within that universe.

The latter portion of her definition highlights another aspect several participants included in their definitions: understanding how one's role contributes to the larger institutional mission. For example, Lex (OP administrator) said, "I guess a sense of community to me would be a group of people who understand the values and mission that they're working towards and they all share in that responsibility." McMillan and Chavis (1986) highlighted the importance of shared values as an integrative force for cohesive communities. Communities fill individual needs based on personal values. The extent to which the community shares these values determines the community's ability to prioritize and achieve goals. Connecting online adjuncts to the

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institution's mission and values and how their roles contribute to the mission appears in participants' strategies for fostering a sense of community, described later in this chapter.

Katie's (OP administrator) definition of sense of community included several concepts, such as feeling a sense of belonging and connection as well as feeling supported and valued. She explained, "Also, feeling like people value your input, you kind of know what your contribution is and that it's valued by the rest of the community; that helps people feel a sense of connection." She said sense of community is about feeling like you can be yourself, knowing what you do makes a difference to the organization, and getting feedback on your work. Katie's definition was multifaceted, leading me to believe she had been thinking about the meaning of sense of community for quite some time. She shared that she helped develop her unit's strategic plan, which included strategies for fostering community among students and adjunct faculty.

Like Katie, several participants' definitions of sense of community included feeling supported, having access to resources and information, and having opportunities to learn and grow. For instance, Regina (OP administrator) said she thinks of support when she thinks of community. She also believes continuous learning is an aspect of community, sharing, "and the whole time people are building their skills and it's, like if you feel like you're continuing to learn and grow, it can be rewarding. And I feel like that's another function of the community." This aspect of participants' definitions of sense of community connects to the integration and fulfillment of needs element in McMillan and Chavis's (1986) sense of community theory described in Chapter 2. Providing online adjuncts with support, resources, and information surfaces in study participants' practices for building community. Opportunities to learn and grow also appear in their practices.

Several participants defined sense of community as feeling connected to colleagues personally and professionally. Stephanie's (CTL administrator) definition included the idea of access to resources and colleagues to connect with:

My definition of sense of community is a sense of belonging to the institution and having that set of resources and people that they can go to talk about teaching or to talk about their field or their career or their discipline.

Madison (CTL administrator) also tied sense of community to feeling connected to colleagues and learning from one another:

It would be, you know, a network that professionals can lean on for resources and for support, for asking questions, for mentoring, for figuring out, you know, how to do things administratively, pedagogically, maybe politically and just practically within their institution.

Madison named another part of the adjunct experience that full-time faculty do not typically encounter: teaching at multiple institutions every semester. She feels it is crucial to connect adjuncts with other adjuncts so they have an opportunity to speak with others who share similar experiences. These interactions can create what McMillan and Chavis (1986) identified as shared emotional connections in their sense of community theory. I will explain how participants create connections between online adjuncts and others when describing their practices for building community. In the following section, I will share why participants think it is important to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

Importance of Fostering Community

As mentioned in the first two chapters of this dissertation, motivated and inspired faculty are associated with higher levels of student satisfaction and retention (Brindley et al., 2006;

Dolan, 2011; Tipple, 2010). Creating an environment where online adjunct faculty feel inspired and supported is critical to the student learning experience (Tipple, 2010). My analysis of the data generated from interviews with the HE administrator participants indicates they are aware of the connections between faculty engagement and student success. They believe that fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty enables them to be more successful in the online learning environment, leading to positive outcomes for the students they teach. They also believe fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty creates a stronger and more cohesive program, leading to positive outcomes for the institution.

Several participants connected fostering a sense of community to their personal values as well as their institution's values. They want all members of their community to feel a sense of belonging. For instance, Katie, dean at a small, private liberal arts institution, shared:

> I definitely think it's part of [the institution's] ethos and value system because we're a small liberal arts school. It's part of our differentiator from a large online provider. We see it as something that makes us a little bit unique and different because we're small enough that we can do it.

Her institution has a strategic plan for continuing graduate programs, with pillars focused on relevance, access, and community. An aspect of her unit's strategic plan focuses on building community among its students and adjunct faculty. She said developing community among their students is very important to her team. Kayla's (CTL administrator) institution also has a strategic plan with an aspect focused on creating a "thriving community." There is a statement in the plan about helping employees make a living and a life. She thinks that portion of the strategic plan applies to adjunct faculty, such as their working conditions, pay, recognition, and involvement in the campus community.

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In addition to her institution's values, Katie shared that her personal values influence her notion of sense of community. She has a student services background and has served as an online advisor for many years. She values customer service, which she said is an idea not often discussed in HE. However, for her, the primary reason for working in HE is to support students and faculty. Her goal is to provide high-quality service to their faculty, which means thinking about what will make their experience teaching with the institution better. She thinks community is essential because people are more likely to retain as teachers or learners if they feel connected to other humans and their work.

Anita, also a dean at a small, private, liberal arts school, said community is an institutional value. There is a strong focus on service, community, and excellence at her school and its programs. Anita and her colleagues want their online students to experience those values the same way as their undergraduate students. One of her assumptions is that faculty cannot make their students feel like part of the institutional community if they do not feel valued and embraced by the institution. She said she does not lead in a hierarchical structure, but instead treats full- and part-time faculty equally to help foster a sense of belonging. Anita values community and belonging, sharing that her core values drive her personally and professionally.

In addition to institutional and personal values, most participants linked fostering a sense of community among online adjuncts to student engagement and retention. The participants believe that if online adjunct faculty feel a sense of community with the institution, that will translate into higher levels of student engagement in the classroom, ultimately leading to student success and retention. As Marie (FD administrator) said:

So I think with adjuncts, it will, I believe it will improve the quality of your education if you foster community, because it's about, it's a weird word, loyalty, it's about belonging,

feeling a sense of belonging, of caring for what you do. If you don't belong, you might

not care as much, right?

Similarly, Tamara (OP administrator) believes that an adjunct's sense of connection translates

into better instruction, commenting, "I would think, you know, you would be more

compassionate or more open to getting to know your students and being more invested in

teaching, if you feel like the institution is invested in your success." She noted that she has seen

this to be true in all her years of experience providing faculty development. Like Tamara, Tom

(CTL administrator) believes fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty

translates into student success, "and so I think that as we show that we're pouring it into the

faculty, they have a desire to pour it into their students."

Tom's experience as an online adjunct also influences his views on why he thinks it is

vital to foster a sense of community among them. He said he served as an adjunct at various

schools and felt isolated at several of them. He taught at a large online university for several

years and was never engaged or sent anything to make him feel a part of the institution. When he

started working for his current institution, he wanted to create an environment where online

adjuncts felt like they were "part of something bigger." Recall from Chapter 4 that nine

participants currently or previously served as adjunct faculty (Casey, Chris, Dawn, Deanna,

Kayla, Kerri, Marie, Symone, and Tom). They expressed similar feelings as Tom, saying some

institutions they taught for were better than others at making them feel like part of the

community. Their experiences influence their views and practices as administrators for fostering

a sense of community among online adjuncts. I will report their practices in the next section.

Before generating and analyzing data for this study, I referred to the methods participants

use to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty as "strategies." However, as the

previous examples illustrate, many participants view fostering a sense of community as a strategy for engaging and retaining quality adjunct faculty, which they believe leads to positive institutional and student outcomes. Given this, I will refer to the methods participants use to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty as "practices" rather than "strategies."

Core Concept: Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion

Early in the study, I found that most participants were acutely aware of the challenges adjunct faculty face and the inequities between adjuncts and FT faculty. The challenges online adjuncts face, as reported by participants, include being hired on short notice, receiving inadequate compensation, feeling isolated from colleagues and disconnected from the institution, and lacking opportunities to engage with others beyond the online classroom. The participants also said many online adjunct faculty hold full-time jobs outside of academia and find it difficult to balance part-time teaching with their full-time jobs. Some of them, therefore, are not able to engage in activities beyond their teaching roles. Additionally, participants mentioned adjunct challenges like not receiving adequate support, feeling like a precarious hire, not having a voice in course or program improvements, and lacking professional development opportunities. These challenges are well-documented in extant literature, as summarized in Chapter 2.

Participants' awareness of these challenges generally comes from their own experiences as adjuncts, their experiences working closely with adjuncts, and/or their reviews of relevant literature for professional or educational purposes. This awareness influenced them to create more inclusive and equitable working environments for the adjuncts they support. The majority of study participants are able to do this more easily within their schools or units because they have direct influence and authority over the policies, processes, and programs they implement than they do at the university level.

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As the study progressed, participants continued to speak about creating inclusive environments for the adjunct faculty they support. They used words like "include," "inclusive," and "inclusion," as illustrated by the selected quotes in Table 3. Participants also used words like "invite" and "engage" when speaking about their practices for fostering a sense of community, which ties to the notion of inclusion. Additionally, I found the concept of inclusion in many of the extant documents submitted by participants.

Table 3

Selected Quotes That Include Core Concept

Participant's pseudonym	Selected quote
Anita	"So it's, its inviting people to share topics for the agenda. It's **including**, you know, making sure that there's ways for people to participate and **including** them on the minutes, just inviting them to teach, you know, to affirming them on their course evaluations…"
Chris	"Those are kind of the things we've been doing, you know, just trying to make sure that they're **included** in things."
Katie	"So it's stuff like that where you **include** them and give them a chance to give back to the community. Um, it makes them feel like they're not just here to teach a course and done, but it is part of a larger community."
Kerri	"So we, I think one of the ways that we engage as adjuncts is by not separating them out and saying, you know, full-time people get this and adjuncts get this. Cause I think that kind of thing can start to build a resentment at times. So again, that sort of open and **inclusive** environment is important."
Tamara	"And so I think these events that we hold as a school and **including** [online adjunct] faculty and inviting them and having them participate in some way, you know, on the panel and stuff like that to highlight, 'Oh, these are our faculty.' I think that does make you feel like, 'Oh, I'm not just in the data science program, but I'm part of [the school],' right?"

Several participants also described how they have advocated for the institutional inclusion of the adjuncts they serve and the challenges they have faced in doing so. For instance, when asked whether the institution has been supportive of fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty, Katie (OP administrator) shared, "so we have had to fight, fight is not the right word, we've had to advocate for the inclusion of adjunct faculty over the years. Not because

anyone wants to intentionally exclude them, but because they are overlooked sometimes." She

said it is easy for those not responsible for supporting online adjunct faculty to neglect them

because "people tend to think about what is right around them." She provided examples of how

they have advocated for the inclusion of adjuncts in university-wide training and service awards.

Other participants shared similar stories to Katie's that I will expand on throughout this chapter

when describing their community-fostering practices.

As the concept of inclusion emerged during data analysis, I began reviewing existing

definitions of inclusion from various sources to deepen my understanding of this concept and its

ties to sense of community. Inclusion is defined as the process of creating a welcoming working

environment that connects each employee to the organization's mission; encourages

communication, collaboration, and respect; provides employees with equal access to

opportunities and resources; and recognizes, values, and effectively utilizes the talents, skills,

and perspectives of every employee (Society for Human Resource Management, 2021; U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021). Inclusion incorporates both an active

process (to include) and an emotional outcome (I feel included). It is driven by perceptions of

fairness and respect as well as value and belonging (Deloitte, 2013). Participants spoke about

fostering these feelings among online adjuncts as an ongoing process requiring intentional,

inclusive actions and programming. Thus, fostering a sense of community through intentional

inclusion emerged as the core concept in this study.

The participants in this study practice inclusion in various ways throughout an online

adjunct's employment with the institution. I grouped their practices into four categories and

defined the categories as follows:

- **Socialization:** Connecting online adjuncts to their roles, colleagues, and institutions and supporting them through ongoing development and feedback.

- **Communication:** Cultivating relationships among online adjuncts through collegial dialogue and empowering them with timely and relevant information and resources.

- **Participation:** Providing online adjuncts with opportunities to contribute to the institutional mission and engage with others outside of the online classroom.

- **Recognition:** Acknowledging an online adjunct's time, value, and expertise publicly, privately, and symbolically.

For the study's participants, these categories function as processes that operationalize the core concept of intentional inclusion. I categorized participants' practices according to the most relevant process, but these processes are not mutually exclusive. Communication is inherent in socialization, participation, and recognition practices. Moreover, several socialization practices involve an aspect of participation and recognition. I will further illustrate the connections among these processes as I describe how participants foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. It is also important to note that participants' practices are situated within varying institutional contexts, influencing the implementation and management of each practice. The ways the four processes relate to the core concept and one another emerged as this study's substantive theory to explain how the HE administrator participants foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

Figure 4

Emergent Substantive Theory: Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
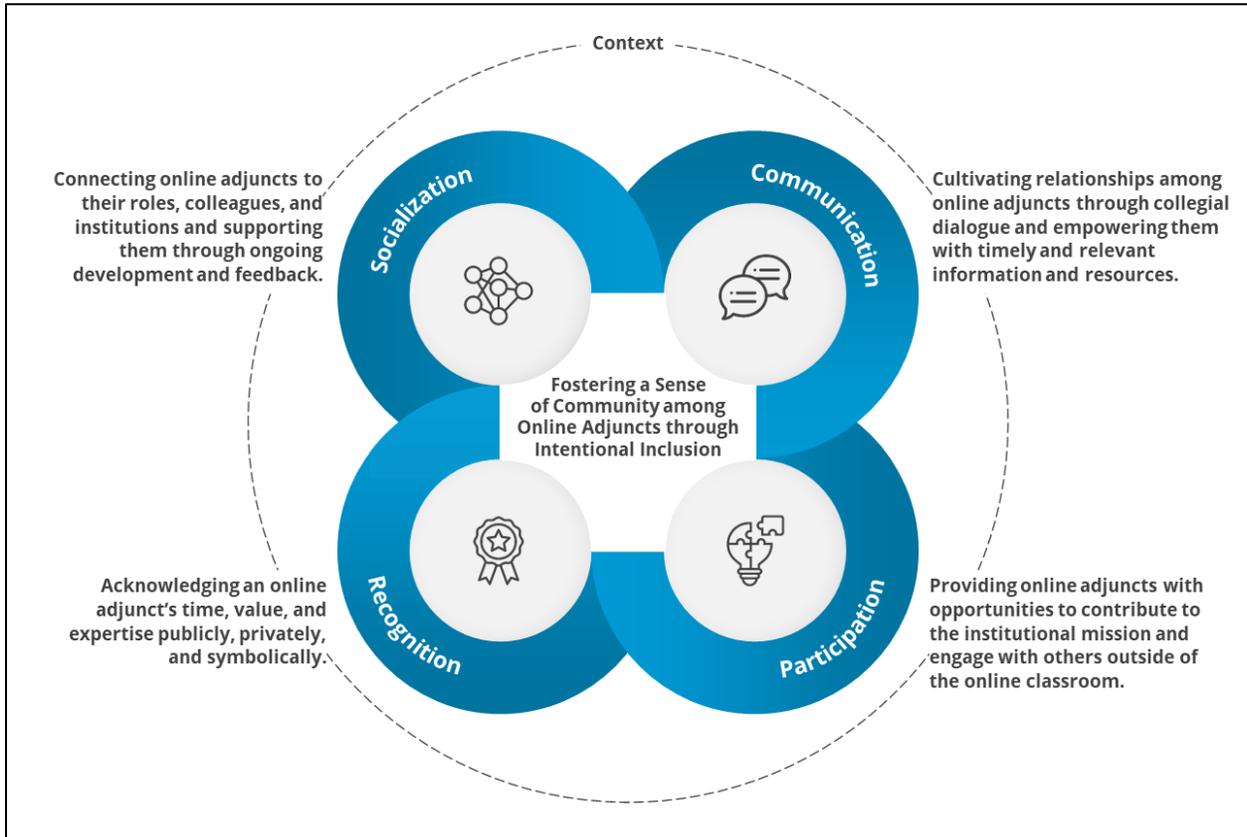
I developed a visual model of my emergent substantive theory, shown in Figure 4. The core concept of fostering a sense of community through intentional inclusion is at the model's center. Four circles with relevant icons represent the four supporting processes of socialization, communication, participation, and recognition. These processes connect to the core concept and one another through an endless looping configuration to represent fostering a sense of community as an ongoing process. A circle surrounds the looping configuration, illustrating that these processes are situated and occur within different institutional contexts. Next, I will provide an overview of each process and participants' related practices, beginning with socialization.

Socialization

Socialization is the most complex process in my emergent theory of fostering a sense of community through intentional inclusion. Recall from Chapter 2 that best practices for supporting online adjunct faculty include orientation, mentorship, professional development, and evaluation. These practices socialize online adjuncts to their roles and institutions. The concept of socialization is found in the part-time faculty integration model (PFIM) developed by Roueche et al. (1996). In the PFIM, socialization is an organizational integration strategy that begins with a part-time faculty member's entry into the institution. It includes practices such as recruiting, orientation, mentorship, development, and evaluation, which also appear in the frameworks presented by Betts et al. (2013), Ridge and Ritt (2017), and Tipple (2010) for supporting and engaging online adjunct faculty. Through these practices, the part-time faculty member learns about the mission and values of the institution, the students they will teach, and expectations related to their role. Socialization also occurs through conversations and interactions in which the part-time faculty member learns about institutional culture and norms (Roueche et al., 1996).

The participants in this study have implemented similar practices to socialize online adjunct faculty and help them make connections with others. While they did not use the word "socialize" specifically, they view these practices as foundational to preparing, supporting, and developing the online adjuncts they serve. Drawing from the PFIM, I used the term "socialization" to categorize participants' practices for connecting, preparing, and developing online adjuncts. As I looked deeper into the extant literature related to organizational socialization (Chao, 2012), I confirmed that these practices were appropriately categorized.

Thus, I raised socialization to a supporting process in my emergent theory of fostering a sense of community through intentional inclusion.

In its simplest form, socialization is defined as the activity of mixing socially with others (Oxford, n.d.-b). I found this concept in many of the practices participants use to foster a sense of community. The participants create opportunities for online adjunct faculty to meet and interact with their colleagues through various meetings and activities. Many of these interactions are recurring or sustained, taking place over several weeks or months. The participants also work to ensure these interactions are positive and productive. Sustained, effective forms of socialization tie to the shared emotional connection element of the sense of community theory described in Chapter 2. The more people interact and the higher the quality of those interactions, the more likely they will form shared emotional connections (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). I will highlight these interactions when describing participants' practices for fostering a sense of community.

A more complex notion of socialization also emerged from participants' practices. Known as organizational socialization, this learning and adjustment process enables an individual to assume a new or changing role within an organization that fits both organizational and individual needs (Chao, 2012). This dynamic process is ongoing, beginning with recruitment and continuing throughout an individual's employment with an organization (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Roueche et al., 1996). The individual learns the values, norms, and skills associated with their role and the organization (Chao, 2012). The concept of organizational socialization appears most comprehensively in participants' onboarding and integration practices. However, it also appears in other areas throughout an online adjunct faculty member's employment with the institution, such as ongoing professional development and evaluation. I will emphasize instances of organizational socialization when describing participants' practices.

Merging these two aspects of socialization, I define the process of socialization as connecting online adjuncts to their roles, colleagues, and institutions and supporting them through ongoing development and feedback. As summarized in Figure 5, participants connect online adjunct faculty to their roles, colleagues, and institutions through recruiting, onboarding, and integration practices. Participants also support online adjuncts through ongoing training, development, and evaluation practices. Inherent in these practices is communication. Aspects of participation and recognition also appear in some of these practices. As previously mentioned, several of the participants view socialization as foundational to their community-fostering practices. They said online adjuncts would be less likely to engage in other activities if their basic needs were not met, such as orientation and training. Next, I will describe participants' socialization practices in more detail.

