Adjunct Faculty Perceptions of Participation in Online Collaborative Research Teams

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Abstract

Career professionals who serve as adjunct faculty at the university level are expected to engage in continual research and publishing to maintain their status as adjunct (part-time) faculty to be considered for potential advancement and to qualify for additional compensation. One way to meet this objective is participating in online collaborative research projects benefiting from a set of multiple lenses, multiple insights, and a multitude of considerations in regard to design, methodology, data interpretations, and broader reaching implications. A narrative inquiry approach was applied to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of adjunct faculty working in online collaborative research teams. Data was gathered through phone interviews where adjunct faculty shared their personal experiences and reflections about working as collaborative researchers in an online environment. Using an inductive process, themes were drawn from the responses of the participants to address the research question. The dominant themes found were organizational skills, interpersonal skills, and personal growth and development. The results of the study led to recommendations for supporting adjunct faculty in online collaborative research for building a sense of scholarly community and expanding opportunities for personal and professional growth.

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Introduction

Adjunct faculty make up almost half of the instructional faculty employed by higher education within the United States (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018), and their production of collaborative research is now seen as an indicator of job satisfaction as well as evidence of personal networking and growth (Welch & Jha, 2016). Job satisfaction and professional development counterbalance the reports that adjunct faculty tend to function in a culture of isolation with limited control over their academic lives and feel marginalized (Mueller et al., 2013; Patton & Parker, 2017; Schwartz, Weiss, & Wiley, 2019). This sense of isolation is made evident by faculty who have voiced concerns over the lack of connection to the larger institution, felt a lack of support in building a sense of community among faculty, and felt barriers to opportunities to collaborate on research projects building collective knowledge and expanding professional development possibilities (Davis, 2018; Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson, & Mandernach, 2015; Ferencz, 2017; Luongo, 2018).

As society grows increasingly dependent upon technology, the ways in which faculty perform academic work have evolved (Ferencz, 2017; Jamali, Russell, Nicholas, & Watkinson, 2014). A contributing factor may be the recent increasing expectation of publication as a requirement for adjunct faculty (Jamali et al., 2014). Submitting and publishing research that is collaborative or co-authored has become more common in both journal submission type and acceptance rates of manuscripts (Burroughs, 2017; Isenburg et al., 2017; Onwuegbuzie and Hwang, 2017).

Substantial benefits exist for online collaborative teams. They provide a wider connection to the academic body of knowledge, sharing of the workload, accelerating time to publication, mobility, as researchers come from a variety of geographic areas, backgrounds, and experiences, and the ability to fulfill the obligation of research and publication within academia (Minnick, Kleinpell, & Norman, 2018; Rawlings, 2014). The overall quality and recognition of an institution is improved when collaborative research is conducted (Vabø, Alvsvåg, Kyvik, & Reymert, 2016). Contributing factors of successful collaborative research were associated with management practices and interpersonal relationships (Jeong & Choi, 2015). A sense of belonging was considered critical for successful collaborations that occur in higher education (McGinn, Shields, Manley-Casimir, Grundy, & Fenton, 2005).

Participating in collaborative team research helped those who wanted to start scholarly work; provided a space for like-minded individuals; was inclusive of one's own personal agenda in undertaking research; and ensured that aims were not mutually exclusive or detrimental to the aspirations of teammates (Duff, 2015). The biggest benefit to joining an online research community was the ability to explore topics in one's own area of interest as well as accessing publication opportunities (Jamali et al., 2014). Educators who engaged in collaborative efforts expressed a sense of belonging developed through relationship building and an increase in professional development and research capacities (Patton & Parker, 2017). Collaborative teaming leads to deeper learning when team members value the contributions of each other, engage in higher levels of cognitive processing, and are motivated to work together to complete the research task (Vuopala, Hyvönen, & Järvelä, 2016).

Communication and conference opportunities that increased publication success were important components of the collaborative team process (Berka, Olien, Rogelberg, Rupp, & Thornton, 2014). With collaborative teams spanning distance and cultures, the online platform is preferred for connecting and offers better solutions for communication clarity, specifically methodologically; but it can also lead to an amplification of complications, including social challenges (Kosmützky, 2018). Using only text can bring misunderstandings and be a cause of concern for semantic and linguistic understandings. Teams that communicated in real-time during the data analysis phase were found to have a positive relationship with editorial decisions, as compared to those solely using email (Berka, et al., 2014). While teams consider academic collaboration rewarding, they can experience problems communicating, sharing the workload, and even assigning the order of authors in the publication of results, requiring proactive efforts in managing conflict, developing formal and informal agreements, and establishing an effective system of communication (Delgadillo, 2016; Rawlings, 2014).