Figure 5

Socialization Practices for Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
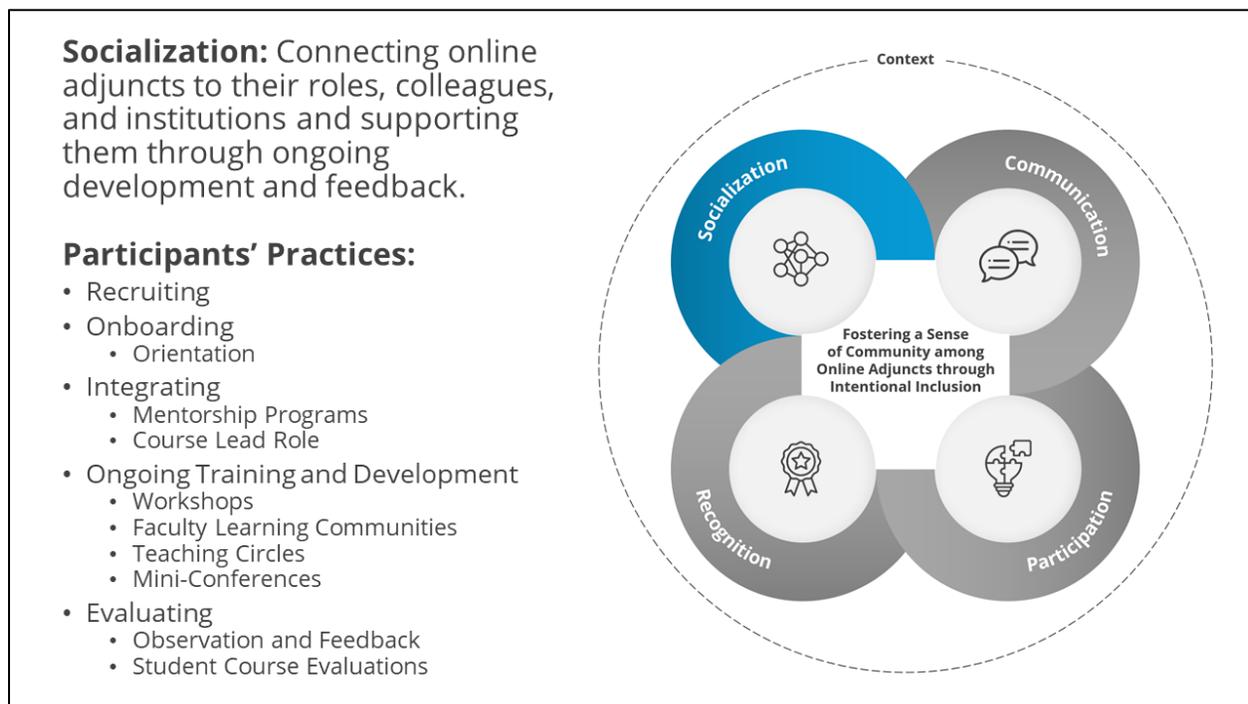
Recruiting. The recruiting and hiring process is critical in generating a prospective online adjunct's first impression of an institution's culture (Betts et al., 2014). Recall from Chapter 4 that six of the participants are directly responsible for recruiting online adjunct faculty (Anita, Casey, Katie, Lex, Regina, and Tom). Two of those participants, Tom (CTL administrator) and Regina (OP administrator), see the recruiting process as an opportunity to begin fostering community. For example, during the interview process, Tom tries to establish that administrators approach instruction as a team effort between administrators and instructors with the mutual goal of helping students learn. He shared:

> So like in the hiring process … I always frame that as you know, this is a formal interview, but it's also an informal opportunity just for us to get to know one another. So I try to, from the very beginning, establish that we're in this together as a team, not as an "us and them" or "administration and instructors" kind of a thing. So even from that very initial conversation, it's, "Hey, how do we work on this together?"

Tom's statement indicates that he strives to develop rapport with candidates during the interview, laying the foundation for their experience with the institution should they get hired.

Like Tom, Regina begins fostering community among online adjunct faculty during recruitment but takes a unique approach compared to other participants. About 3 years before this study, Regina implemented a 5-week online teaching institute for social work educators focused on pedagogy, technology, and social work values. The institute has various learning activities and assignments to model best practices in online education. All of the assignments are graded on a rubric, and participants have to score 90% to pass.

In addition to training social workers in online education, the institute functions as a recruiting mechanism, providing the school with an opportunity to communicate their

instructional expectations and identify highly qualified candidates to teach in their online

program. They offer the institute three times per year, and anyone can apply to participate.

Regina said they receive applications from individuals at different points in their careers. Some

apply to learn about the fundamentals of online teaching, while others apply because they want

to teach for the school. Regina and her team screen institute applicants for their professional

backgrounds, areas of expertise, and course compatibility. Those who pass the institute may be

considered for an online adjunct faculty position; however, passing the institute does not

guarantee a position with the school. Qualified candidates must still go through a formal

interview and hiring process.

At the time of Regina's first interview, more than 300 people had completed the institute

with a passing grade, and it has become well-known in the field of social work. Those who

complete the institute receive a digital badge as a form of recognition. Regina thinks the institute

has the most significant impact on fostering a sense of community among online adjuncts. She

said it is the school's only professional development activity where adjuncts have assignments

involving discussion forums and other peer-to-peer interactions. Participants get to know their

classmates before they even begin teaching for the school. She sees community continue to

develop after the institute, such as adjuncts meeting up for coffee or interacting on LinkedIn

([https://www.linkedin.com/)](https://www.linkedin.com/), a social media and professional networking platform. Regina

believes the institute provides a strong foundation for online adjunct faculty to grow and

develop.

Onboarding. The participants in this study view onboarding as an essential step in

fostering a sense of community among adjunct faculty regardless of modality. Onboarding is

typically a series of events that acclimate an employee to an organization. The onboarding

process usually begins when an employee is hired and can continue for several weeks or months until the employee is a fully functioning member of the organization. Orientation is often a one-time event that occurs during the onboarding process, such as an in-person or online class that introduces an employee to the organization's culture, mission, vision, and values as well as benefits, policies, and procedures (Lewkovich, 2017). Several participants described in great detail a comprehensive onboarding process that they oversee. Moreover, almost a fifth of the artifacts I received were related to the online adjunct onboarding process.

For example, Tamara (OP administrator) submitted an extant document called "high impact practices for online instruction" that outlines how to be an effective online instructor. Her team developed the document using research-based best practices and ideas shared by their online adjunct faculty. Her team sends this document to newly hired online adjuncts and uses it as a guide when performing occasional "course checks" to ensure the school's online faculty engage with their students. Her team refers to the high-impact practices when providing online adjunct faculty with feedback.

As evidenced by Tamara's artifact summary in Figure 6, she believes that this document helps to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty because it enables her team to provide online instructors with proactive instructional support. It establishes a set of shared instructional expectations, socializing online adjunct faculty to the institution and helping them understand how to succeed in their role.

Figure 6

Screenshot of an Extant Document Written Summary Submitted by Tamara

High Impact Practices for Online Instruction Guidelines – ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and we use it to both onboard faculty and to set expectations for online engagement and responsiveness to students. Staff periodically conduct spot checks of online course sites, especially of newer faculty, to ensure presence and engagement. These spot checks enable my staff to be more proactive in supporting faculty (not waiting until sub-par student evaluations or even student complaints), and having specific areas to focus on, like feedback and building student community. This provides a common language and common set of expectations across all of our online graduate programs and opens up a way to talk about teaching effectiveness.

Lex (OP administrator) also submitted an extant document outlining a rigorous three-part onboarding process that all new online instructors complete. Lex manages this process for new online adjunct faculty. The first part of the onboarding process includes a 3-week orientation course that includes learning management system training and best practices for teaching and engaging adult students in online learning environments. Once new instructors complete the orientation, they are given their first online class to teach and are assigned a peer mentor who is enrolled in the new instructor's course section. The peer mentor serves two purposes: to ensure that new adjuncts do not feel alone during their first time teaching and that new adjuncts meet instructional expectations. At the conclusion of the online instructor's first term teaching with the school, a peer observer completes a course review and provides the new instructor with constructive feedback. Lex feels the three-part onboarding process is one of the most important things she does to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty because it helps prepare and integrate them into the institution. It also helps keep the online adjuncts engaged and ensures they meet expectations in the online classroom.

Orientation. At many of the participants' institutions, the onboarding process for online adjunct faculty usually includes a multi-week orientation course with asynchronous activities and assignments. Some orientations also have synchronous virtual meetings. The orientations contain information about the institution, school, program, and role. There is also technical training related to the learning management system and other instructional technology the adjuncts will use. The orientation's learning activities often provide new online adjuncts with opportunities to get to know their peers through asynchronous and/or synchronous discussions and activities.

Several of the participants (Dawn, Deanna, Katie, Lex, and Tamara) said their online adjuncts must complete an orientation before they are assigned a course. The participants use orientation to communicate institutional values and instructional expectations, thus serving as a form of socialization. It gives the HE administrators a sense of whether each adjunct has the time to teach in addition to their responsibilities outside of the institution. It also sets expectations for the workload involved with being an adjunct for the institution. For example, Lex (OP administrator) shared:

> Some people get in there and they're just like, "Whoa, I'm not engaging in this. This is too much work," which is great. I want them to kind of filter out. Cause if they can't engage in a 3-week [orientation] course, then they're probably not going to engage in a classroom.

Completing orientation is an essential step toward becoming an online adjunct faculty member at Lex's institution. Those who do not complete it cannot teach for the institution and are no longer eligible to become a member of the institution's community. Those who complete the orientation may feel a sense of belonging and personal accomplishment because they have worked to earn

their place within the institutional community, aligning with the element of membership in the sense of community theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Integrating. Integrating online adjunct faculty into their academic department or program is critical to ensuring they understand their role, expectations, policies, and procedures (Tipple, 2010). At many of the participants' institutions, integration begins with an orientation, providing the online adjunct with an opportunity to learn about the university, school, and program as well as their role and related expectations. Integration continues during the online adjunct's first term with the institution. In addition to orientation, two practices related to integration include mentorship programs and connecting with the course lead role, which I will describe in the following sections.

Mentorship Programs. Several participants discussed the importance of mentorship as a tactic for integrating online adjunct faculty into the institution, thus helping to foster a sense of community. As discussed in Chapter 2, mentorship programs are a recommended best practice for supporting online adjuncts because they can help online adjuncts feel better prepared to function in their role (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). Mentorship programs also provide new online adjuncts with a deeper understanding of institutional and departmental policies, procedures, and culture, thus integrating them into the department. Additionally, mentorship programs can increase collegiality and improve communication, helping to connect online adjunct faculty to their peers (Lyons, 2007; Tipple, 2010). Thus, mentorship serves as a form of socialization.

Dawn, Kerri, Lex, Tamara, and Tom described mentorship programs for the online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions. The mentor is typically another full- or part-time faculty member who receives a small stipend for serving as a mentor. An administrator or the

program chair assigns the mentor to the mentee, and they meet during or immediately following orientation. The mentor's role is to provide guidance, feedback, and support. The mentor also has access to the mentee's course materials at some institutions and observes their ongoing course facilitation. Though the mentor monitors the course, the participants clarified that the mentor does not supervise or evaluate the mentee.

Lex (OP administrator) and Tom (CTL administrator) implemented and managed mentorship programs as part of the onboarding process for new online adjunct faculty. As previously mentioned, the three-part onboarding process Lex oversees involves peer mentorship. She tries to pair mentors and mentees in the same subject areas. The mentor is enrolled in the new online adjunct's course section and can see announcements, discussion posts, and the gradebook. New adjuncts can ask their peer mentors questions about things like policies and handling student issues. The mentor and mentee usually meet one-on-one throughout the term. Lex thinks the mentorship program enables online adjunct faculty to form peer connections, helping to foster a sense of community.

Similarly, Tom implemented a mentorship program as part of his institution's orientation process for new online adjunct faculty. Two of their veteran adjunct faculty serve as mentors, receiving a small stipend for each mentee. The mentors guide mentees through the orientation course, providing instructional strategies that work well in an online environment. The mentors also observe the mentees during their first term of online teaching and provide feedback. The frequency of interactions between the mentor and mentee lessens during the second and third time the new online adjunct teaches. Some online adjuncts have asked for a mentor to observe them several years later, which Tom views as a success of the mentor program.

Although Dawn (FD administrator) serves as an online faculty mentor, her role and responsibilities are different from those who mentor new online adjunct faculty. Dawn provides training, development, and support to more than 500 online adjuncts. She also monitors their courses, reviewing their instructional approach and providing constructive feedback. The new online adjunct's mentor is another online adjunct who teaches the same course. New online adjunct faculty meet their mentor after completing orientation and training.

The mentor has access to the new online adjunct's course to observe and provide feedback. Likewise, the new online adjunct has access to the mentor's course to observe the mentor's instructional practices. The mentor checks the new adjunct's online course regularly to ensure they meet instructional expectations. The mentor and mentee meet at various points throughout the term. Occasionally, a mentor will reach out to Dawn when a new adjunct is not meeting expectations so she can check the course and provide the new adjunct with constructive feedback. She said this process helps the mentor and mentee maintain a positive relationship.

In all of the various mentorship programs described in the previous paragraphs, the mentor and mentee meet and communicate several times throughout the new online adjunct's first term teaching for the institution. This dynamic serves as one of the first peer relationships a new online adjunct faculty member has at the institution. The mentor also helps to socialize the new online adjunct, communicating written and unwritten rules of the organization.

Course Lead Role. As a reminder, the course lead is a faculty member responsible for keeping a master course updated in between each course offering. The institutions that utilize a master course approach usually have a designated course lead. The course lead is typically a full-time faculty member, though a few participants said adjunct faculty members have served in this role. Each time the course is offered, the master copy is duplicated into sections facilitated by

other instructors who are usually online adjunct faculty. The course lead ensures that the course facilitators understand the learning objectives, learning activities, and assignments in the master course.

A course lead's oversight over the course facilitators varies by institution. At some of the participants' institutions, the course lead serves as a quasi-manager of the course facilitators, monitoring their course sections during the semester. For example, in the online programs Casey (OP administrator) administers, the course lead is the instructor of record for all course sections. The course lead oversees the course facilitators, ensuring that they meet expectations. Course facilitators are not to change the course content or assignments, but they can share supplemental materials with students throughout the semester. The course lead is the course facilitator's first point of contact should they have questions about the course and related academic policies and procedures. The course lead usually meets with the course facilitators to discuss upcoming assignments and various student issues and concerns throughout the term.

At other institutions, the course lead has less oversight over the course facilitators. For instance, at Regina's (OP administrator) institution, online adjunct faculty serve as the instructors of record. However, they have course leads who work with all instructors teaching a particular course. Course leads are full-time faculty who receive teaching credits for the role. The course leads ensure that all course instructors use the syllabus approved by the curriculum committee. They also ensure instructors are teaching the correct set of learning objectives. The course leads share resources with the instructors and meet regularly as a group. Instructors can modify the course, such as changing a discussion activity or assignment, so long as they teach to the designated learning objectives.

Anita (OP administrator) established the course lead role as a way to intentionally promote two of the school's core values: excellence and community. She adapted the role from another institution. Course leads are responsible for updating the course syllabus and master course and onboarding new course facilitators. They seek input from the course facilitators and receive a summarized report of course evaluation feedback to make course improvements. Both full- and part-time faculty can serve in this role. She said the course lead role has been critical in helping to foster excellence and community in their online program.

Even though the course lead role varies between participants' institutions, several participants said they felt having an established course lead fosters a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. The course lead acts as an informal mentor, helping orient new online adjunct faculty to the course, program, and school. The new online adjuncts form collegial relationships with the course lead and fellow course facilitators. The course lead also ensures that the team understands the expected learning outcomes. Most participants said their course leads are highly collaborative, asking the course facilitators for feedback about the course design and incorporating their suggestions during the course revision process. This practice serves as a form of participation in which online adjuncts can contribute to the program beyond teaching a course.

Ongoing Training and Development. As highlighted in Chapter 2, providing online adjunct faculty with ongoing training and professional development can ensure quality teaching and prepare them to adapt to meet the future needs of the institution. Because online adjuncts have differing professional and academic experience, schedules, and external obligations, these opportunities should be offered in a variety of formats and structured in ways that meet their individual needs (Bedford & Miller, 2013; Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Mandernach et al., 2015; Tipple, 2010).

The participants in this study provide ongoing professional development opportunities for the adjunct faculty they serve in various ways. These professional development offerings focus on topics related to teaching and learning. The sessions are designed to be interactive to keep instructors engaged. The participants view professional development as an opportunity for online adjunct faculty to connect with other faculty who teach for the same program, school, and institution, serving as a form of socialization.

Additionally, several participants described how they showcase the instructional effectiveness of their online adjunct faculty by asking them to share teaching tips and best practices with their peers. The different types of professional development offerings include workshops, faculty learning communities, teaching circles, and mini-conferences. Some of these professional development offerings result in a badge or certificate. I will describe each of these development activities in the following four sections.

Workshops. Several participants spoke about offering workshops throughout the year as part of their professional development programming for faculty. These workshops range in topic, but typically relate to teaching, learning, or student success in multiple modalities. The workshops are usually an hour-long or broken into multiple, one-hour sessions offered over several weeks. The CTL administrator participants described hosting workshops on-campus before the COVID-19 pandemic and moving them to an online format during the pandemic. They anticipated that they would return to an in-person format once on-campus activities resumed, but several said they planned to continue offering online professional development, too.

The participants who administer online programs or support predominantly online faculty spoke about hosting online workshops, often called webinars. The term webinar is short for web-

based seminar. A webinar is a workshop, lecture, or presentation delivered synchronously online using webinar software (Beal, 2003). For example, Dawn (FD administrator) hosts a webinar every two weeks on topics focused on online teaching and learning, such as "the fine art of grading" and "offering lifelines to your students." When she first started hosting webinars, attendance seemed low considering the number of adjuncts that teach for the institution. Dawn's supervisor suggested that she ask faculty for their input during the webinars. Now, she poses discussion questions and asks faculty to share their best practices, which has made the sessions more interactive.

Dawn has noticed an increase in attendance since she started implementing the interactive webinar format. Additionally, she has noticed increased activity in the webinar chat space. She thinks the webinars are building community because more online faculty have an opportunity to interact with their peers and learn new things relevant to their role, so they see the webinars as a valuable use of their time. In addition to holding interactive webinars, Dawn helps to coordinate faculty learning opportunities called "7-minute sizzles." When she sees adjunct faculty doing something well in the online environment, she asks them if they want to share what they are doing through a short presentation, acknowledging their expertise. The 7-minute sizzles are held virtually and are usually well-attended with a highly engaged audience.

Faculty Learning Communities. Kayla, Madison, and Deanna spoke about developing and implementing faculty learning communities as a strategy for fostering a sense of community among adjuncts. A faculty learning community (FLC) is a form of professional development in which cross-disciplinary groups of faculty engage over a period of time in an active and collaborative program focused on enhancing teaching and learning and building a sense of community. FLCs can be topic- or cohort-based. Cohort-based FLCs address the developmental

needs of a group of faculty affected by isolation, fragmentation, stress, or neglect in academia, such as adjuncts, junior faculty, or departmental chairs. Topic-based FLCs address a campus teaching and learning need, issue, or opportunity, such as teaching writing courses or problem-based learning (Cox, 2004). Based on my analysis of their FLCs, Kayla and Madison offer cohort-based FLCs specifically for adjunct faculty, while Deanna offers topic-based virtual FLCs (VFLC) for adjunct faculty. All three participants spoke highly of this type of professional development, saying they consistently receive positive feedback from adjuncts after each FLC/VFLC they conduct.

Kayla and Madison (CTL administrators) offer adjunct FLCs every semester at their respective institutions, inviting all adjunct faculty to participate in a series of on-campus meetings and activities. These FLCs focus on community building, information sharing, and instructional best practices. Kayla and Madison shared that online adjunct faculty have participated in their FLCs. At both of their institutions, adjunct faculty receive a stipend upon completing the FLC.

At Kayla's institution, adjunct faculty participating in the FLC distribute a mid-course survey to students. They also get observed by an instructional coach and then meet to discuss the observation and mid-course student feedback. The adjuncts say that the feedback from the instructional coach is a valuable part of the learning community experience. Kayla also distributes a survey asking participants if the FLC met their expectations. The feedback is almost always positive, and participants comment that it was a great way to connect and speak with other adjuncts.

Similarly, Madison's team distributes a survey at the end of each adjunct FLC, asking adjuncts questions about the impact of the learning community on their teaching and sense of

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community. Her team also sends a survey to all adjuncts at the institution every couple of years

to gauge whether they feel supported or isolated. Generally, the feedback provided by the

adjuncts is very positive. The number of adjuncts who feel isolated and unsupported has

decreased over time. Madison said adjuncts used to ask questions about topics that were not part

of the survey, such as "I need an office" or "I don't know where to park." She believes their

comments indicated that they did not know whom to ask for this information, demonstrating

aspects of their disconnectedness from the institution. Madison reported that adjuncts' awareness

of support resources for students and faculty has increased considerably since implementing the

adjunct FLC.

Like Kayla and Madison, Deanna's (CTL administrator) team offers VFLCs to their

online instructors. Recall from Chapter 4 that Deanna and her colleagues in the teaching and

learning center support approximately 120 full-time and 1,200 adjunct faculty, most of whom

teach online. Deanna said the VFLCs are the most impactful action the center team takes to

foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. The team reviewed relevant literature

about supporting online adjuncts before developing and implementing the VFLCs. Through this

review, the team discovered that globally dispersed faculty often do not have a sense of

belonging to their university. The team thought developing a virtual space where faculty could

come together and talk about a particular topic would help them feel more connected to one

another and the university.

For the past 5 years, the center team has offered one VFLC each fall and spring semester,

with 40 faculty members participating on average. Each VFLC is 6 weeks and focuses on a

specific topic, such as Bloom's taxonomy or feedback philosophies. Faculty who sign up to

participate are put into an asynchronous course. They begin the VFLC by watching an overview

video and introducing themselves through a discussion board. Then, they explore resources related to the VFLC topic and participate in asynchronous discussions. They submit a deliverable the final week, such as a teaching statement or an objective they plan to integrate into a course. The VLFCs have always been faculty-focused; faculty can participate as much or as little as they want. Some faculty have participated in every VFLC, even when the learning community is focused on a previously covered topic.

The center team conducted semi-structured interviews with their faculty about the VFLCs because they participated in them more than any other professional development offering and the team wanted to know why. Faculty said they benefitted more from the VFLCs than the other professional development offerings because they learned and interacted over an extended period. The team also interviewed faculty who signed up for the VFLC but did not participate in discussions, asking them why. Although they did not participate in discussions, those faculty said they still found it beneficial to read the discussion posts between their peers. Those statements shifted the team's mindset on how they define participation. Leading up to the VFLCs, faculty had to complete activities to receive recognition for professional development. After implementing the VFLCs, the team uses different terms to recognize varying levels of participation.

Teaching Circles. A teaching circle is a less structured version of an FLC, though both have similar goals: to enhance teaching and learning and build a sense of community. Teaching circles are regular, informal discussions among faculty members who share common concerns and interests related to teaching. They meet to share ideas, offer resolutions to problems, and advise one another. The members of the teaching circle drive topics of discussion. Attendance at all of the teaching circle sessions is not required (Marshall, 2008).

Stephanie (CTL administrator) implemented an adjunct faculty teaching circle over an FLC because she did not want adjuncts to feel obligated to participate in every meeting. One of her priorities in the months before she participated in this study was to build a support system for part-time faculty. Normally, the center she works for welcomes part-time faculty to all their professional development offerings; however, the center's programming has changed due to institutional restructuring. She realized that most of their new professional development activities were geared toward full-time faculty, so she developed a teaching circle for part-time faculty. She has always wanted to develop a teaching circle, but the COVID-19 pandemic sped up the need to offer one.

Stephanie said getting the administration's buy-in was a critical first step. Their school's adjunct faculty are not unionized, so there was a great deal of concern from the administration about the name and structure of the teaching circle. They wanted to ensure they were not giving adjuncts a grievance area or place to coordinate more rights or benefits. Stephanie had to be clear that the center was running a teaching circle focused explicitly on teaching and learning. She said the goal of the teaching circle was to have an open group that part-time faculty can "bop in and out of without feeling like they need to make a major commitment."

Stephanie shared that she wanted the teaching circle to be faculty-driven, so she created an advisory group comprising part-time faculty from different disciplines. There is no budget for the teaching circle, so advisory group members do not receive a stipend. The group meets once a semester to set priorities and goals for the semester. She handles all of the logistics under their guidance and suggestions. She said some of the advisory group's ideas include bringing in outside speakers to discuss diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. They are also interested in learning more about educational technology and conducting social activities like trivia nights.

Stephanie believes the teaching circle will help foster a sense of belonging among the adjunct faculty at her institution. Recall from Chapter 2 that a sense of belonging is an important aspect of feeling like a member of a community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Mini-Conferences. Another adjunct faculty professional development opportunity that some of the participants spoke about were mini-conferences. The center Deanna works for frequently offers virtual passes to several teaching and learning conferences throughout the year. These passes are available to online adjunct faculty. Kayla's institution hosts an annual internal conference in which adjunct faculty can participate. They also host a free internal conference that all faculty are encouraged to attend called "Great Ideas for Teaching and Learning," which is a series of workshops that happen throughout the day.

Additionally, Kayla collaborates with a colleague at a nearby university to offer a free annual conference specifically for adjunct faculty. Usually, about 50 adjuncts attend. Adjuncts do not usually have access to professional development funds, making attending and presenting at conferences challenging. The goal of the conference is to create community and provide a place for adjuncts to share their scholarship and learn from one another. Kayla said attendees have reported that the conference accomplishes both of these goals.

Evaluating. Recall from Chapter 2 that online adjuncts need mechanisms for measuring their teaching effectiveness related to student outcomes (Mandernach et al., 2015). Regular teaching evaluations are a recommended best practice for supporting online adjuncts. These evaluations should also include developmental feedback for continuous improvement (Tipple, 2010), thus socializing online adjuncts to the institution's performance expectations. Several participants spoke about the importance of providing online adjunct faculty with ongoing developmental feedback. The participants who have access to online adjuncts' student course

evaluations review the data, noting trends. They provide feedback and support as appropriate, acknowledging the online adjunct's performance and individual needs. They view this process as contributing to an online adjunct's sense of community because it reinforces the importance of instructional excellence and communicates the critical role online adjuncts play in helping the institution uphold its mission. I will describe participants' evaluation practices in the following sections.

Observation and Feedback. The majority of participants shared that there is an established observation and feedback process for new online adjunct faculty. Depending on the institution, new online adjuncts are observed by the course lead, mentor, peer reviewer, or administrator. The individual conducting the observation provides the new online adjunct with feedback through an observation form, email, or conversation. The participants explained that this process establishes instructional expectations and helps new online adjunct faculty feel supported during their first term teaching with the institution. It also serves as a proactive mechanism for mitigating potential issues, ensuring students are satisfied with their experience.

Compared to new online adjunct faculty, the observation and feedback process for returning online adjuncts tends to be less structured; however, some monitoring still occurs. For example, one of Dawn's (FD administrator) responsibilities is to perform routine course checks each semester to ensure online adjuncts meet expectations. She coaches instructors, providing them with constructive feedback based on her observations. Deanna's (CTL administrator) team of faculty quality managers, who work for the institution's center for teaching and learning, conduct course observations using an observation form. They send the form to the instructor's department, which is used as part of the instructor's annual evaluation. Both Dawn and Deanna said the course observation process informs their professional development topics. If they notice

several instructors struggling in a particular area, they will focus professional development efforts in that area.

The accrediting body that governs Lex's (OP administrator) institution requires 20% of their adjunct faculty to be observed once per term in all units. Adjuncts are observed once per year by peer reviewers after passing the onboarding process. She evaluates online adjuncts using data from the peer observation form and student course evaluations. Full-time faculty go through a different observation and evaluation process. She said she is a "big shared governance person" and tries to get faculty members' feedback on many of the things she implements, such as the peer observation form.

Student Course Evaluations. In addition to observing and providing online adjunct faculty with feedback, the administrators who have access to student course evaluations spoke about monitoring these data. They acknowledged that student course evaluations do not always accurately portray the quality of an instructor's course facilitation. Several participants also acknowledged that instructors occasionally have life circumstances that prevent them from frequently engaging with students, resulting in lower course evaluation scores. Given this, the participants said they look for patterns in the course evaluation data so they can address areas of concern as they arise. They also use the data to help them determine if an online adjunct needs any coaching or professional development, providing them with additional assistance as applicable.

Anita (OP administrator) said she reviews all student course evaluations every term, taking notes on overarching themes related to the course design and instruction and following up with instructors as needed. She explained:

So sometimes I've even had to coach full-time faculty to listen to the majority of the voices and to pay attention to the outliers, but not to put their whole focus on the outliers, you know? And I've been able to do the same with my part-time faculty, "you know what, here are the things that I heard you being affirmed for. Yeah, if there was one thing you might want to work on, it might be this." I kind of interpret the feedback for full and part-time faculty just in the "here's what I heard," you know?

Anita believes most faculty see this as an affirming process because she acknowledges what they are doing well and what they can work to improve. Because she regularly communicates with faculty about their student course evaluations, they know she reads them. Some of them contact her when they have had a bad semester, letting her know that they did not receive favorable feedback and why. She reiterated that she looks for trends and rarely uses the data to make hiring decisions.

Tom (CTL administrator) follows a similar process as Anita. Recall that Tom is a director for a teaching, learning, and assessment center. The center reviews all course evaluations at the end of each term, including the course evaluations of online adjunct faculty. This process allows his team to send a personalized note to high-performing online adjuncts, pointing out what they did well. They also connect with online adjuncts who did not have a great semester and discuss ways to support them going forward. If an online adjunct does not improve long-term and does not meet instructional standards, he has a conversation with them about reducing their load and potentially letting them go if they do not improve. He said those conversations are "never easy to have," but thinks they would be more difficult if he had not worked to establish relationships with them.

Communication

Similar to socialization, communication emerged early in data analysis as one of the four key processes for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Participants overwhelmingly spoke about the importance of communicating with the online adjuncts they support. Many of the extant documents they submitted also exemplified various forms of communication with online adjuncts, such as digital newsletters, email messages, and screenshots of faculty resource sites. Recall from Chapter 2 that communication is essential for supporting and integrating adjunct faculty (Ridge & Ritt, 2017; Roueche et al., 1996; Tipple, 2010). Ridge and Ritt (2017) expressed the importance of timely, consistent, and respectful communication when engaging online adjunct faculty. Tipple (2010) posited that effective leadership of online adjunct faculty involves empathetic communication, which is based on an emotional appreciation for another's feelings.

Indeed, the participants in this study spoke about building trust and making an effort to get to know their online adjunct faculty as individuals. The participants also exhibit respect for the online adjunct faculty they support, demonstrated in the ways they communicate with them and about them to others. Their communication patterns help break down barriers between full- and part-time faculty, creating a more collegial environment. The participants discussed the importance of frequent and timely communication, describing the various methods they use to convey relevant information to online adjunct faculty. However, the communication between the participants and the online adjuncts they support is not one way. Many participants have created outlets for online adjuncts to provide feedback and share ideas with their colleagues.

To represent these various communication practices, I define communication as cultivating relationships among online adjuncts through collegial dialogue and empowering them

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with timely and relevant information and resources. I grouped participants' practices under two sub-categories: cultivating relationships and empowering with information (see Figure 7). Next, I will describe these sub-categories and related practices.

Figure 7

Communication Practices for Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
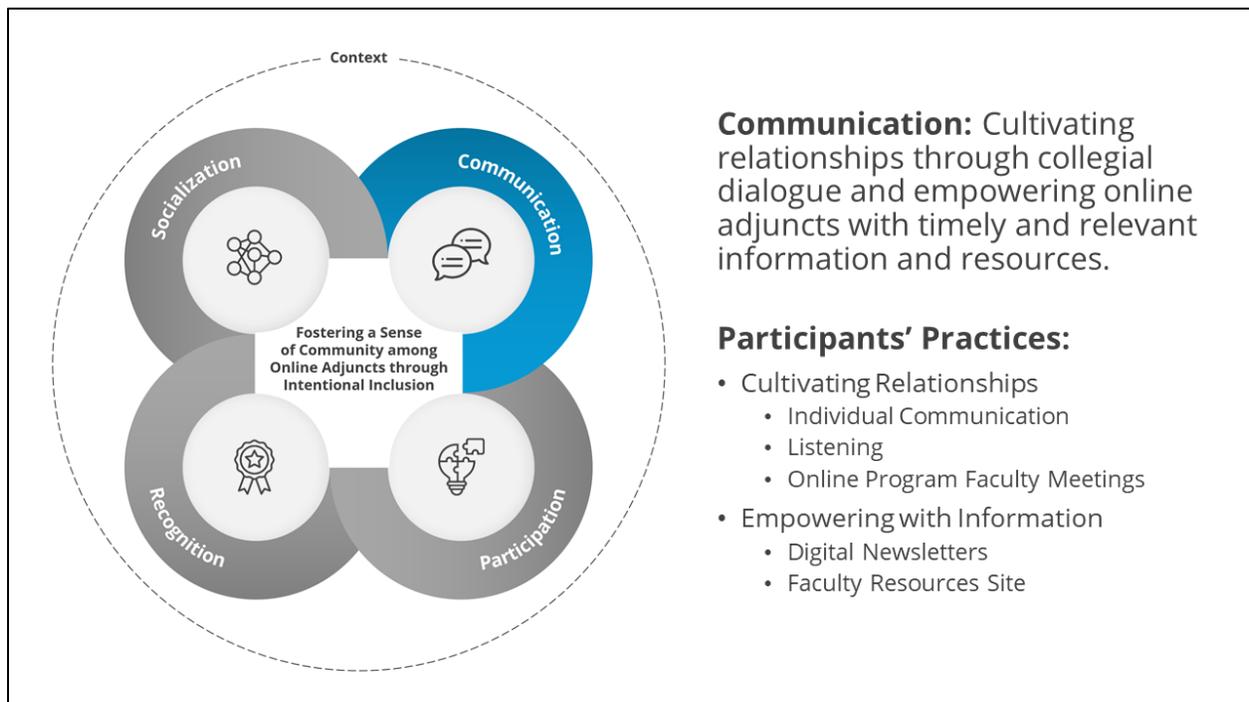
Cultivating Relationships. As mentioned in Chapter 2, collegiality is an essential element for effective faculty work. It involves trust, cooperative effort, and mutual respect. Faculty are more likely to thrive when they feel cared for, respected, and valued for their contributions to the institution (Gappa & Austin, 2010; Gappa et al., 2007). The participants in this study spoke about cultivating relationships with the adjuncts they support and providing them with opportunities to develop relationships with one another. These relationships are fostered through collegial dialogue in which adjuncts are treated with respect and care. Three

common practices among participants for cultivating relationships include individual communication, listening, and inviting online adjuncts to participate in online program faculty meetings, which I will describe in the next three sections.

Individual Communication. Several participants spoke about developing relationships with the online adjuncts they support and getting to know them as individuals. This involves intentional and individualized communication. For example, Kerri (OP administrator) said personalized contact is essential for virtual communities. When Kerri became program chair, she scheduled meetings with each adjunct because she wanted to connect and provide them with better support. Initially, the adjuncts were worried about these meetings because her predecessor never met with them individually or took the time to get to know them. Kerri said it is crucial to be intentional about forging personal connections to understand each individual and what is happening in their lives. The challenges one adjunct faces might be completely different from the challenges of another. She thinks there should be a supervisor or someone staying connected to each online adjunct so they know why someone may not be performing as well and how they can best support them.

Like Kerri, Lex (OP administrator) thinks creating a community for adjuncts is vital. She described herself as a "people person" who likes making connections and forming relationships. She takes the time to talk to adjuncts and solicit their feedback, which has helped her determine their needs. She also spends a lot of her time engaging with them and making them feel like part of the institution. Lex said that because she works hard to build relationships, she finds it easier to give constructive feedback when needed. To her, it makes sense to engage with those who are teaching the majority of students at her institution, which in her case are online adjunct faculty.

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Listening. A few participants spoke about another aspect of communication, which is listening. Kerri (OP administrator) said one of the most significant strategies she uses to foster a sense of community is listening carefully and responding accordingly. She provided an example:

> If they're complaining about something, it doesn't necessarily mean you can fix that, but listening to what they've got going on and hearing the feedback. And, and I would say not just hearing, but listening and, you know, reading between the lines when they're saying, "well, this is isolating or this is frustrating or whatever," reading between the lines to think, okay. You know, clearly they're frustrated with this. We could do these things to help lessen that frustration.

Kerri said she is a firm believer in two-way communication and stressed the importance of listening. Recall from Chapter 4 that Kerri's dissertation research focused on virtual teams. Her dissertation research continues to influence her work as a virtual manager. One of the biggest mistakes she has seen virtual managers make is not engaging enough with their team members. She believes virtual managers need to be intentional about communicating regularly with their team, which also applies to HE administrators responsible for supporting online adjuncts.

Similar to Kerri, Kayla (CTL administrator) and Katie (OP administrator) spoke about the importance of listening. When Kayla first started in her role, she met with department chairs and adjunct faculty to discuss their challenges. She tries to listen and learn and then offer reasonable solutions. Her advice to others would be to listen and keep communication open at all levels. Katie (OP administrator) also feels building community among online adjunct faculty requires listening to them and being responsive to their needs. She explained, "They need to feel like they're getting quick, accurate, timely, responsive support for those day-to-day problems.

Um, and kind of just like Maslow's hierarchy. If their basic needs are met, you can move up toward more."

Online Program Faculty Meetings. In addition to cultivating relationships with online adjunct faculty, the participants create opportunities for online adjuncts to engage in collegial dialogue and make connections with other faculty. They do this through the ongoing training and development opportunities previously described, such as workshops, faculty learning communities, teaching circles, and mini-conferences. Through these forums, adjuncts can discuss topics of interest with their peers. Another way participants create opportunities for online adjuncts to engage in collegial dialogue is by inviting them to online program faculty meetings.

Casey, Regina, Tamara, and Anita (OP administrators) hold recurring faculty meetings as a way to communicate information, discuss program improvements, provide professional development, and create connections. They view these meetings as an essential strategy for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. The meetings are held virtually using video conferencing technology. The meetings are scheduled monthly or several times per year in alignment with the academic calendar. The administrators said they spend significant time planning these meetings, ensuring there are several agenda items and opportunities for their online adjunct faculty to contribute to the conversation. Given their part-time status, attendance for online adjuncts is usually optional. The participants shared that more than half of their online adjunct faculty attend these meetings, which they believe indicates that their online adjuncts find the meetings highly valuable. Regina and Anita described how they format their recurring meetings, briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

Regina holds five 2-hour meetings a year for their full- and part-time faculty who teach online. These meetings are scheduled in the evening and recorded for those who cannot attend.

Regina always starts the meetings with celebrations, highlighting online adjuncts' recent accomplishments. Her team also discusses any relevant program or policy changes. Additionally, she asks the dean, librarian, and others to attend the meetings to share updates and highlight the resources available to students, giving online adjunct faculty access to various administrators and staff and facilitating dialogue between these groups.

During the second portion of the meeting, they discuss special topics, such as "demystifying publishing." Regina and her colleague chose this topic because some of their adjuncts expressed interest in publishing but seemed intimidated or did not know where to begin. She wanted to empower them with information and normalize that the publishing process is full of rejections. She has published numerous articles and has been rejected several times. She said she would not have felt comfortable sharing her failures had she not established a supportive community of faculty, staff, and administrators:

> I don't think I would feel comfortable sharing my failures so publicly had we not had this community. So I think it goes both ways because I can be a little more vulnerable because we have this really supportive community … everyone is really encouraging and supportive of one another. So I think it's valuable for me to be part of this community and, you know, not just be creating the community for everybody else.

Regina's comment reflects the emotional safety individuals have when they feel a sense of community, as posited by McMillan and Chavis (1986).

Regina facilitates lightning round presentations at the end of the online program faculty meetings. A few attendees get one slide and 2 minutes to present something related to online teaching and learning. These presentations have served as a stepping stone for further professional development. Some adjuncts have turned their lightning round presentations into

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conference presentations or blog posts. Regina said the meetings also function as a "reunion of sorts" because faculty reconnect. She enjoys these meetings because of the community aspect and the learning that happens. She said meeting attendees are "constantly chatting using the chat function, and it is fun to see their participation in this way."

Anita also holds recurring online program faculty meetings for all full- and part-time faculty but formats them a little differently than Regina. Five years before this dissertation study, Anita decided to start holding "faculty gatherings" as part of an action learning project she completed for a leadership fellowship program. The project's focus was to intentionally promote two of the school's core values: excellence and community. She purposefully chose the word "gatherings" instead of "meetings" to feel like one less thing people were required to attend. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the gatherings were held in a room equipped with video conferencing technology so people could attend in-person or virtually. At the time of Anita's interviews, the meetings were being held virtually due to the pandemic.

When Anita first held faculty gatherings, she did not know what to expect but said the gatherings have become everyone's favorite meeting. Faculty are not required to attend, but most do because they get to connect with their colleagues and discuss things relevant to their role. The gatherings have become a space for faculty development and program improvement. At each gathering, they collectively set the agenda of things they wanted to talk about. For example, they have discussed how to conduct a more systematic instructional design review process. They have also shared strategies for effective online teaching.

Anita said the gatherings have helped break down barriers between full- and part-time faculty. For example, when the school launched the online program, the full-time faculty wanted the courses taught by full-time faculty. When Anita arrived 5 years later, they wanted at least

half of the courses to be taught by full-time faculty. Anita said no one talks about how many courses need to be taught by full-time faculty anymore. She thinks the full-time faculty view the part-time faculty as "one of us." She believes this is a result of the faculty gatherings because full-time faculty can get to know the part-time faculty and realize they can make meaningful contributions to the program.

Regina and Anita spoke passionately about their recurring online faculty meetings, saying they think these meetings are one of the most impactful strategies they use to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Casey and Tamara (OP administrators) also spoke of the importance of recurring meetings with their online faculty. The format of these meetings allows online adjunct faculty to be actively engaged. They are part of the dialogue and treated equally as their full-time colleagues. They get to learn new approaches to teaching and learning, share their ideas, and connect with their peers. They also learn more about the organization and their role within it through the information communicated by the administrators, staff, and full-time faculty, serving as a form of socialization. Furthermore, their expertise is affirmed when they are asked to present their instructional approaches to their peers, acting as a form of recognition.

Empowering With Information. Recall that having access to resources and information was a common idea in participants' definition of sense of community. The participants consistently spoke about sharing information and resources with the online adjuncts they support in various ways, one being the recurring online program faculty meetings previously described. Others talked about sending emails frequently, noting the importance of timely, relevant communication. For example, Casey sends a "welcome to the term" email to all online instructors at the beginning of the term, communicating enrollment, new faculty or courses, and

"housekeeping" items such as academic deadlines. She also sends an "end of term" email at the

conclusion of each term, communicating grading guidelines and thanking instructors for their

help in providing a great student experience.

Similarly, Tom (CTL administrator) sends monthly notices to faculty, including

reminders and other important information. He said they also created an email address so online

faculty can communicate directly with the online unit. Pattie (OP administrator) also spoke about

frequently communicating with online adjuncts. She described her communication style as

"light" and said she tries to inject humor into her messages when appropriate to help ease stress.

She found this particularly important during the fall semester when faculty were navigating

teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to sending emails and inviting online adjuncts to recurring faculty meetings,

the two most common practices participants use to share information and resources are digital

newsletters and faculty resource sites. The participants spoke about wanting to empower online

adjuncts with the information they need to succeed in their roles. Digital newsletters and faculty

resources sites help accomplish this, which I will describe next.

Digital Newsletters. Seven of the 17 participants (Dawn, Deanna, Lex, Katie, Kayla,

Symone, Tom) shared that they develop or contribute to a digital newsletter sent to faculty

weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. These seven participants submitted one or more newsletters as an

extant document to exemplify how they foster a sense of community among online adjunct

faculty. Commonalities between these newsletters include general reminders, teaching tips and

resources, upcoming professional development opportunities, and instructor spotlights. The

teaching tips are either written by the participant or a current full- or part-time faculty member.

In speaking with participants about these newsletters, I discovered that Lex, Kayla, Dawn, and Tom took the initiative to develop newsletters specifically for online adjunct faculty. Several years ago, Lex (OP administrator) and Kayla (CTL administrator) began sending newsletters to the adjunct faculty they support to help them feel more connected to the institution. Lex noticed that although various offices at the university sent information to faculty, none of it was targeted for adjuncts. She started sending a quarterly newsletter to adjuncts, explaining, "So I was really kind of trying to find ways to give them more information about us, make them feel like they were, this was their university too. So that was kind of the reasoning behind starting this."

Similarly, Kayla wanted to raise awareness among adjuncts about the resources available on campus that they might find helpful and important. Both Lex and Kayla reported receiving anecdotal feedback from adjunct faculty who said they appreciate the newsletters. Kayla mentioned that she occasionally receives a question from an adjunct she has never heard from before, leading her to believe that adjuncts read the newsletter and view her and the center as a resource they can come to with questions. She believes the newsletter creates engagement between the center and the institution's adjunct faculty.

Like Lex and Kayla, Dawn (FD administrator) began sending a newsletter to build community and share information. The newsletter was something she decided to do on her own. One of her responsibilities is to review instructors' facilitation of their online courses and provide them with feedback. She said she did not think she would be very effective in giving faculty feedback without first making connections and building relationships with them. Similar to teaching students, Dawn felt the faculty would not pay attention to her feedback if she were a

stranger to them. The weekly newsletter is a tactic she uses to build connections with them so they know who she is and see her as a resource.

Tom (CTL administrator) took a slightly different approach with his newsletter compared to the other participants. He has been with his institution for more than 8 years, serving in roles of increasing responsibility. He said there used to be a divide between "traditional" full-time faculty who teach on-campus and online adjunct faculty. As a result, he has had to defend the qualifications of online adjuncts to his colleagues, explaining that many of their online adjuncts have advanced degrees, publish articles, and present at conferences, but also happen to have a day job outside of academia. Tom had been sending a newsletter to their online faculty, who were primarily adjuncts, but decided to start sending it to the entire campus to help break down the barriers between their "traditional" and online faculty. Part of the newsletter showcased the work online adjunct faculty were doing in and outside of the online classroom, exposing the rest of the campus to their expertise. The newsletter has evolved since then, but still contains faculty highlights. Tom shared that he has been very purposeful in integrating online adjuncts into the campus community and said it has been fulfilling to see the level of collegiality improve between them and full-time faculty.

These examples show how the participants use newsletters as more than a mechanism to communicate information to the faculty they serve. They also use newsletters to help build connections and foster a sense of community. Interestingly, most participants use a portion of their newsletters to spotlight one or more adjunct faculty members, giving them a presence among their peers. These adjunct faculty features also serve as a form of public recognition, showcasing their expertise and experience. The participants also use the newsletter to share

upcoming professional development opportunities and events, encouraging adjunct faculty to participate.

Faculty Resource Site. In addition to sending digital newsletters, the majority of participants use digital spaces to share administrative information, instructional resources, technical how-to guides, recordings of past professional development opportunities, and a calendar of upcoming professional development opportunities with faculty. These digital spaces are either a public-facing website or a password-protected course space in the learning management system. Some institutions use an intranet site to share information with faculty. Six participants (Casey, Deanna, Katie, Lex, Tamara, and Tom) submitted a link to their public-facing website or a screenshot of a password-protected site as one of their artifacts demonstrating how they intentionally foster a sense of community among adjunct faculty. As shown in Figure 8, these sites serve as a one-stop-shop, allowing online adjuncts to access relevant information and resources whenever they need them.

Tamara (OP administrator) shared in her interview and written summary submitted with Figure 8 that they created a faculty resource site a year before this study. They plan to build on the site over time. She said having a single online space where faculty can find resources at any time makes it more likely that they will seek them out. She thinks the site also conveys the message that the school values teaching and efforts to improve instruction. Next, I will describe the third process that emerged for fostering a sense of community among online adjuncts through intentional inclusion.

Figure 8

Image of Faculty Resource Site Submitted by Tamara
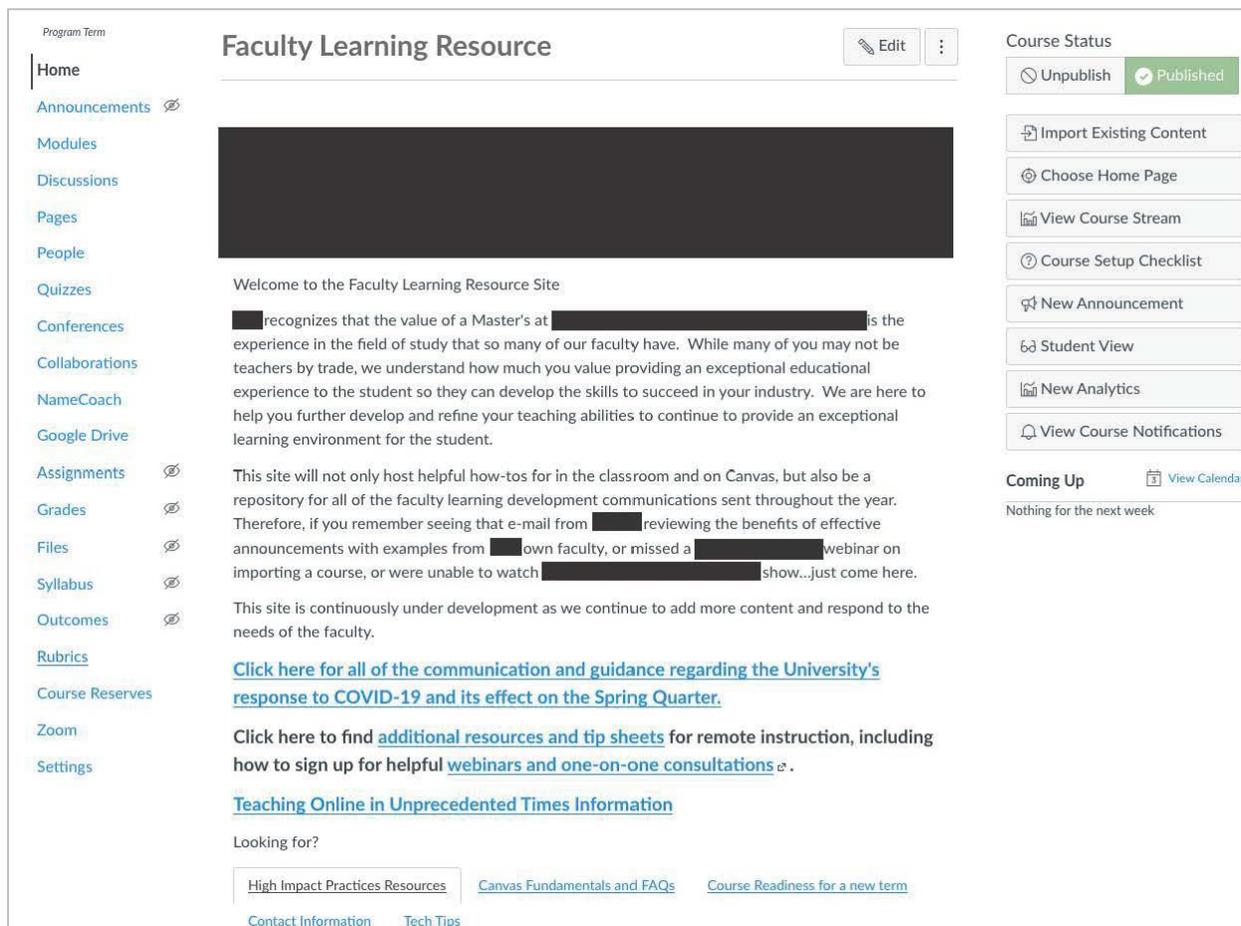
Participation

Compared to socialization and communication, the concept of participation emerged later

in data analysis. The HE administrator participants provide multiple pathways for online adjunct

faculty to participate in activities beyond teaching. Their participation in these activities is more

than an invitation; they get to interact and contribute in similar ways as their full-time

counterparts. As such, I define the concept of participation as providing online adjuncts with

opportunities to contribute to the institutional mission and engage with others outside of the

online classroom. Note that communication is inherent in this concept as it would be challenging to participate without utilizing some form of communication.

Allowing online adjunct faculty to participate in campus traditions and decision-making fosters a sense of belonging, aligning with the sense of community theory. Through meaningful participation, online adjunct faculty can gain influence and develop shared emotional connections, key elements of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These interactions are essential for breaking down barriers between full-time and contingent faculty, creating a more collegial culture (Gappa et al., 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2014).

Through participation, online adjunct faculty are given an opportunity to influence the community, sharing their thoughts and expertise. At some of the participants' institutions, online adjuncts get to participate in decision-making and program improvements. They also learn community norms through their interactions with the community, serving as a form of socialization. Recall that influence is an element of sense of community. Members are more attracted to a community in which they feel influential. At the same time, community cohesiveness relies on the community's ability to influence its members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In the following sections, I will describe the various participation opportunities participants provide to the online adjunct faculty they support, summarized in Figure 9. I organized these practices into two categories: providing opportunities to engage and providing opportunities to contribute.

Figure 9

Participation Practices for Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
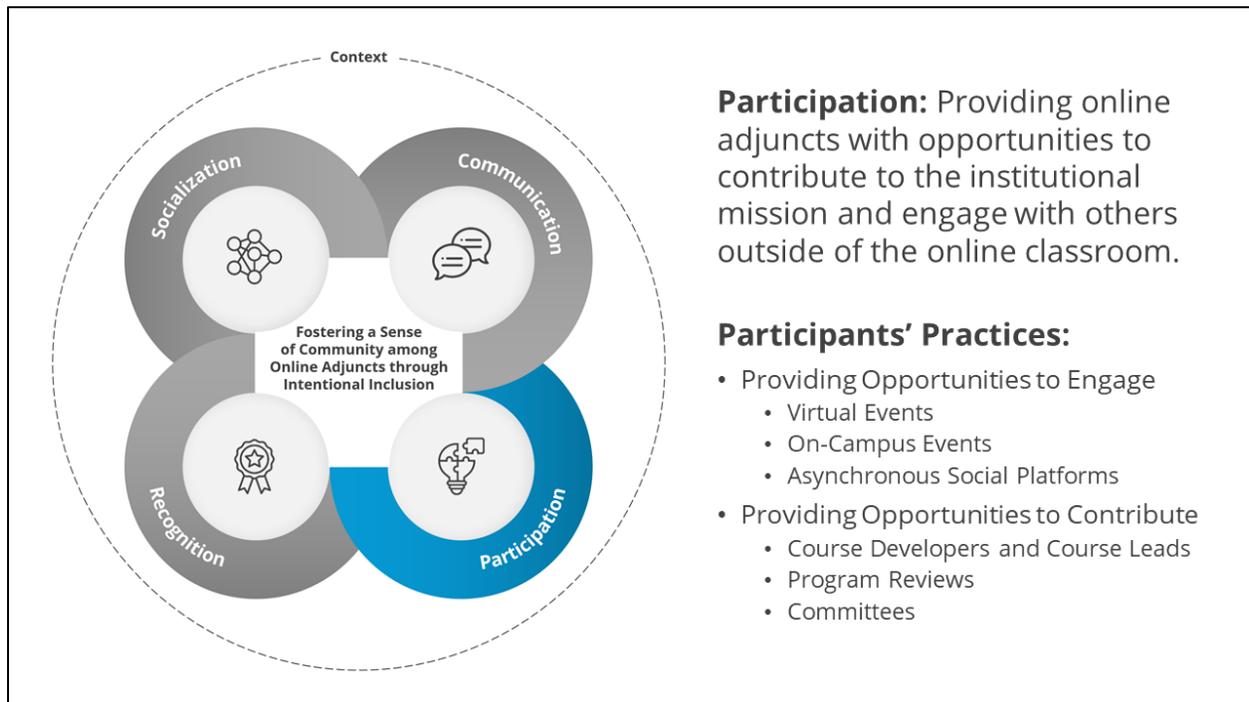
Providing Opportunities to Engage. Faculty engagement is defined as "the actions and behaviors that faculty and institutions take to facilitate and support faculty professional development and growth" (Thirolf, 2017, p. 305). One example of faculty engagement is when an institution offers professional development opportunities, and faculty partake in those opportunities. Recall that participants offer a variety of professional development opportunities to online adjuncts. These activities are participatory in nature, giving them a chance to discuss ideas with peers and apply what they learn to their instructional practices.

Another example of faculty engagement is when an institution provides faculty with opportunities to connect, and faculty participate in those opportunities, building on them to foster strong, fulfilling relationships (Thirolf, 2017). The participants in this study provide online adjuncts with multiple opportunities to connect with others, including the previously described

socialization and communication practices. The participants also engage online adjuncts by

inviting them to virtual and on-campus events. Additionally, several participants use

asynchronous social platforms as a way to engage online adjuncts beyond the classroom. I will

describe these practices in the following sections.

Virtual Events. Some of the participants engage online adjunct faculty by inviting them

to virtual events. These events may be formal, such as a student award ceremony, or informal,

like a virtual lunch or happy hour for faculty and staff. Katie (OP administrator) shared an

example of including online adjunct faculty at a formal event. They hosted a virtual celebration

for students who received a scholarship, were on the dean's list, or were inducted into an honor

society during the fall semester. All faculty were invited to attend the celebration. At the end of

the event, they gave attendees time to express their thoughts. Many students thanked faculty

members who were at the event, some of whom were online adjunct faculty. This form of public

recognition helps online adjuncts feel appreciated and communicates the valuable role they play

in the student experience.

Kerri (OP administrator) discussed including online adjunct faculty at informal virtual

social events. A few weeks before this dissertation study, they started holding virtual lunches and

happy hours for faculty and staff. The administrators take turns hosting the social events. One of

their happy hours lasted several hours because people had such a good time. Kerri said there was

a lot of enthusiasm for the happy hours, and faculty and staff said they have enjoyed connecting

with others through a non-work-related meeting. She is not sure as many people would attend if

they "were not in the middle of a pandemic;" however, they plan to continue offering these

virtual social events as long as people keep showing up. She said that even if only one or two

people attend, they will still offer virtual social events to keep those employees happy and engaged.

      On-Campus Events. Inviting online adjunct faculty to participate in on-campus events is another strategy several participants use to engage them and foster a sense of community. Some of these events include homecoming, online program residencies, and commencement. Attendance at these events is optional, though the participants said many online adjuncts attend, especially if they are within driving distance of campus. Some schools reimburse online adjunct faculty for their travel expenses, while others do not because of budgetary constraints. For many of their online students and faculty, these campus events are their only opportunity to meet other people from their school in-person, so the participants see these events as important community-building opportunities. Tom (CTL administrator) described what he does for their online faculty during homecoming:

> We've worked hard at transforming some other things. So like for our annual founder's week, which is like our homecoming kind of a thing, you know, we set up a booth for our online faculty to be able to come and hang out so that there was a space for them. If they happen to make it to campus, they can feel like they belong there.

Similarly, Tamara's (OP administrator) school hosts an annual symposium for graduate programs the same weekend as homecoming. Online students and faculty can come to campus to attend conference-style sessions. They make sure the faculty program directors can attend, compensating them for their travel expenses. There is a homecoming breakfast and a reception, followed by program-specific breakout events. Faculty and students can connect, and faculty also have an opportunity to connect with senior leadership.

Casey (OP administrator) invites faculty who live within a 3-hour radius to their online programs' on-campus residencies. Most of their online adjunct faculty live within driving distance of the campus, so it is an easy trip for them. There are usually 35-45 adjunct faculty who attend the Friday night reception. They have also had a few online adjunct faculty lead or co-lead a residency. She calls them her "super adjuncts" because they are highly engaged and have a strong professional background that adds value to the program. She said she does not have a way to measure whether adjunct faculty attendance at residencies increases engagement in the online classroom. However, she thinks these events help connect the adjuncts to their students, other faculty, and the school, thus fostering a sense of community.

Perhaps the most meaningful on-campus event to invite online adjuncts to is commencement, not simply getting to watch but also participating in commencement activities. Anita, Lex, Tom, and Tamara said they invite their online adjunct faculty to graduation, and many attend. However, for Tom (CTL administrator), it took more than 10 years for other campus offices to approve his request to allow online adjunct faculty to march in their regalia at graduation. He shared, "Yeah, so that's been an ongoing thing with lots of resistance, but I think that we finally have cracked that barrier at this point." He said several online adjunct faculty who lived near campus could march in graduation, which meant a lot to them. Tom also was able to convince others to allow online adjunct faculty to participate in the graduation brunch:

> We have held traditionally a, like a brunch before graduation. And so, you know, we'll
> have people from literally all over the world who come to our campus, our online
> students with the, you know, either the undergrad or the grad programs. And that's been
> another opportunity where we have allowed a few, again, this has been a process, that a
> few of those online adjuncts to be able to speak as faculty members at this brunch.

Anita (OP administrator) also went in-depth about the school's graduation events. When she became dean, she invited online adjunct faculty to march in commencement. When doing so, she said some of them were so happy that they practically cried tears of joy:

I mean, the first time we had our graduate commencement, our hooding ceremony, and I invited part-time faculty to come, some of them were almost weeping that they got to walk in regalia with the full-time faculty to support the students. And it's just like, it's moments, you develop community in moments, you know?

Figure 10

Screenshot of an Extant Document Submitted by Anita

Below is an email that I received after inviting our PT faculty to attend both baccalaureate and graduation.

Hello ████,
Yes, I would love to come to baccalaureate and graduation! Thank you for inviting me. I admire the way you practice inclusion. :)
All the best,
████

████ sent me an email and a picture after baccalaureate:

What a great looking team! Thank you for inviting me. I am honored and humbled to be included with the ████ faculty.

One of her artifacts included a message she received from an online adjunct faculty member that she invited to graduation, as shown in Figure 10. The adjunct acknowledged Anita's efforts to be inclusive. Anita summarized all of the various things she does to foster a sense of community and shared, "it's all the little things you do that make a difference. Not that you just declare you're going to have a community, but you actually work to build it, you know, and care about your people."

During Anita's second interview, I asked her if there was any resistance to allowing online adjunct faculty to walk at graduation. As the dean of the school, she could not recall whether she asked anyone for permission to invite them. She felt like it was important to include online adjuncts not only because they play an essential role in the online program, but also to make them visible to the rest of the university. She explained:

> I feel like because it's an online program, our students, and then some of our part-time faculty are invisible to the rest of the university, you know? And so some of the inviting them to the public events, like that is a way of saying, no, they are us. They are part of us, you know? … It's like, yeah, no, they're here and they're not even being paid to be here. … And so it's making them visible cause our students, the students who come to commencement, because we have no residency requirement, for some of them, it's the first time they're setting foot on campus, you know? And they don't see any difference between the part-time faculty and the full-time faculty in terms of who were their teachers throughout the program.

In both her first and second interview, she said "they are us" when talking about online adjuncts. As Anita's passage indicates, she works to foster a sense of community among online adjuncts through intentional inclusion.

Asynchronous Social Platforms. Tipple (2010) recommends using online asynchronous networking systems to engage and involve online adjuncts. These platforms help accommodate the physical distances and time constraints online adjunct faculty encounter. Indeed, three of the participants, Tom, Marie, and Deanna, described efforts they or their institutions have taken to engage online adjunct faculty using mobile and web-based asynchronous social platforms like Facebook, Path, and Slack, with varying levels of success. Facebook

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(https://www.facebook.com/) is a free social networking application through which users can create, share, discuss, and modify web-based and user-generated content (Nations, 2020). Formerly known as Campus, Path (https://pathhq.com/) is a portal that connects students, staff, faculty, and alumni with the people, information, systems, and tools relevant to their interests and needs. Slack (https://slack.com/) is a channel-based messaging platform that allows users to send messages and share files. In the following paragraphs, I will describe how these applications have been used to engage online adjunct faculty at the participants' respective institutions.

Several years before this study, Tom (CTL administrator) created a Facebook group for online adjunct faculty to build relationships with them and help them connect with one another. Tom described the Facebook group as "fun" because he gets to know the online faculty better. It has become a place for people to share recent accomplishments, such as completing a dissertation or speaking at a conference. He pays attention to the Facebook group and will send online adjuncts a note when he sees something happening in their lives, like a promotion or birth of a child. He also checks in with online adjuncts and asks how they are doing. He said he wants to make sure they feel valued rather than "cheap labor filling a slot."

Deanna's (CTL administrator) university recently adopted Path, which she described as an online community similar to Facebook. There are pages for the various colleges and administrative offices as well as student groups. They can have polls and discussions and opportunities for people to connect. They used to have a faculty resources site in Canvas to share information, but have since migrated to Path and are trying to drive faculty to it instead of Canvas. They have not seen a lot of online adjunct faculty engagement through Path yet, but it had only been in place for a couple of months at the time of Deanna's interview.

Marie (FD administrator) said her unit has tried to use Slack to engage faculty, but the channel is not very active. They have not figured out a way to use it that engages people and creates interactions. However, she shared that their school is developing an open campus platform that will allow students and faculty to create pages and discussion groups. She said they use Blackboard as their learning management system, but it is not as interactive and open for participation across courses or programs. They are hoping the open campus platform will allow for more community building.

Providing Opportunities to Contribute. Tipple (2010) posited that if online adjunct faculty are to be fully engaged in the institutional mission, those responsible for leading them must find ways to involve them in the full scope of institutional life. This includes invitations to institutional events such as those previously mentioned. This also includes providing online adjuncts with opportunities to broaden their role and contribute to the institution beyond their teaching responsibilities (Tipple, 2010). Indeed, several participants spoke about various ways online adjuncts can expand their role with the institution should they choose. As described in the preceding sections, online adjuncts can serve as mentors for new online adjuncts at many of the participants' institutions. Additional ways online adjuncts can contribute include serving as course developers and course leads, participating in program reviews, and serving on various committees. Next, I will describe these practices and why they believe these activities foster a sense of community among online adjuncts.

Course Developers and Course Leads. As described in Chapter 4, full-time faculty are typically responsible for developing and managing online courses at most participants' institutions. Depending on the institution, online adjunct faculty can also serve as course developers. This provides online adjuncts with an opportunity to contribute to the program

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beyond their normal teaching responsibilities. By entrusting an online adjunct with this task, the institution symbolically affirms the online adjunct's subject matter expertise and teaching abilities.

Kerri and Deanna, who both work for global campuses, said they have such a broad scope of programs that they sometimes need to hire subject matter experts to develop courses on specialized topics. In these cases, the subject matter experts are paid a stipend to develop the course. Both of their organizations use a master course model, so the subject matter expert would be responsible for creating the master course and potentially facilitating one or more sections as an online adjunct. Though the other participants do not work for global campuses, many said online adjuncts have served as course developers at their institutions. If an adjunct serves in this type of role, they usually receive training and the support of an instructional designer. Additionally, they may receive a course outline with expected learning outcomes from the faculty program director or department chair.

Recall from Chapter 4 that the majority of participants said their institution uses a master course model in their online programs or is moving toward an online master course model. In most cases, a course lead is responsible for revising the master course and ensuring online adjuncts understand the learning objectives, learning activities, and assignments. Lex, Casey, and Anita (all OP administrators) shared that several of their online adjuncts have become course leads and are compensated accordingly. Anita said four of the 11 full-time faculty she has hired since she became dean of the school of education were once online adjuncts for the school's online master's program. She sees this as a sign that the online adjuncts enjoy the community she has created and that the full-time faculty see them as equals. She commented, "So that's been

interesting too, you know, that we've had people who have been working for us part-time that have also wanted to join us full-time."

Program Reviews. Involving online adjunct faculty in program reviews serves as another opportunity for online adjunct faculty to participate in decision making and program improvements, thus broadening their role. Tom (CTL administrator) and Tamara (OP administrator) described how they involve their online adjunct faculty in program reviews. Tom shared that when they conducted their first online program review, he asked several longtime online adjuncts to be part of the assessment team. It was an enriching experience for the adjuncts to be part of the program review team because it allowed them to share their observations and validated their expertise. It was also an opportunity for the on-campus faculty to see that knowledge and quality adjunct faculty teach for the institution's online programs.

Like Tom, Tamara involves online adjunct faculty in the program review process. Although the program review only happens once every few years, it allows online adjunct faculty to engage beyond the classroom. Tamara also involves a few online adjunct faculty in the capstone assessment review process. She relies on the assistant directors to identify engaged and successful adjuncts in the program to be involved with the process. They also try to involve at least one capstone instructor. Tamara's team meets with the faculty to explain the process. They give the group student work samples, develop a rubric, assess student work, and produce a final report with recommendations. She views the capstone assessment review process as an opportunity to develop faculty and foster community. The adjunct faculty learn more about the program's curriculum and how the courses align with the capstone assignment. They also get to have conversations with one another.

Committees. Recall from Chapter 2 that adjunct faculty are usually not expected to serve on committees as part of their responsibilities. However, allowing adjuncts to serve on committees involves them in the decision-making process, giving them a voice in institutional matters that impact their role (Kezar & Sam, 2013, 2014; Roueche et al., 1996). A few of the participants confirmed that their adjunct faculty can serve on committees if they choose. For instance, Tom (CTL administrator) said he has invited online adjunct faculty to be part of several committees over the years and has given them a gift card or small gift in exchange for their time. Pattie (OP administrator) said adjunct faculty can serve on their graduate admissions advisory committee if they choose. The committee meets several times per year to review admissions applications. These meetings used to be held in person but were being held virtually at the time of Pattie's interview due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lex (OP administrator) sees shared governance as a way to create a sense of community among adjunct faculty. The adjunct faculty who teach in their online and executive programs can serve on the adjunct faculty development committee or the grievance committee. She works closely with the adjunct faculty development committee to discuss and plan professional development. She also mentioned that she has a great relationship with committee members and enjoys brainstorming with them. Lex believes it is important to include adjunct faculty in shared governance, especially if a university decides to move to a predominantly adjunct-driven instructional model like the online programs at her institution. At the same time, she acknowledged continuity challenges related to involving adjunct faculty in shared governance, explaining:

Obviously you can't engage somebody who only teaches once a term or who you never

see again. You have to have continuity with a certain level of adjuncts, and that's really

where you're going to bring in your shared governance.

Committee member continuity challenges appear to be common among the institutions

represented by participants. For example, Madison (CTL administrator) shared that her

university used to have a special committee for adjunct faculty chaired by an adjunct. Once the

chair stepped down, the committee dissolved and has not re-convened; however, there is still

space for the committee in their faculty governance structure. She also said that adjuncts do not

get paid extra for serving on the committee, highlighting compensation challenges related to

involving adjunct faculty in shared governance. Similar to Madison, Kayla (CTL administrator)

shared that although an adjunct faculty representative serves on the institution's faculty senate,

adjuncts are not broadly involved in university governance or service. Some departments try to

include adjunct faculty in governance or on committees, but adjuncts are not expected to take on

any responsibilities outside of teaching.

Recognition

Recognition emerged as the fourth process for fostering a sense of community among

online adjuncts through intentional inclusion. As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the challenges

adjunct faculty face is lack of recognition for their teaching, scholarship, and service, leading to

feelings of unappreciation (Benton & Li, 2015; Dolan, 2011; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006). One way

to ensure the equitable treatment of adjunct faculty is to make them eligible for recognition and

awards for outstanding performances and publicize their contributions. They should also be

included in ceremonies where recognition and awards are given (Gappa et al., 2007). The

participants in this study shared various ways they recognize their online adjunct faculty publicly, privately, and symbolically.

Initially, I categorized recognition under socialization, viewing recognition as the final step in supporting and developing online adjunct faculty. However, I felt recognition needed to be raised to a supporting concept in my emergent theory based on the ways my participants spoke about it. Recognition requires more intentional effort than many of the other socialization practices described because it is not tied to developing online adjuncts in their role. As the participants shared, it can be harder to prioritize and justify recognition practices when time and resources are limited. Yet, the participants said it is vital to acknowledge the time, value, and expertise of the online adjuncts they support.

Recognition is also a retention mechanism, improving job satisfaction. Recall Herzberg's dual-factor theory from Chapter 2 (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to this theory, work dimensions are classified into motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are intrinsic factors that make an employee feel satisfied, including achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Hygiene factors are extrinsic factors that are necessary so that employees are not dissatisfied with their jobs, including company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationships with peers, personal life, relationships with subordinates, status, and security. Note that achievement and recognition are two of the six intrinsic motivators that improve job satisfaction. Thus, recognizing online adjuncts' time, value, and expertise can help them feel satisfied with their roles.

In the previous sections, I shared that participants feature online adjuncts in their digital newsletters, serving as a form of public recognition. The participants also symbolically affirm

online adjuncts' value by asking them to share their expertise with colleagues through professional development, recurring meetings, course development, program reviews, and committees. Other ways participants publicly, privately, and symbolically recognize online adjuncts' time, value, and expertise is by acknowledging important milestones and achievements and providing them with equitable benefits and compensation. I will discuss these practices in the following sections, summarized in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Recognition Practices for Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
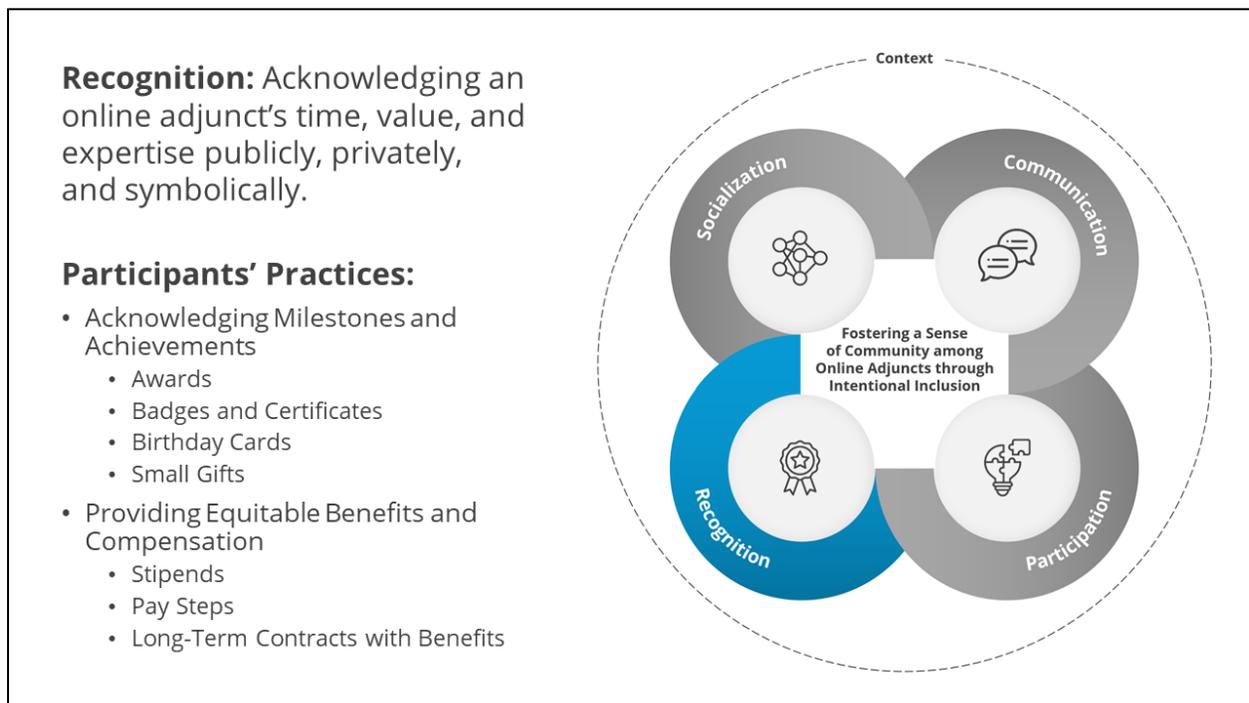
Acknowledging Milestones and Achievements. Several participants in this study recognize milestones and achievements of the online adjuncts they support, such as years of service, instructional excellence, and birthdays. Awards, badges, and certificates serve as a

public form of recognition, whereas birthday cards and small gifts serve as private forms of recognition. I will describe each of these practices in the following sections.

Awards. Online adjunct faculty are eligible for teaching awards at Katie's and Tamara's (OP administrators) institutions. For example, Katie's institution has an annual "Excellence in Adult Education Award" where students vote for a faculty member who has made a difference in their lives. The winner is often an adjunct faculty member. Katie shared a picture of an accounting adjunct professor receiving the award as one of her artifacts. Her unit sends each nominated faculty member a letter with a quote from the student who nominated them so they feel appreciated and valued. At Tamara's institution, they give a distinguished teaching award every year for each of their areas, non-credit, undergraduate, and graduate, as a way to recognize quality teaching that's happening in each of their programs.

Stephanie and Madison (CTL administrators) spoke about awards for adjunct faculty in general. At Stephanie's institution, there is an annual teaching award for part-time faculty. Department chairs can nominate a part-time faculty member for the award. Many of the adjuncts she supports do not know how to become eligible for the award. She advises them to share what they are doing in the classroom with their department chair to increase their likelihood of being nominated for the award. Madison worked with a faculty member on a number of adjunct-related issues that they put before the faculty council for visibility and action. One of the items was a prestigious teaching award only given to full-time faculty members for the past 20 years. The faculty council agreed to expand award eligibility to adjunct faculty members.

Badges and Certificates. A few of the participants described badging and certificate opportunities for their online adjunct faculty. These badges and certificates are non-credit-bearing. The badges and certificates serve to recognize an online adjunct's time and effort and

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provide them with a growth opportunity. As previously mentioned, faculty who complete the VFLCs at Deanna's institution receive a certificate of completion. Casey (OP administrator) also said online adjunct faculty can receive a certificate for completing various workshop series. Madison, an administrator of a center for teaching and learning, said the center offers various professional development opportunities that lead to a certificate. Adjunct faculty can participate in these opportunities. For example, the center instituted an "essentials of teaching and learning" certificate to give adjuncts a credential they can put on their curriculum vitae. The certificate can now be completed entirely online.

Regina (OP administrator) takes a unique approach in recognizing online adjunct faculty for their time and effort spent on professional development compared to the other participants. She awards digital badges to online adjunct faculty who complete the online teaching institute previously mentioned and attend all five annual online program faculty meetings. If an online adjunct cannot participate in one of the faculty meetings, they can watch a recording of the meeting and submit a reflection paper to receive a badge. She also awards badges to faculty who complete intensive workshops and other forms of ongoing training. They provide language for the badge holders to list the badge on their resumes.

Regina said their adjuncts seem to be more interested in the digital badges than their full-time faculty. The badges help to demonstrate their growth and progress. She has seen adjuncts put the digital badges they earn in their email signatures, LinkedIn profiles, and resumes. She said someone even printed the badge onto a coffee mug. She thinks adjuncts feel a sense of accomplishment when they earn one. It also makes them more marketable. She said one of their adjuncts got headhunted for a job she did not apply for because of the badges she earned from the school. Regina commented:

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You know, I would love it if people stayed with us forever, but also I don't want to hold

them back from that. I want to help them feel like they have options. So it's a choice that

they're teaching with us and not like an obligation or something.

Regina believes that adjuncts earning and being proud of their badges demonstrate their

dedication to the school and their craving for community.

Regina was the only participant in this study who implemented digital badges, though

other participants mentioned they are considering implementing a badging system. Symone (FD

administrator) thinks the badges might not appeal to their faculty without an associated stipend.

Others said they would like to implement a badging system but do not have the capacity to

manage it. Regina also commented on the time and effort it takes to manage a badging system.

She said that while it is more work for her and her team, she feels it is worth it, especially since

they cannot pay their adjuncts for professional development.

Birthday Cards. Although only one participant mentioned sending online adjunct faculty

birthday cards as a method for fostering community, I felt it was important to highlight this

practice as a form of recognition. Dawn (FD administrator) started sending digital birthday cards

to online adjuncts more than a year ago after attending a conference presentation where the

presenters did the same. Using the delayed delivery feature available through her institution's

email platform, she sets the cards up once a month to be sent the morning of a person's birthday.

She includes the person's name and a message that says, "I hope you have a wonderful birthday.

I appreciate all that you do today and all year long." She also includes an image and says, "May

you find moments of joy on your special day." Another team at her institution heard about her

idea and also started sending digital birthday cards to their online adjunct faculty. Several faculty

liked this idea so much so that they wanted to send birthday cards to their students. A simple

gesture like wishing someone a happy birthday is one of the ways Dawn works to build community.

Small Gifts. A few participants spoke about sending their online adjunct faculty university-branded items as a token of appreciation. For instance, Tom (CTL administrator) sends an annual gift to the school's online adjunct faculty, such as university-branded headphones or flash drives. One year, he had enough money in his budget to get everyone a polo shirt. They asked their online adjuncts to take a picture of themselves wearing it and send it to the school. Many sent in photos of themselves wearing the polo while presenting at conferences, making videos for their online students, and visiting them in person. They seemed proud to represent the institution. Tom submitted a picture of a group of online adjunct faculty wearing their polo shirts as one of his artifacts.

Similarly, Katie (OP administrator) spoke about sending her online adjunct faculty gifts for milestone anniversaries every 5 years. Katie shared that they had a "years of service" award in which faculty receive a small gift and a certificate for years of service in increments of five. The award and gift are given during the institution's fall opening training session. For many years, only full-time faculty could receive the award. Because so many adjuncts teach for their continuing and graduate programs, they started extending the award to adjuncts because they wanted them to feel honored and appreciated. She said some of their adjuncts have been teaching for the institution for more than 30 years, and it was a cultural shift to get them included in the years of service award.

Providing Equitable Benefits and Compensation. As discussed in Chapter 2, adjunct faculty are usually compensated on a term-by-term basis at rates much lower than full-time faculty. They also have fewer chances for salary increases or professional advancement. Because

they are part-time employees, they do not typically receive benefits such as health insurance, retirement, sick leave, or paid vacation (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006; Halcrow & Olson, 2008). Without being prompted, many of the participants in this study spoke about the challenges related to adjunct faculty benefits and compensation and how they work to overcome these challenges. Several of them believe providing adjunct faculty with equitable benefits and compensation fosters a sense of community because it affirms their value and contributions to the institution.

I included benefits and compensation with recognition because the participants are mindful of the contractual nature of adjunct work and believe in compensating them for taking on additional responsibilities. I grouped three common practices with this sub-category: stipends, pay steps, and long-term contracts. Stipends serve as a monetary form of recognition for their time. Pay steps and long-term contracts serve as a monetary form of recognition for their years of service. I will describe these practices in the following sections.

Stipends. The participants spoke about the importance of providing stipends to adjunct faculty for completing tasks and training outside of their adjunct duties. Several participants said their online adjunct faculty receive stipends for completing online course design and development requirements. These stipends are usually several thousand dollars. Additionally, online adjunct faculty who serve as peer mentors typically receive a stipend for each assigned mentee. The participants also reported that adjuncts receive a stipend for completing faculty learning communities.

Kayla (CTL administrator) said she is piloting compensating adjunct faculty at their hourly rate for attending workshops. The stipend for attending workshops serves as an indirect way she can help increase their overall compensation. It also recognizes adjunct faculty

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members' commitment to teaching. Tamara (OP administrator) pays online adjuncts a stipend for serving as a mentor, on a committee, as a course lead for a multi-section course, or reviewing capstone student assessments. She mentioned that this additional compensation can incentivize some adjunct faculty to teach for their online programs. Tamara shared, "So I don't ever want them to feel like I'm exploiting their labor by not compensating them fairly for doing extra outside of their teaching duties."

Pay Steps. Several participants shared that their institution has implemented or is considering implementing a pay-step system for adjunct faculty. In this type of system, adjunct faculty receive a higher compensation rate per term for defined periods of service. For example, Kerri (OP administrator) shared that her institution's adjunct pay scale contains three steps. Adjuncts receive an increase in pay after the first five classes they teach, then another after 10 classes, and then a final bump after teaching 20 classes. Kerri said the pay scale is a nice incentive for people who have been teaching with them for a long time. It also communicates that the institution values their loyalty and service.

At Katie's (OP administrator) institution, adjunct faculty move from the introductory pay rate to the standard rate after teaching six courses. When full-time faculty and staff received a 2% pay increase, Katie advocated that their adjunct faculty should also receive a 2% pay increase. Her request was approved, so both the incoming rate and pay step increased by 2%. She said this instance is an example of why it is important to have someone advocating for adjuncts. The adjuncts were not intentionally left out when everyone received a raise, just overlooked.

Long-Term Contracts With Benefits. Kerri, Marie, and Deanna mentioned that their institutions offer long-term contracts for highly scheduled adjunct faculty. At Deanna's (CTL administrator) intuition, "highly scheduled adjuncts" receive contracts in which they are

guaranteed 10 courses a year. Kerri's (OP administrator) institution has a full-time adjunct position. Adjuncts hired into this position can teach up to five sections per academic term and are guaranteed a minimum of three sections. They are still paid a stipend per course, but they receive employee benefits, such as health insurance and paid time off. She said these types of positions provide a little more security to their adjuncts, helping to retain them. Additionally, it helps provide consistency across the program for students and makes section staffing easier for administrators.

Marie's (FD administrator) institution, located in a state that allows labor unions, also offers a more permanent position to adjunct faculty as part of their faculty and staff union agreement. Adjunct faculty who have taught for the institution for several years receive a 2-year contract that guarantees they will receive up to two sections every time the course is offered. If enrollments are too low and the institution cannot give the adjunct a section, the institution must pay the adjunct. The university system must also provide health insurance to adjuncts who have been teaching two or more courses consistently for at least a year and are not employed full-time elsewhere. These adjuncts also receive benefits such as sick leave in case something happens.

Unlike Marie's institution, Kayla's (CTL administrator) institution does not offer long-term contracts to adjunct faculty. However, she has been collaborating with the institution's new Vice President of Human Resources on improving adjunct faculty compensation and benefits. He looked into making health insurance available to adjunct faculty. Because they are a state institution, they are limited in what they can provide to part-time employees; however, he was able to get the campus health center to provide discounted services to adjuncts who are not insured.

Kayla was the one who announced this benefit to adjuncts. During her first interview, she said she was preparing to send the announcement, wondering if it would still not feel like enough for the adjunct faculty who do not have insurance. At the same time, she said it is a benefit they have not been able to offer in the past and provides acknowledgment of the contributions of adjunct faculty. She shared that this situation is similar to other situations she has encountered related to her role in supporting adjunct faculty:

> So I think with a lot of the adjunct-related things, that's often the challenge is if you can't do the ultimately best thing, how do you choose what the next, you know, how does the next level of things not feel completely meaningless? I don't know. That's something I've been thinking about recently.

During her second interview, I asked if she had sent the email announcement to adjunct faculty. She said she had, but received no responses, commenting that she was not sure if that meant adjuncts were happy or upset about the benefit or it did not impact them because they receive health insurance elsewhere and do not need to take advantage of the discounted services.

Institutionalization of Practices

The previously described processes and related practices provide insights into how the HE administrator participants foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty through intentional inclusion. The participants agreed that these practices require a sustained, systematic approach. They said it takes a great deal of time and effort to cultivate community effectively. Several participants were asked whether the community they helped develop would continue to thrive if they left. They believed it would because they have worked to create a culture within their school or unit that values the contributions of online adjunct faculty.

Many participants have also created formal policies and procedures to institutionalize their community-building practices. Examples include implementing a comprehensive onboarding process, establishing a course lead role, and creating pay steps for online adjuncts. Anita (OP administrator) shared, "I don't think this is totally built on me. I do think that it would, it could continue to thrive because of some of the systems and practices that I've put in place."

Katie (OP administrator) said fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty takes a strategic approach in order for it to live beyond a single person:

> I think if you really want them to feel connected to the institution, it does take a real strategic approach, or you're certainly more likely to do it consistently for all adjuncts if you take that approach. And for it to have some life beyond a particular staff person, like our instructional designer is really good and she makes people feel connected, but if she leaves and there is no institutional priority given to it, then that will disappear when she disappears. So you want to avoid that … but if we put it into our strategic plan, it's more likely to outlive any one person.

Similarly, Kayla (CTL administrator) said she was helping develop her institution's strategic plan to ensure adjunct faculty are included more broadly at the institution beyond her efforts. As these examples illustrate, incorporating online adjunct faculty into a strategic plan is another way some participants institutionalize their community fostering practices.

Shared Challenges

While participants use various practices to intentionally foster community, they also face challenges that limit or prevent them from implementing some practices. These challenges can also be viewed as contextual factors that influence participants' decisions and actions related to fostering a sense of community. Recall the third research question that guided this study: What

challenges do they [HE administrators] face, if any, as they implement these strategies [for fostering a sense of community]? Each participant described several challenges they have faced when fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. Though some of the participants face unique difficulties due to their institutional contexts, I found commonalities across the group, categorizing them into five areas: (a) communicating with adjuncts, (b) scheduling meetings and activities, (c) budgetary constraints, (d) competing priorities, and (e) working within a traditional environment. I will discuss each of these challenges in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Communicating With Adjuncts. While communication is an essential aspect of cultivating community among online adjunct faculty, participants also spoke about communication barriers. Several of the CTL and FD administrator participants said they do not always receive the names of their institution's adjuncts until after the semester starts. Because of this, some adjuncts might not receive their messages about faculty orientation activities or adjunct faculty learning communities. They also said their employee databases make it difficult to determine which employees serve in adjunct-only roles and may need different levels of training and support compared to full-time employees who also serve as adjuncts.

Madison (CTL administrator) and Chris (FD administrator) work with Human Resources each semester to ensure adjuncts are included on their various email distribution lists. However, they both commented that it is an imperfect process. A few participants noted that even when adjunct faculty are included on email distribution lists, some adjuncts may not check their university email inboxes when they are not teaching. As a result, they might miss critical information, such as policy changes and professional development opportunities.

Another challenge related to communication is ensuring adjuncts know which email

announcements pertain to their role. Stephanie (CTL administrator) said they want their adjuncts

to feel like part of the institution and include them on various listservs; however, this can also

lead to confusion. Stephanie explained:

> It can be hard sometimes when you're bombarded with emails and messaging and you
>
> can't figure out like, "what applies to me and what doesn't apply to me" as a part-time
>
> faculty. I think that was one of the pieces of feedback I got at one of our orientations.
>
> And for some reason that has stuck with me more than anything else, this idea of like, "I
>
> don't know where I fit in the bigger picture and I don't know what is relevant to me and
>
> what's not."

Stephanie said it is important to point out relevant information for adjuncts when communicating

with them. This challenge is one reason why some of the participants in this study decided to

develop newsletters for the adjuncts they serve, allowing them to communicate role-specific

information.

Scheduling Meetings and Activities. Scheduling meetings and professional

development activities is another challenge participants face when fostering a sense of

community among online adjunct faculty. Several OP and FD administrator participants said

most of their online adjuncts are working professionals. They cannot attend faculty development

sessions during traditional working hours, even when the sessions are virtual. Some online

adjuncts live in other time zones, so virtual offerings may still not align with their schedules.

Regina (OP administrator) schedules her unit's five annual faculty meetings in the evenings to

overcome this challenge but said it is still difficult to find a day and time that works for

everyone. She also records the meetings and makes the recordings available to faculty for those who could not attend.

Chris (FD administrator) and Kerri (OP administrator) face similar challenges as Regina. Chris had contemplated holding faculty development sessions in the evening, but said it can be difficult to schedule speakers after traditional working hours. She also thought of hosting "viewing parties" in the evening to watch and discuss recordings of sessions held during the day but doubted attendance would be high. Kerri said many of their school's online adjuncts perform their teaching responsibilities in the evenings, such as holding synchronous discussions, making it difficult to schedule meetings. Their online adjuncts are also spread from coast to coast, so it is challenging to find a meeting time that works across all time zones. To accommodate the schedules of their online adjuncts, the administrators at her school offer two meeting times whenever possible, varying the days and times of the meetings.

Budgetary Constraints. The majority of participants said one of their biggest challenges in fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty is budgetary constraints. This challenge limits their ability to increase online adjunct faculty compensation and provide them with stipends for participating in activities beyond their contractual responsibilities. For example, Stephanie (CTL administrator) has no budget for the teaching circle and cannot provide stipends to advisory group members. Similarly, Madison (CTL administrator) said her overall budget for the adjunct FLCs had been reduced, and her budget request for a second adjunct FLC was denied. Symone and Marie (both FD administrators) spoke about wanting to give stipends for extended faculty development activities but not being able to because they have limited budgets.

Several participants said their budgets had been reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lex (OP administrator) said her institution lowered adjunct compensation during the pandemic. She commented:

> It didn't sit right with me, but I mean, you got to do what you got to do. And I understand where we came from and most institutions did the same thing. But with that, we need to be aware of what that means on the back end. If we're going to pay our adjunct faculty less, we can't require more.

She has high expectations for their online adjunct faculty and wants them to fully engage in their courses but understands their compensation does not match their time investment. She tries to find a "middle ground" by discussing efficient ways online adjuncts can create instructor presence. She also said she is "very loyal" to her instructors, telling them that she will offer them more course sections even though she cannot pay them as much as other schools.

Regina (OP administrator) said she would like to pay for their online adjunct faculty to attend or present at conferences, but has a limited budget to fund those types of activities. To overcome this challenge, she shares information about free conferences through their faculty resource site. She also mentioned that there is an annual social work distance education conference that many faculty and practitioners attend. If anyone associated with their online program goes to or presents at the conference, she asks them to share what they learned or presented with others during one of their five annual faculty meetings. She said this is her way of bringing the conference to those who cannot afford to attend.

Regina would also like to pay their online adjunct faculty more for each course they teach, but she does not have the authority to change their compensation. She sees creating a community for online adjuncts as a way to overcome this challenge, sharing:

And I also feel very grateful to the people who work with us because they are very

talented, and they could do anything. They don't have to work for us. There are things

that pay more and there are things that are easier and for them to choose to spend their

time working with us, I feel like that has to be rewarded and I can't reward it with more

money cause there's, I don't have control over that, but I can reward it with creating a nice

community.

Similarly, Kerri (OP administrator) mentioned that sending online adjuncts swag or small gifts

for participating in activities would be nice, but that is not always feasible. She thinks creating

inexpensive engagement opportunities, like the virtual lunches and happy hours she helps

coordinate, is an easy way to foster a sense of community when working with a limited budget.

For many of the participants, a limited budget also means limited staff to help implement

strategies to cultivate community among their online adjunct faculty. They must balance their

various responsibilities, limiting their time on faculty engagement activities and initiatives. For

example, 2 years ago, Lex sent university-branded gifts to adjuncts for their years of service,

such as coasters for 5 years, a pen set for 10 years, and a clock for 15 or 20 years. She hoped to

send anniversary gifts every year, but the project was too time-consuming to manage with her

other responsibilities. She believes there are small things she could do that would mean a lot to

adjuncts, such as sending anniversary gifts, but she does not have the capacity to implement

everything she wants to and does not have the funds to hire support staff.

Competing Priorities. Several of the OP administrator participants said they deal with

competing priorities when fostering a sense of community. On the one hand, they are responsible

for ensuring their online programs maintain healthy enrollments and generate revenue. They

sometimes feel competing priorities when trying to foster a sense of community among online

adjunct faculty while also focusing on enrollments and revenue. They said building community among online adjunct faculty takes constant time and effort, but they feel it is important because it leads to positive student outcomes.

For instance, Katie (OP administrator) feels competing priorities when fostering a sense of community and fulfilling her other responsibilities. She said the institution's senior leadership team recently changed, including a new president, provost, and six new cabinet members. With these changes, there has been more pressure to increase enrollments and pursue new markets of students. She commented, "I think, you know, some people might want you to spend more time marketing and recruiting versus building community, but I think it is really important for retention of students and faculty." She went on to say, "I prioritize it because I think it matters, but I don't know that everybody would, and I certainly in my position feel pulled into other things, especially right now, because it's been a difficult year."

Tamara (OP administrator) touched on similar points made by Katie. Tamara's primary responsibility is new program development and maintaining healthy enrollments and operations of existing programs. She said she could easily spend her time doing other things instead of fostering a sense of community among their faculty. However, she believes enrollment and student retention are connected to the quality of their programs, and program quality is connected to faculty and their instructional practices. She thinks faculty development is essential and "feels lucky" that her supervisor also recognizes the connection and supports the team's efforts to develop and engage faculty. Tamara said under different leadership, she could imagine that the focus might be solely on new program development or revenue-generating programs. To her, it is "so obvious" how everything ties together, but it does not always seem apparent to others, especially those outside of academics.

Like Katie, Lex (OP administrator) said one of the biggest barriers in her role is the institution's senior leadership becoming more market-driven. She feels it is difficult to be market-driven with a collegial mission. She said senior leadership wants more for less, which also applies to their adjuncts. Recall in the previous section that adjunct compensation has been decreased at Lex's institution, but their responsibilities remain the same. Based on her conversations with senior leadership, some of them seem to think all their online adjunct faculty should be elite and engage at extremely high levels for very little pay. She noted that the majority of their online adjunct faculty hold full-time jobs outside of the institution. She feels it is unreasonable to expect adjuncts to treat their position with the institution like a full-time job.

Lex also mentioned that one of their executives wants to monitor adjunct engagement in their courses using the learning management system data. She finds this frustrating because this type of data does not accurately represent online instructor presence and shows a lack of understanding of effective online teaching. She vented:

> So for me that has become a barrier because like I said, people just don't understand what they're asking. They want more and more and more for less, less, less. And so it's frustrating to me when I have conversations and they're like, "Hey, let's figure out a way to monitor adjunct engagement in the course." And let's basically spy on the adjuncts and what they're doing in the course. And that's frustrating to me because people just, they just don't seem to understand what really drives, you know, what's important in the classroom, instructor presence and what it means.

She explained that instructor engagement is more than just the number of times someone interacts in the learning management system. It is also about sending emails, giving in-depth feedback, and checking in with students, which cannot be tracked using data from the learning

management system. Lex finds herself torn between holding online adjuncts to a high standard while also being mindful of their subpar compensation and protecting them from senior leadership's unrealistic expectations.

Working Within a Traditional Environment. Several participants also spoke about the challenges of administering non-traditional programs within a traditional HE environment. Many of them said there is a lingering stigma against online education at their institutions. The faculty who do not teach online often see online education as inferior to traditional on-campus programs. Moreover, many of the structures, policies, and services at their institutions are designed for traditional on-campus programs, students, and faculty, making it difficult to support the needs of their online faculty and students.

Tamara, an assistant dean for a school of professional studies, said their school's programs are an afterthought for the rest of the university. She chuckled as she said, "I think there is still the sense, you know, we often joke within the school that we're kind of the, you know, the ugly stepchild of the university, right?" Tamara shared that her school's distance learning office started hosting online workshops because the institution's center for teaching and learning only offered on-campus workshops prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The institution also offers a teaching and learning fellowship that one of their online adjuncts wanted to participate in; however, faculty were expected to come to campus to participate. She commented, "I think they were fairly flexible, but again, like if you have fellowships around teaching and learning that are designed primarily for in-person, it's a barrier. So I see that at the university quite a bit." Like many of the participants in this study, Tamara is hopeful that the COVID-19 pandemic will change how the university engages with faculty from a distance. She commented, "Everything has had to be virtual and I'm hoping some of that shifts

and that there are some more opportunities for our faculty to engage from afar, not just at our school, but at the university as a whole."

Like Tamara, Pattie's school serves a different population of students compared to the rest of the institution, which she described as "very traditional and very Catholic." Recall that Pattie serves as a dean for a school that offers part-time undergraduate and graduate programs. She was hired for her background in online education and was given the goal of offering all of the school's graduate programs both on-campus and online. When she arrived, she identified a need to refresh the curriculum to respond to the market and meet the needs of career-focused students. This refresh meant cutting some long-standing course requirements and working with full- and part-time faculty to create and revise courses.

Pattie also implemented several academic policies and procedures to help create consistency across the programs. Some faculty welcomed these changes, while others were more resistant. She said she is used to being nimble and moving quickly to put programs online. Working in such a traditional environment has been a culture shift. She has been providing support around pedagogy and implemented faculty development to help faculty adjust to these changes.

Similar to Tamara and Pattie, Tom (CTL administrator) and Anita (OP administrator) work within traditional HE environments. They both spoke about online education being viewed as less prestigious by their full-time faculty when they started working for their institutions. Many of their full-time faculty shared the mindset that anything delivered by online adjuncts would not be as good as if it were delivered by full-time faculty. Tom and Anita have created pathways for full-time faculty to interact with online adjuncts, which has helped break down

barriers between these two groups. However, it took Tom and Anita several years of consistent effort before they noticed any significant changes.

Summary of Findings

As this chapter illustrates, the HE administrators who participated in this study foster a sense of community in various ways. Based on the data generated and analyzed, fostering a sense of community through intentional inclusion emerged as the core concept supported by four categories: socialization, communication, participation, and recognition. These categories function as interconnected processes that operationalize the core concept of intentional inclusion. Participants' practices were grouped according to the four processes. These practices are situated within various contexts, shaped by participants' individual experiences, roles, values, institutional environments, and associated challenges. In Chapter 6, I will describe these contextual conditions and discuss the implications of the study's findings, providing recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

This study investigated how selected higher education (HE) administrators foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions. Chapter 4 introduced the 17 HE administrators who participated in this study and their institutional contexts that influenced their community-building practices. Chapter 5 reported the emergent findings of this study, using quotes, summaries, and examples from the data to support the results. This final chapter will discuss these findings, the role of context, and implications for educational leaders, culminating with recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Emergent Findings

The HE administrator participants view fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty as a strategy for engaging and retaining quality adjunct faculty, thus creating a better overall student experience and a more cohesive online program. The participants believe it takes intentional effort to foster community among online adjuncts because they are physically distant from the institution. The participants spoke about common challenges online adjuncts face, such as receiving less compensation, support, and development compared to full-time faculty (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012; Gaillard-Kenney, 2006; Halcrow & Olson, 2008) and feeling isolated from their peers and institutions (Dolan, 2011; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003). The participants' awareness of these challenges stems from one or more experiences: serving as an adjunct, working closely with adjuncts, and/or reviewing relevant literature. These

experiences and their personal and/or institutional values have influenced the participants to

create more inclusive working environments for the adjuncts they support.

Participants described how they cultivate community with the adjunct faculty they

support, summarized in Table 4. They also shared several extant documents that exemplify their

practices. When examining their practices, fostering a sense of community among online adjunct

faculty through intentional inclusion emerged as the core concept of this study. Four categories

support this core concept: socialization, communication, participation, and recognition. These

categories function as interconnected processes for operationalizing the core concept of

intentional inclusion, situated within participants' institutional contexts, thus emerging as my

substantive theory. I developed a visual model to illustrate the connections between the core

concept and supporting categories, as presented in Chapter 5 and included in this section for

reference (see Figure 12). Next, I will discuss the role of context in relation to participants'

practices.

Table 4

Summary of Participants' Community Fostering Practices

Processes for operationalizing core concept	Related practices for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty through intentional inclusion

Socialization: Connecting online adjuncts to their roles, colleagues, and institutions and supporting them through ongoing development and feedback.	• Recruiting
	• Onboarding
	   o Orientation
	• Integrating
	   o Mentorship programs
	   o Course lead role
	• Ongoing training and development
	   o Workshops
	   o Faculty learning communities
	   o Teaching circles
	   o Mini-conferences
	• Evaluating
	   o Observation and feedback
	   o Student course evaluations

Communication: Cultivating relationships among online adjuncts through collegial dialogue and empowering them with timely and relevant information and resources.	• Cultivating relationships
	   o Individual communication
	   o Listening
	   o Online program faculty meetings
	• Empowering with information
	   o Digital newsletters
	   o Faculty resource site

Participation: Providing online adjuncts with opportunities to contribute to the institutional mission and engage with others outside of the online classroom.	• Providing opportunities to engage
	   o Virtual events
	   o On-campus events
	   o Asynchronous social platforms
	• Providing opportunities to contribute
	   o Course developers and course leads
	   o Program reviews
	   o Committees

Recognition: Acknowledging an online adjunct's time, value, and expertise publicly, privately, and symbolically.	• Acknowledging milestones and achievements
	   o Awards
	   o Badges and certificates
	   o Birthday cards
	   o Small gifts
	• Providing equitable benefits and compensation
	   o Stipends
	   o Pay steps
	   o Long-term contracts with benefits

Figure 12

Emergent Substantive Theory: Fostering a Sense of Community Through Intentional Inclusion
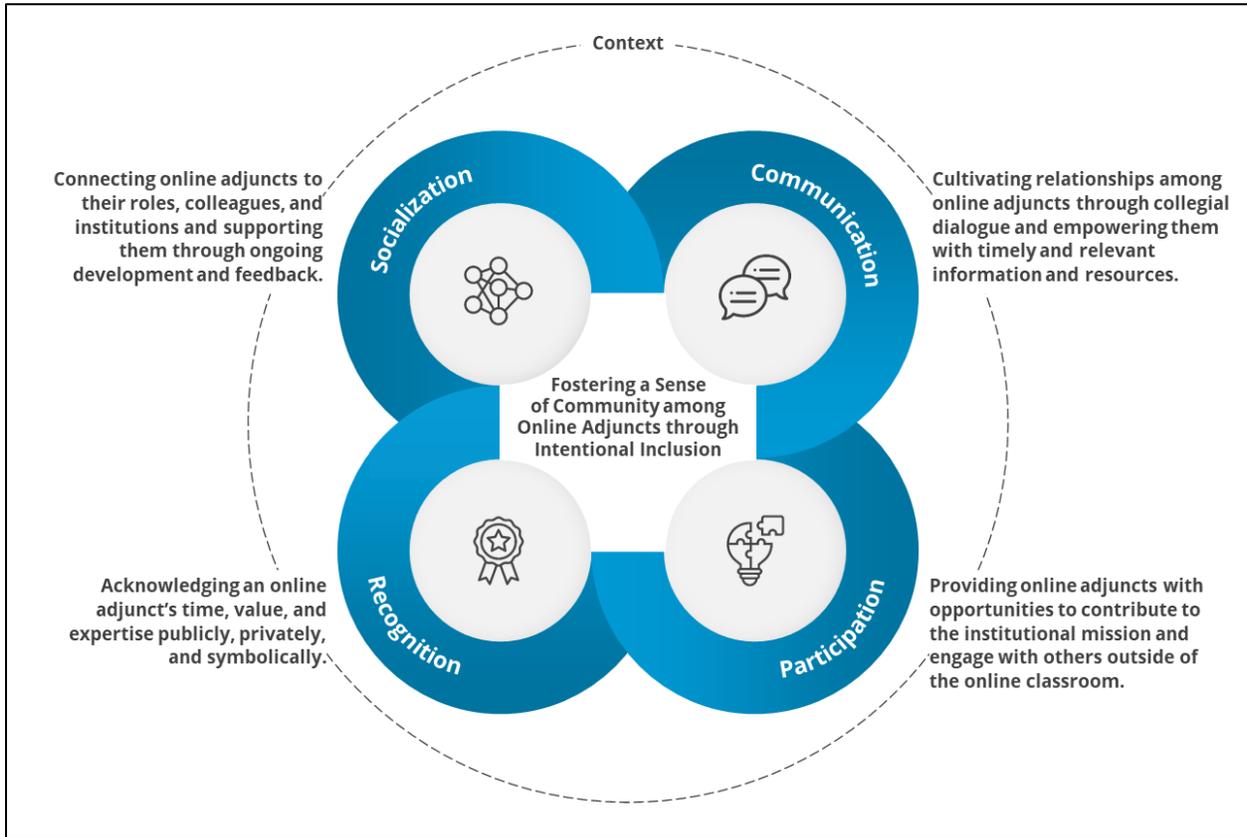
The Role of Context

Context plays a critical role in shaping the practices participants use to cultivate community among online adjunct faculty. In Chapter 4, I summarized the participants' educational backgrounds, professional experiences, job titles, and institutions. I also described online adjunct faculty recruiting practices and their related characteristics as well as faculty roles in online course development and instruction at the participants' institutions. These factors contextualize participants' practices for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty in their respective workplaces.

The participants have varying educational and professional backgrounds, providing them with unique lenses through which to view their work. For example, the participants with K-12 professional backgrounds (Anita, Deanna, Pattie, and Tom) likely bring strong teaching and learning orientations to their work and enjoy supporting other instructors, such as online adjuncts. Anita, for instance, spoke about how her experience as a K-12 special education teacher strengthened her collaboration, problem-solving, and advocacy skills, which have helped her navigate working with faculty as an administrator in HE.

The participants who started their careers outside of academia (Casey, Kayla, Kerri, Lex, and Regina) may have different perspectives about HE than those who spent most of their careers in education. A few participants said their dissertation studies focused on topics similar to this study (Kerri, Pattie, and Stephanie) which gave them foundational knowledge that influenced how they cultivate community among online adjunct faculty. Moreover, nine of the 17 participants (Casey, Chris, Dawn, Deanna, Kayla, Kerri, Marie, Symone, and Tom) said their prior experiences as adjunct faculty influenced their community-fostering practices. For example, as stated in Chapter 5, Tom did not feel like part of a community at some of the institutions where he served as an adjunct. When he became an administrator, he wanted to create an environment where online adjuncts felt like they belonged and were contributing to the institution.

The participants also have varying job responsibilities that determine the nature of their authority and influence on processes and activities that support, develop, and engage online adjuncts. While I classified the participants into three categories (OP administrators, FD administrators, and CTL administrators), their titles and responsibilities varied within these categories. For instance, the HE administrator participants in higher-level leadership roles, such

as deans, associate deans, and assistant deans, generally had more authority and influence to implement community-building practices at the school or university level than the participants working in director, associate director, or assistant director roles.

Recall that Tom, director of a teaching and learning center, spent nearly a decade breaking down barriers between full-time faculty and online adjuncts. It took him several years of asking the university to include online adjunct faculty at graduation ceremonies before the university agreed. By contrast, Anita, a dean of a school of education, invited the school's online adjunct faculty to graduation without asking for permission. Similarly, Katie, a dean of continuing, graduate, and online programs, advocated for a 2% pay increase for adjunct faculty to match the salary increase full-time faculty and staff received, which the university approved. These examples illustrate how participants' positions shaped their ability to implement certain practices advocating for the inclusion of online adjunct faculty members.

The participants also work for schools or units situated within 17 different institutions of varying sizes and cultures. Their specific practices were influenced by the contexts in which they operate. For instance, some participants work for small, highly residential campuses with strong communities (Anita, Katie, Chris, and Tom). They shared that they want their online students and faculty to feel the same sense of community felt by the rest of the institution, so they work to bring that sense of community into the online space. They conduct activities for their online faculty and students specifically and also integrate them into university-wide activities so that they feel like part of the broader university community.

At the same time, Anita, Tom, and others described the challenges of working within traditional HE environments in which stigmas against online education linger and the majority of resources and services are allocated to on-campus programs. For example, several participants

reported that many of their full-time faculty view online education as inferior to on-campus courses and programs. The participants also mentioned having to request the inclusion of their online adjunct faculty at on-campus events and activities like graduation. Several participants also spoke about limited budgets that prevent them from implementing certain practices and hiring support staff to help them. Indeed, it appears that some aspects of participants' institutional contexts shaped how they foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

Emergent Substantive Theory in Relation to Existing Research

This study's emergent substantive theory builds on the work of Betts et al. (2013), Ridge and Ritt (2017), and Tipple (2010), who proposed comprehensive frameworks for supporting and engaging online adjunct faculty. Tipple's (2010) leadership framework of online adjunct faculty was developed from a review of relevant literature on best practices for supporting online adjunct faculty. Betts et al.'s (2013) online human touch conceptual framework and Ridge and Ritt's (2017) orientation and engagement program were based on real-world examples implemented at their respective institutions. All three models stress the importance of orientation, mentorship, development, and evaluation, which are critical socialization practices in my substantive theory. These three models also include communication, a vital process for fostering a sense of community in my substantive theory.

Furthermore, Betts et al. (2013), Ridge and Ritt (2017), and Tipple (2010) discussed the importance of providing online adjunct faculty with opportunities to broaden their roles beyond teaching and engaging online adjunct faculty in school and university events, allowing them to develop deeper connections with the institution. Similarly, my substantive theory includes

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practices for providing online adjuncts with opportunities to contribute to the institutional mission and engage with others outside of the online classroom.

My substantive theory also extends the work of Roueche et al. (1996), who developed the part-time faculty integration model (PFIM), a conceptual model for integrating part-time faculty into community colleges. Recall from Chapter 2 that Roueche et al. (1996) developed the PFIM based on their review of organizational identification research and broader research on part-time employment and job satisfaction. The PFIM includes the "concertive strategies" of socialization, communication, and participation, situated within an organization's cultural context (p. 37). Depending on the organization's context, the interplay of these strategies either reinforces or hinders part-time faculty members' integration, resulting in their identification with the organization. Their identification can be observed through personal outcomes, such as feelings of loyalty and belongingness, as well as organizational outcomes, such as organizationally oriented decision making (Roueche et al., 1996). Similarly, the HE administrator participants in this study believe fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty leads to positive outcomes for online adjuncts and their students, creating a stronger and more cohesive online program, thereby benefitting the institution. Their associated practices for cultivating community are situated with differing contexts, as previously discussed.

Roueche et al. (1996) used the PFIM as a guide to explore the strategies community college administrators use to integrate adjunct faculty into their institutions' organizational cultures. The strategies reported focused on recruitment, selection, orientation, development, evaluation, and integration. Some of the practices documented in this study are similar to those reported by Roueche et al., strengthening the efficacy of socialization, communication, and participation as processes for fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty

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through intentional inclusion. However, my definitions of socialization, communication, and participation are grounded in the data generated with this study's participants, offering an expanded view of these processes.

A unique aspect of my substantive theory is that recognition is emphasized more than in similar frameworks for supporting and engaging online adjuncts (Betts et al., 2013; Ridge & Ritt, 2017; Tipple, 2010) and part-time faculty (Roueche et al., 1996). Although these authors noted the importance of recognizing adjunct faculty for their contributions and teaching excellence, the concept was briefly discussed. They did not include recognition as a primary process or practice in their frameworks. My study provides specific examples of how the selected HE administrators recognize an online adjunct's time, value, and expertise publicly, privately, and symbolically. These practices include: (a) acknowledging milestones and achievements through awards, badges and certificates, birthday cards, and small gifts; and (b) providing online adjunct faculty with equitable benefits and compensation through stipends, pay steps, and long-term contracts with benefits. The participants also feature online adjuncts in their digital newsletters and ask them to share their expertise with colleagues in various ways, acknowledging and affirming their value and expertise. Elevating recognition as a key process for building community among online adjuncts and including benefits and compensation as a form of recognition furthers the conversation on ways to create an equitable and inclusive environment for this population of faculty.

Implications for Educational Leaders

The findings of this study have several implications for educational leaders who work for institutions that currently or plan to employ online adjunct faculty. As the participants in this study shared, fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty requires intentional

and consistent effort; it cannot be dependent on any single person. Instead, it must be embedded, or institutionalized, into the daily practices, policies, and actions of all employees who interact with online adjunct faculty. In order to make this happen, leaders may need to reshape their institution's underlying values and norms (Kezar & Sam, 2013). Many of the participants in this study took steps to reshape the cultures in their schools or units by intentionally including online adjunct faculty in meetings, events, and activities, thereby exposing others to the value they bring to the institution.

The emergent substantive theory presented in this study provides HE administrators with a framework for fostering a sense of community among the online adjunct faculty they serve. Using the visual model (see Figure 12), HE administrators can examine their current socialization, communication, participation, and recognition practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses in each area and working to create a more inclusive community among online adjuncts within their institutional contexts. Next, I will discuss the practical implications of this study's findings for educational leaders, including those that can guide: (a) online program administrators; (b) faculty development and center for teaching and learning administrators; (c) faculty program directors and department chairs; and (d) senior leaders.

OP Administrators

Recall that participants were grouped into three categories based on their job title and responsibilities: OP administrators, FD administrators, and CTL administrators. Given the nature of their roles, the OP administrators in this study oversee more aspects of online adjuncts' employment with the institution than the FD or CTL administrators. Compared to the FD and CTL administrators, the OP administrators had the most latitude to create comprehensive programming for supporting, developing, and engaging online adjuncts. This study supports

research conducted by Ferencz (2017), who found that online adjuncts with a high sense of community see administrators of online programs as primarily responsible for initiating connections between faculty members. The online adjuncts studied by Ferencz believed that administrators of online programs have the greatest power to positively influence online adjuncts, particularly those new to the role. Ferencz contended that online program administrators should cultivate an environment where online adjuncts feel supported and empowered to ask questions. Similar to Ferencz's research, this study also suggests that OP administrators have substantial power to positively influence online adjuncts.

None of the OP administrators reported being directed to implement community-building practices. However, they felt it was essential to do so as a strategy for creating strong and cohesive online programs, leading to positive outcomes for students, instructors, and the institution. Effective leadership of online adjuncts is critical to the success of online programs (Tipple, 2010). Institutions planning to or currently employing online adjuncts should ensure there is an administrator responsible for supporting, developing, and engaging this group of faculty as one of their primary responsibilities. Without such an individual, the quality of the program and student experience could suffer.

Implementing Community Fostering Practices. OP administrators looking to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty could adopt and adapt many of the practices shared in this dissertation study to their contexts. However, it is worth noting that the practices reported in this study were synthesized across participants; none of them implemented all of the practices listed. While the specific practices mentioned in this study may not work at every institution, the supporting categories of socialization, communication, participation, and

recognition provide a guide for operationalizing the community-building process among online adjuncts.

Recall from Chapter 5 that the participants view socialization practices as foundational to preparing, supporting, and developing the online adjuncts they serve. Relevant literature also suggests developing and implementing a comprehensive socialization process aimed at helping online adjuncts create connections and learn how their role supports the institutional mission. This process should include orientation, peer mentorship, ongoing professional development, and evaluation (Kezar, 2012; Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003; Tipple, 2010). As a starting point, OP administrators should review their current socialization practices, identifying areas where they can create stronger connections between online adjunct faculty and their roles, colleagues, and institutions. They should also survey their current online adjunct faculty, asking them for feedback on potential improvements.

If an institution uses an online master course model, OP administrators should consider establishing a course lead role with the expectation to meet regularly with course facilitators to ensure they understand the course's learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments. There should also be a process for online adjunct faculty to share their ideas for course and programmatic improvements. The course lead could solicit this feedback from online adjunct faculty at the end of each course offering, helping to create a collaborative relationship. At most institutions discussed in this study, the course lead was usually a full-time faculty member. The participants explained that this helps build connections between full- and part-time faculty and ensures full-time faculty are engaged in the school's online programs and related curriculum. However, promoting online adjunct faculty into a course lead role could also be a way to acknowledge their expertise and competence. Utilizing mostly full-time faculty for the course

lead role with the flexibility to promote part-time faculty into this role when needed seemed to be the preferred practice among OP administrators in this study.

Like several participants in this study, OP administrators should also consider implementing a course observation and feedback process for online adjunct faculty, especially in their first term with the institution, to ensure they understand the school's instructional expectations. Having such a process communicates that the school values high-quality instruction and the critical role online adjunct faculty serve in the student learning experience. This observation and feedback process would help to inform the developmental needs of the online adjunct faculty member.

In addition to creating a comprehensive socialization process for online adjunct faculty, OP administrators should consider providing them with multiple communication pathways. Two noteworthy communication practices reported in this study include inviting online adjuncts to online program faculty meetings and sending digital newsletters. The participants provide online adjuncts with opportunities to participate in meetings, contributing to the decision-making process. They also recognize online adjuncts during the meetings by celebrating their accomplishments and/or asking them to present their instructional practices. Similarly, they use digital newsletters to communicate information and recognize online adjuncts' accomplishments and instructional effectiveness. Embedding socialization, participation, and recognition into these communication practices could make them more impactful.

Furthermore, several of the OP administrators in this study include online adjunct faculty at virtual and on-campus events. The online adjuncts are not bystanders when they attend these events. Instead, they get to interact with others and contribute in ways similar to their full-time peers. OP administrators looking to create more connections between online and on-campus

faculty should review their current virtual and on-campus events and determine areas where they can involve online adjunct faculty in meaningful ways. Like some of the participants in this study, OP administrators should consider reimbursing online adjunct faculty for their travel expenses when they make an effort to engage in on-campus activities.

Finally, OP administrators should ensure they recognize online adjunct faculty in a variety of ways, such as teaching and service awards, stipends for completing time-intensive professional development activities, and news and website features showcasing the value online adjuncts bring to the university. Small gestures such as thank you messages could also help online adjuncts feel appreciated. Other forms of recognition include creating and implementing a pay step system or long-term contracts to symbolically recognize online adjuncts' loyalty and service to an institution.

FD and CTL Administrators

The FD and CTL administrators in this study spoke about fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty primarily through professional development activities. These activities are interactive, allowing adjuncts to share their ideas and make connections with other faculty. However, there seemed to be some misalignment between online adjuncts' specific needs and the professional development formats offered by centers for teaching and learning.

For example, a few CTL administrator participants spoke about inviting online adjunct faculty to on-campus professional development activities. One of the challenges several OP administrators said they faced in fostering a sense of community among online adjuncts was working within a traditional environment. They requested that their CTLs offer virtual attendance options and other virtual professional development activities for online adjunct faculty. However, their CTLs offered on-campus-only options. In-person professional

development activities present a challenge for adjuncts who do not live close to campus and/or adjuncts who hold a job outside of academia and cannot attend activities during the day. Developing various online professional development opportunities provides all adjuncts with more flexible options.

CTL administrators should consider examining their current practices to identify opportunities for intentionally including online adjunct faculty in their various professional development offerings. Webinars and VFLCs are two practices described by participants that could help online adjunct faculty feel more connected to the institution. Several participants also spoke about allowing adjunct faculty to share their approaches to online teaching during their professional development offerings. CTL administrators should consider providing virtual attendance options for their in-person training activities. Surveying the adjunct faculty they serve about their professional development needs, interests, and preferred formats could provide data to guide the types of professional development they offer. CTL administrators should also consider collaborating with OP administrators to discuss ways to support the development of online adjunct faculty.

Faculty Program Directors and Department Chairs

Many OP administrators spoke about collaborating with faculty program directors or department chairs when recruiting online adjunct faculty. Depending on the institution, program directors or department chairs also acted as the online adjunct's supervisor. Faculty program directors and department chairs serve a vital role in creating an inclusive environment for online adjunct faculty. They are often the bridge between administration and faculty, advocating for the needs of their program or area's faculty and influencing administrative policies and procedures. They also serve as the bridge between adjuncts and the rest of the faculty in the program or

department. Additionally, they set the tone for the program or department culture and have the ability to foster environments of collegiality and respect (Benton & Li, 2015; Gappa et al., 2007).

Given their roles, program directors and department chairs can help foster a sense of community among online adjuncts in various ways. Benton and Li (2015) provided several suggestions to department chairs for supporting online adjuncts, similar to the practices described in this study: (a) establish and maintain communication channels, (b) know your adjunct faculty, (c) be available and approachable, (d) encourage professional connection, (e) involved adjuncts in department decision making, (f) build a collection of resources for adjuncts, and (g) provide professional development. Program directors and department chairs can model collegial behavior by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for their respective online adjunct faculty. Involving online adjuncts in programmatic or departmental decision-making regarding policies and procedures that impact their role could help them feel a sense of belonging and like their perspectives are valued. Soliciting their feedback when looking to make program improvements or redesign the curriculum is another way to include online adjuncts in departmental activities (Benton & Li, 2015; Gappa et al., 2007).

While the HE administrators in this study provide online adjunct faculty with professional development opportunities, these opportunities usually focus on best practices for online teaching and learning. It was not apparent whether they provide online adjunct faculty with professional development related to current topics in their disciplines. Faculty program directors and department chairs can address this need by inviting online adjunct faculty to engage in subject-specific development opportunities, such as faculty research presentations, panel discussions, and webinars. This type of development would ensure that online adjunct faculty

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stay current in their respective fields while also allowing them to network with faculty in their discipline, thus helping them become more integrated into the institution.

Senior Leaders

Recall from Chapter 2 the differences between senior and mid-level leaders in HE. Senior leaders typically occupy positions within the presidential cabinet, whereas mid-level leaders hold administrative positions outside the presidential cabinet (Amey & Eddy, 2018). The majority of participants in this study are considered mid-level leaders. Some of the participants spoke about receiving support from senior leadership to foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty. At the same time, several participants said they felt pressure from senior leadership to focus on enrollments and other priorities instead of cultivating community. None of the participants described an instance where a senior leader engaged with online adjuncts on their own accord or called for the intentional inclusion of online adjuncts. This does not suggest that the senior leaders at the participants' institutions do not value or understand the vital roles adjunct faculty play in contributing to the institutional mission. Instead, it highlights the critical roles mid-level leaders serve in connecting online adjuncts to the rest of the campus community, specifically online program administrators.

Still, the intentional inclusion of online adjunct faculty requires institution-wide effort, and the actions of senior leaders tend to have a significant impact on these efforts. Moreover, senior leaders are essential in helping institutionalize long-term change (Kezar & Sam, 2013; Roueche et al., 1996). For online adjunct faculty to be fully embedded into the institutional community, senior leaders must be aware of the challenges online adjunct faculty face, the impact those challenges can have on the student experience, and the resources needed to support, develop, and engage this population of faculty. Without the support of senior leadership, "even

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the most innovative and complete integration plan will be difficult, if not impossible, to implement successfully" (Roueche et al., 1996, p. 42).

Resource Allocation and Planning. One way senior leaders can support online adjunct faculty is to ensure the institution's online programs are adequately funded and staffed. Creating an inclusive community for online adjunct faculty should not feel like a competing priority for HE administrators compared to their other responsibilities. Unfortunately, several participants spoke about feeling pressure to continuously increase enrollments and reach new markets of students, leaving less time to focus on cultivating community. They also faced budgetary constraints, preventing them from hiring support staff needed to implement additional practices for supporting, developing, and engaging online adjunct faculty. Ensuring there are administrators responsible for managing online adjunct faculty will help maintain the quality of the institution's online programs.

Senior leaders should consider developing a strategic organizational plan that identifies when additional support staff should be hired based on metrics like student enrollment and the number of faculty needed to lead course sections, budgeting accordingly. This plan should also ensure the appropriate supports and resources are in place for the various departments and offices that serve online adjunct faculty, including academic departments, online program offices, the center for teaching and learning, and administrative offices such as human resources, finance, payroll, and information technology. Failing to increase administrators and staff in these areas as online program enrollments grow could cause delays in processes that negatively impact online adjunct faculty and the students they teach.

For example, an online adjuncts' onboarding could be delayed if critical hiring documents are not processed on time due to insufficient staffing in human resources, finance,

and payroll departments. This delay could leave the online adjunct with less time to complete orientation. The online adjunct may also not be able to review the course materials before the start of the term, making it challenging to stay ahead of students. This chain of events could cause the online adjunct to feel unprepared, undervalued, and less invested in the institution, resulting in poor instructional performance and thereby negatively impacting the student experience. Students who are dissatisfied with their experience may be less inclined to recommend the program or institution to others, potentially damaging the institution's reputation and future enrollment growth. Therefore, it is imperative for senior leaders to plan for organizational growth when planning for online enrollment growth as a strategy for maintaining academic quality and excellence.

Values in Action. Recall that personal and institutional values influenced several participants in this study. This finding is noteworthy for senior leaders because it supports the importance of institutional values as a set of ethical standards from which employees can align their practices (Bryson, 2011). Values determine how an institution conducts its educational business, influencing both strategic initiatives and day-to-day operations. Values that are deeply held and widely shared by stakeholders shape an institution's culture and brand (Calder, 2014). Indeed, several participants said community is part of their institution's ethos. The participants embody this institutional value and, in turn, strive to foster it among the faculty they support. This finding suggests that an institutional value like community, belonging, or similar influences a HE administrator's practices in fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty.

Moreover, an organization's culture is experienced through its values, beliefs, and ideologies as well as its policies, procedures, and practices. In healthy organizational cultures, the latter demonstrates the former (Roueche et al., 1996). Senior leaders looking to create a more

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inclusive environment for online adjunct faculty should examine their institution's values against the policies and procedures under their purview to determine whether there is alignment between the two. For example, an institution that values belonging, but excludes online adjunct faculty from participating in university traditions like graduation is not upholding its values. Similarly, an institution that values excellence, but does not provide online adjuncts with professional development opportunities or feedback about their instructional performance is not fostering a culture of excellence.

Recommendations for Future Research

As discussed in the previous section, the findings of this study suggest several implications for educational leaders. However, some limitations should be considered when interpreting and potentially applying the results of this research. First, the intent of grounded theory is to develop a substantive theory from generated, analyzed data. Unlike formal theories that have broader applications, substantive theories are specific to a group or place (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Therefore, the emergent substantive theory to explain how HE administrators foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty applies to the 17 HE administrators who participated in this study. The community-building practices reported in this study require further examination to understand their efficacy in specific settings, such as highly residential and nonresidential, public and private, and research-active and non-research-active institutions.

Second, this research focused explicitly on the community-building practices of HE administrators. It was beyond the scope of this study to generate data with the online adjunct faculty the participants support, so their perspectives about the community building practices reported by the administrators remain unknown. Similarly, the perspectives of course leads and their roles in fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty were not investigated.

Third, this study did not measure the effects (if any) of online adjuncts' sense of community on student learning outcomes.

Keeping these limitations in mind, I suggest three areas for future research related to fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty: (a) investigating the perspectives of online adjunct faculty regarding the practices reported in this study, (b) investigating the practices implemented and relationships between course leads and course facilitators, and (c) investigating the effects of online adjuncts' sense of community on student learning experiences and outcomes.

Perspectives of Online Adjunct Faculty

When studying the engagement and integration of part-time faculty, it is important to examine institutional actions and how those actions are perceived by part-time faculty. Studying either in isolation would not identify which actions have the most positive influence on part-time faculty (Thirolf, 2017). This research focused on the community-fostering strategies of the selected HE administrators and not on investigating the viewpoints of the online adjunct faculty they support. However, future research is needed on the perspectives of online adjunct faculty and the ways they feel a sense of community with their respective institutions. Understanding which practices are most meaningful to online adjunct faculty could help HE administrators determine where to spend their time and resources.

For example, receiving a gift for years of service may not be as important in making an online adjunct feel acknowledged as a teaching award or pay increase. Alternatively, online adjunct faculty may prefer connecting with colleagues through professional development activities like webinars or virtual faculty learning communities instead of an asynchronous communication platform like Facebook. While these practices may foster a sense of community,

HE administrators cannot typically implement and manage them all. HE administrators need to focus their efforts on practices of most value to the online adjuncts they serve.

Moreover, some of the practices may only be meaningful to specific categories of online adjunct faculty. Recall the categories of adjunct faculty from Chapter 2: *career-enders*; *specialists, experts, and professionals*; *aspiring academics*; *freelancers*; and *professional adjuncts* (Bedford, 2009; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Adjunct faculty who only teach one or two courses per year and hold full-time jobs outside of academia (i.e., specialists, experts, and professionals) might not be as interested in participating in governance as those who want to attain a full-time faculty position (i.e., aspiring academics). Alternatively, those who teach several online courses per term simultaneously at multiple institutions throughout the year (i.e., professional adjuncts) may find some socialization practices repetitive or burdensome, such as onboarding and mentorship (Kezar & Sam, 2014). A study could be conducted, for example, that examines how online adjunct faculty respond to HE administrators who implement community-building practices, categorized by adjunct type. The findings could help institutions determine where to focus their efforts based on the types of online adjunct faculty they employ.

Investigating the Course Lead-Course Facilitator Relationship

The majority of participants in this study work for institutions that use a master course model of online course development and delivery. Proponents of this model say this approach allows institutions to scale instruction while maintaining a certain level of consistency and quality. This type of standardization can lessen student frustration when navigating among online courses. However, some researchers challenge the master course model, arguing that it prioritizes revenue and cost-effectiveness over academic freedom. They contend that this model allows a single faculty member to dictate how other instructors should engage students,

dismissing their instructional expertise and removing their creative authority (Magda et al., 2015; Moon, 2019). Opponents of the master course model encourage institutions to consider a community approach to online course development where multiple faculty collaborate to design an online course instead of a single course author (Moon, 2019).

While the participants in this study did not describe taking a community approach to online course design, several noted that they have faculty members in established course lead roles responsible for guiding the course facilitators (i.e., online adjunct faculty). The participants shared that their course leads are very collaborative and ask the course facilitators for their input about the course design. Creating deeper connections between the course lead and course facilitators is one way several participants foster a sense of community among online adjuncts.

However, little is documented about the roles and responsibilities of course leads and their relationships with course facilitators, highlighting an area in need of future research. Unless the course lead has experience as a department chair, program director, or a similar role, serving as a course lead may be the first time a faculty member leads a team of instructors. They may need leadership coaching and other forms of professional development to effectively guide a group of instructors. Understanding the challenges of serving as a course lead could help administrators better support them and the online adjunct faculty they are leading.

Impact of Online Adjuncts' Sense of Community on Student Success

Research suggests that online instructors who are enthusiastic about the institution and have an obvious connection to campus help their students feel more connected to the institution (Conner, 2019). Thus, it is essential to integrate online adjunct faculty into the institutional community so they can foster community among the students they teach. The HE administrator participants in this study believe that fostering a sense of community among their online adjunct

faculty enables them to be more successful in the online learning environment, leading to positive outcomes for the students they teach. They also believe fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty creates a stronger and more cohesive program, leading to positive outcomes for the institution.

However, the participants did not report a way to measure the impact of an online adjunct's sense of community on student success and engagement. While motivated and inspired faculty are associated with higher levels of student satisfaction and retention (Brindley et al., 2006; Dolan, 2011; Tipple, 2010), more research is needed to determine the effect of an online adjunct's sense of community on student success and engagement (Ferencz, 2017). The findings of such a study could reveal whether an instructor's sense of community impacts their ability to establish community and influence the students they teach, providing deeper insights into the online learning environment. Having stated these recommendations for future research, I will bring this study to a close in the next and final section.

Conclusion

Online education has become a multi-billion-dollar industry in the U.S. and is expected to grow exponentially over several years (Bouchrika, 2020). Experts say HE institutions will offer new online programs at increasing rates to capture a broader market of students (Friedman & Moody, 2021). Given the financial and administrative benefits of using adjunct faculty to teach online courses, they will likely be employed at higher rates than previous decades as institutions expand their online program offerings.

As the market becomes flooded with online programs, quality course design and delivery will be a key differentiator (Pelletier et al., 2021), highlighting the need for competent and engaged online instructors. Thus, fully embedding online adjunct faculty into the institution's

community and creating environments in which they feel prepared, supported, and included is and will continue to be vital to the long-term success of an institution's online programs.

The findings from this study shed light on the practices of 17 HE administrators who intentionally cultivate community among online adjunct faculty at their respective institutions, furthering our understanding of ways to create inclusive and equitable environments for this faculty population. As Anita shared in Chapter 5, "it's all the little things you do that make a difference. Not that you just declare you're going to have a community, but you actually work to build it, you know, and care about your people." Indeed, fostering a sense of community among online adjunct faculty requires intentional and sustained effort. The HE administrators who participated in this study believe the potential outcomes of such efforts are well worth the investment.

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Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Message to Professional Learning Communities

Subject Line: Study about Fostering Community among Online Adjunct Faculty Members

Dear Colleagues,

I am a Ph.D. candidate in William & Mary's School of Education, conducting my dissertation study. **I am researching the strategies used by higher education administrators who intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty members at their institutions.** If you are a higher education administrator and meet the criteria listed below, please consider participating in my study.

I am seeking higher education administrators who:
- work for a public, private non-profit, or private for-profit higher education institution in the United States;
- are responsible for supervising, supporting, developing, and/or engaging online adjunct faculty members; and
- use strategies to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty members at their respective institutions.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in my study by completing this brief questionnaire [linked to Qualtrics survey]. Your responses will be used for the purpose of selecting participants from a range of institutions and experiences. I will contact you to let you know whether you have been selected to invite to participate in the study.

Participation in this study will include the following:

- Participate in up to three 60-minute one-on-one interviews held virtually through Zoom during mutually convenient days and times. (Please note that a third interview is unlikely, but may be necessary to further explore your answers from the first two interviews.)
- Share a minimum of three existing documents related to the focus of the study, such as emails, newsletters, workshop materials, websites, or videos. You will also be asked to write a short paragraph summarizing the intent of each document.
- Review an emailed summary of my interpretations of the perspectives that you share during each interview, making corrections as needed.

Participation in this study will take approximately 3-5 hours over the course of 2-3 months. Participants will be asked to provide consent via a consent form and are responsible for abiding by their institution's policies for participating in this research study. Participants may terminate their participation in this study at any time by email or by phone. All data will be kept confidential, and the identities of the participants will be protected.

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Survey (Qualtrics Survey)

**Toward Fostering a Sense of Community Among Online Adjunct Faculty:
Strategies of Selected Higher Education Administrators**

Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation study. Please complete this questionnaire, telling me a bit more about the institution you work for as well as your educational and professional background. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer.

Your responses will be used for the purpose of selecting participants from a range of background experiences and will remain confidential. I will contact you to let you know whether you have been selected to invite to participate in the study.

If you are selected as a participant, information from this survey that identifies you to the researcher will be associated with your interview data, but your participation will remain strictly confidential and any personally identifying information will not appear in any publications or presentations of the study's results.

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2020-09-07 AND EXPIRES ON 2021-09-07.

Contact Information

- First name:
- Last name:
- Email address:
- Phone number:

Professional and Educational Background

Current job title:

Please provide a brief description of your current role and primary responsibilities:

How many total years of experience do you have for each of the following?
- Years of professional/working experience:
- Years of experience working in higher education:
- Years of experience working in your current role:

Highest education level completed:
- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Post-Doctoral Certificate(s) or Degree(s)

Place of Employment

Name of institution:

Location of institution (City, State):

Type of institution:
- Public
- Private not-for-profit
- Private for-profit
- Other (please specify):

Please list the name(s) of the online program(s) you administer/support; or, share the link to the website that lists this information:

Please share the approximate total number of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who teach for the online program(s) mentioned in the previous question.
- Full-time faculty:
- Adjunct faculty:

Recommend a Peer

If you know someone in your professional network who might wish to participate in this study, please provide the individual's contact information below.

If you do not want to recommend a peer, please skip this question and select Next to submit your responses.

- First name:
- Last name:
- Email address:
- Phone number:
- Job title (if known):
- Place of employment:

Email to Potential Research Participants

Subject Line: Study about Fostering Community among Online Adjunct Faculty Members

Dear [Participant Name],

I am a Ph.D. candidate in William & Mary's School of Education, conducting my dissertation study. I am researching the strategies used by higher education administrators who intentionally foster community among online adjunct faculty members at their institutions.

You have been identified as a higher education administrator who might be a good source for my work. I am reaching out to see if you are interested in participating in my study.

Participation in this study will include the following:

- Participate in up to three 60-minute one-on-one interviews held virtually through Zoom during mutually convenient days and times. (Please note that a third interview is unlikely, but may be necessary to further explore your answers from the first two interviews.)
- Share a minimum of three existing documents related to the focus of the study, such as emails, newsletters, workshop materials, websites, or videos. You will also be asked to write a short paragraph summarizing the intent of each document.
- Review an emailed summary of my interpretations of the perspectives that you share during each interview, making corrections as needed.

Participation in this study will take approximately 3-5 hours over the course of 2-3 months. Participants will be asked to provide consent via a consent form and are responsible for abiding by their institution's policies for participating in this research study. Participants may terminate their participation in this study at any time by email or by phone. All data will be kept confidential, and the identities of the participants will be protected.

As someone who also works in higher education administration, I know how precious your time is. My hope is that the results of this study will benefit administrators and the online adjuncts they support.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in my study by completing this brief questionnaire [linked to Qualtrics survey]. Your responses will be used for the purpose of selecting participants from a range of institutions and experiences. I will contact you to let you know whether you have been selected to invite to participate in the study.

Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

[Researcher's Email Signature]

Appendix D

Research Participation Consent Form

Title of Study: Toward Fostering a Sense of Community Among Online Adjunct Faculty: Strategies of Selected Higher Education Administrators

Principal Investigator(s): Ali Blankinship, Ph.D. Candidate

Purpose of the Study: This qualitative study will explore the strategies higher education administrators use to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at their institutions. This is a dissertation research study; the final portion of a doctoral program of studies. The work may also be presented at professional conferences or published in an academic journal.

Participant Selection Process: You have been identified as a higher education administrator who works for a higher education institution in the United States. In your current position, you are responsible for supervising, supporting, developing, and/or engaging online adjunct faculty. You use strategies to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at your institution. You will be one of approximately 10-30 administrators invited to participate in this study.

Duration of Participation: Participation in this study will take approximately 3-5 hours over the course of 2-3 months during days and times that are convenient for you.

Study Procedures: As a participant in this study, you will be asked to do the following tasks.

- **Participate in interviews:** Participate in up to three 60-minute one-on-one interviews held virtually through Zoom during mutually convenient days and times. The interviews will be recorded and the audio will be transcribed. Please note that a third interview is unlikely, but may be necessary depending on the data generated from the first two interviews.
- **Share existing documents:** At the end of the first interview, you will be asked to share a minimum of three existing documents related to the focus of the study. Such documents may include but are not limited to emails, newsletters, handbooks courses, workshop materials, websites, videos, or survey results. You will also be asked to write a short paragraph summarizing the intent of each document.
- **Review the researcher's interpretations:** Following each interview, you will be asked to review an emailed summary of the researcher's interpretations of the perspectives that you shared. You will have the opportunity to confirm, change, and/or add to the interpretations in order to clarify your experiences. You may also request that specific data be deleted from the study.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time by informing the researcher of your decision by email or by phone. You may also choose to skip any question or activity requested of you. Refusal or termination of participation will not result in negative consequences in any way.

Participant Responsibility: You are responsible for abiding by your institution's policies for participating in a research study. You agree to notify the researcher if she needs to secure permission from your institution to participate in this study.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation is strictly confidential. The data you contribute to this research will be identifiable only by a pseudonym assigned by the researcher. There will be no way for others to connect your responses with your personal identity. Moreover, all data and other records will be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer. All interview recordings and transcripts and any documents that you share will be deleted once this study has been completed.

Results: A summary of the results of this investigation will be developed and emailed to you once the study is complete.

Questions or Concerns: Please contact the researcher, Ali Blankinship, by email (acblank@wm.edu) or phone (724-825-6760) if you have any questions or concerns at any time about this study. You may also contact the researcher's dissertation chairperson, Dr. Judi Harris at William & Mary's School of Education in Williamsburg, VA by email (jbharr@wm.edu) or phone (757-221-2334). If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may (anonymously if you choose) contact Dr. Tom Ward (tjward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jessica Stevens (jastev@wm.edu), chairs of the two committees that supervise the treatment of human research study participants.

I, _____, have read all the information provided on this form and agree to participate in this study. My signature below confirms that my participation in this project is voluntary, that I am at least 18 years old, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____ Date_____
Participant's Signature

_____ Date_____
Investigator's Signature

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (PHONE 757-221-3966) ON 2020-09-07 AND EXPIRES ON 2021-09-07.

Interview Guide: Initial Interview

Begin Interview

Review the consent form and describe the interview format to the participant.

Background Information

Ask follow-up questions related to the information supplied in the original recruitment form to gain better understanding of institutional context:

- [Review years of professional experience listed in response form.] Please briefly describe your educational background and professional experience leading up to your current role.

- [Review online programs listed in response form.] How long have these programs been online?

- What are the roles, if any, of full-time faculty with regard to these online programs, and the roles of adjunct faculty?

- Who monitors the hiring and rehiring of online adjunct faculty at your institution (centralized or decentralized unit)?

- Please describe the pool from which you draw online adjunct faculty. How are they recruited? What qualifications do they have (degrees, experience)?

- From your perspective, what motivates online adjunct faculty to teach at your institution?

- Are there any incentives used to attract and retain online adjunct faculty, such as competitive compensation, bonuses, benefits, support services, and professional development opportunities?

- Do the online adjunct faculty at your institution have any other responsibilities in addition to teaching? Are these voluntary or paid?

Definition

Transition to questions related to research focus.

- What is your definition of a sense of community? What experiences have led you to this definition?

Strategies

- Please describe the strategies you use to intentionally foster a sense of community among online adjunct faculty at your institution throughout their employment cycle.

If the participant needs prompting, ask questions about the following:

- Recruiting and Hiring
- Orientation
- Departmental integration
- Mentoring
- Ongoing training and development
- Evaluation
- Contract renewal/termination
- Networking opportunities
- Broadening role
- Awards and recognition

As the participant is describing strategies, example follow-up questions may include:

- Why do you feel this [strategy/program] was/is important?

- Who was/is involved in the development and implementation of this [strategy/program]?

- Who monitors the effectiveness of this [strategy/program]?

- What challenges did you face, if any, while implementing this [strategy/program]?

- How was/is this [strategy/program] communicated to online adjuncts?

- How has this [strategy/program] been received by online adjuncts? By full-time faculty?

- What do you think motivates an online adjunct to participate in this [strategy/program]?

- Have you noticed any trends related to which online adjuncts participant in this [strategy/program] versus those who do not? Why do you think that is?

Conclude Interview

- Is there anything else you want to share that you feel is relevant to our discussion?

Remind the participant to send three extant documents relevant to the research focus with summary statements. Also remind participants about reviewing a summary of my interpretations of the information the participant shared.

Appendix F

Researcher as Instrument Statement

My professional and personal experiences shape my interpretations of the world. I am a licensed educator with more than 11 years of experience in education. I have been a part-time graduate student studying educational leadership for more than 6 years. I am also a woman, wife, daughter, and sister. I have helped dozens of faculty design, develop, and facilitate online and blended courses in multiple subject areas. Additionally, I have conducted countless seminars and workshops related to online teaching and learning best practices. I am aware of many research-based instructional strategies for supporting and engaging online students.

I started my career in education as a student-teacher at an under-resourced high school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The materials I wanted to use for instruction were outdated or nonexistent, but I managed to make the best of what I had. It was a challenging school year, but also very rewarding and continues to influence my educational values. The following year, I received a full-time teaching position at a well-resourced high school in Williamsburg, Virginia. The plethora of instructional materials that became available to me illustrated the disparity the schools. These experiences shaped my belief that every student deserves to be pushed to their full potential and that all teachers deserve to have access to the resources necessary to perform their jobs well, including online adjunct faculty.

In my current role, I serve as a HE administrator supporting online adjunct faculty. One of my responsibilities is to ensure they feel connected to their colleagues and to the institution's mission, vision, and values. Through my work, I have grown increasingly aware of and have experience implementing research-based best practices for supporting and engaging online

adjunct faculty. I cannot truly set aside my experiences, but I can grapple with them and become more aware of my values and assumptions through reflexivity.

I must make every effort to remain open to different perspectives and contexts. What is true at my institution may not be true at other institutions. The challenges I face may not be the same as other HE administrators. Being mindful of leadership dispositions, organizational structures, instructional models, and other contextual factors is critical as I explore my research questions. For example, the values of the higher education institution I work for include belonging and inclusion. Deep human connections are a hallmark of our university. I aspire to uphold the values of our institution in the work that I do; however, each institution has its own culture and set of values. I must not assume that every institution values similar things as the one for which I work.

Additionally, the institution I work for is smaller than many institutions with online programs, which may employ more online adjuncts. The school and department I work for are also well-funded and supported. The participants in my study may not have access to as many resources as I do. These challenges are real and must be respected. I must also keep in mind that perceived challenges are a matter of context and individual dispositions. What I might perceive as a struggle may not be viewed in the same way as someone else. I have to respect and honor each participant's perspective and what is real for them within the context of their institution and experiences.

Vita

Alexandra Catherine Blankinship

Education:

2022   Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Policy, Planning, & Leadership
Concentration: Curriculum & Educational Technology
William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA

2009   Master of Arts in Teaching
Secondary Social Studies Education
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA

2008   Bachelor of Arts
History and Anthropology (Double Major)
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA

Professional Experience:

2018 -   Director of Instructional Affairs
Center for Online Learning
Raymond A. Mason School of Business
William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA

2016 - 2018   E-Learning Manager
WHRO Public Media
Norfolk, VA

2014 - 2016   Instructional Designer
William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA

2010 - 2014   Instructional Technology Specialist
Williamsburg James-City County Public Schools
Williamsburg, VA

2009 - 2010   Social Studies Teacher
Jamestown High School
Williamsburg James-City County Public Schools
Williamsburg, VA