High-performing research teams are created and maintained when the diversity of members is fostered, interactive skills are taught, recognized, and practiced using channels of communication (Cheruvelil, Soranno, Weathers, Hanson, Goring, Filstrup, & Read, 2014). Social aspects of trust and relationships were found to be foundational for sustaining collaborative efforts through the tensions and conflicts that can arise when generating new knowledge and making efforts of change within a diverse team of individuals (Warren, Calderón, Kupscznk, Squires, &

Su, 2018). While collaborative research may focus on a shared collective team vision, where team members benefit from the knowledge and skills each of them brings to the collaboration effort, individuals should also have the opportunity to work alone, reflecting, digesting, and generating new ideas so teams are not perpetually existing as a groupthink (Wray, 2014). Interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills are part of the team dynamics where members offer new ideas, provide feedback and strive to visualize and understand the ideas of others, and show a willingness to accept a collective action (Daniel & Jordan, 2017). Identification of other input factors included project motivation, transformational leadership, frequency of communication, equally balanced workloads, and an emphasis on the role of the group leader (Vabø et al., 2016; Jeong & Choi, 2015). Themes previously extracted from dialogue with team members about the research process revealed that invitations to participate, membership, knowledge of self, power, and practicalities resonated with successful collaborations (Blumer, Green, Murphy, & Palmanteer, 2007).

Inherent in online research is the technology-enabled platforms used for team interactions. Digital platform use in higher education continues to grow, as does the research about its use (Renner, 2017; Luzón, 2013). Creating a shift from traditional research communities, emerging digital technologies have led to changes in the roles of faculty, scholars, and professors (Renner, 2017). For this paper, we use Jamali et al.'s (2014), definition of digital communities:

> The term "online communities" … is defined as digital communities that concern themselves with research collaboration, the development and conduct of research projects, provision of advice, and exchange of information and data, prepublication of research results, dissemination, and speeding up the publication cycle through online and interactive refereeing. (p. 604).

Digital environments challenge concepts of traditional community building and researchers are split on whether digital environments limit or support a sense of community necessary for academic learning (Glazer, Breslin, & Wanstreet, 2013; Luzón, 2013). Ferencz (2017) defined a sense of community as feelings of connectedness within the university community. He studied online adjunct faculty and used the *Sense of Community Index*, version 2 (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008), an online questionnaire, to identify potential participants among online adjunct faculty who work for accredited universities in the United States and had a high sense of community. An analysis of the data revealed that online adjuncts with a high sense of community-initiated collaborative dialogue with other faculty members demonstrate their support of students and colleagues alike.

Connecting adjunct faculty virtually leads to camaraderie, enhancing one's social network, increases awareness of scholarly opportunities, and builds a sense of pride (Schieffer, 2016). Each and every contact online influences one's view of the academic community and affects the way one views the knowledge being created (Glazer et al., 2013). These social interactions can lead to trust and sharing of knowledge and can be successfully developed through online technology platforms similar to face-to-face social interactions (Olaisen & Revang, 2017). Such face-to-face meetings have been accomplished using meeting applications such as Zoom, Skype, and HighFive, etc.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore the stories shared by professionals who served as adjunct faculty at the university level and were part of an online collaborative research team to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences leading to successful publication of the research. Faculty research team members in this study represented several different universities and had some professional organizational memberships in common.

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We established a common interest in the process of collaborative research teams through shared informal conversations. As individuals, we had participated in successful collaborative online research teams. As we began discussing the experience, we realized a potential study existed that could provide some interesting insights for the growing numbers of online adjunct faculty members.

Narrative data was gathered through an interview process using four open-ended questions. Due to the descriptive and interpretive nature of analyzing participants' stories, a deductive reasoning approach was needed (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013); therefore, a narrative inquiry study was the appropriate method to use (Benson, 2014). The following research question guided the study: *What are the perceptions of adjunct faculty of being part of online collaborative research projects?*

Method: Design and Procedures

Narrative inquiry reflects the growing need to authenticate people's stories as a source of knowledge, and emergent design is a reiterative process that allows ongoing analysis during the research process (Bruce, Beuthin, Shields, Molzahn, & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). We situated our framework in Dewey's theory of experience, embracing his belief that experience is a continuous interaction of one's personal, social, and physical environment (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Hutchinson, 2015). The stories of adjunct faculty engaged in a collaborative research effort showed how they used their experiences to shape and define their role as researchers and collaborators.

The researchers developed the interview questions specifically for this study. The principles as identified by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) were followed in the development of the questions: ask open-ended questions, ask questions to elicit memorable stories, avoid "why" questions, and follow up with reflective prompts. These principles led to the creation of the following four semi-structured questions encouraging the adjunct faculty to share their personal stories.

- How would you describe your experiences working in an online collaborative research team?
- How has your development evolved as the result of your experience/s as an online collaborative research team member?
- What knowledge or skills, if any, did you gain through the collaborative experience that you were able to apply to your professional career?
- What advice would you provide to colleagues entering into an online collaborative research project?

The questions were field-tested to assure they were aligned with the research question and were free of ambiguity, so no changes were needed.

Demographic information was gathered through an online questionnaire followed up with phone interviews in which participants shared their personal experiences and reflections about working as collaborative researchers through a digital platform. Interviews were continued until saturation was reached where no new thoughts or ideas were generated. In our role as researchers, we strived to interpret and understand the meaning found in their stories (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Criteria for participation in the study were career professionals who also worked as adjunct faculty at the university level and had successfully submitted for publication or had published an

article based on their collaborative research efforts with other colleagues. Adjunct faculty were recruited through the non-probability technique of snowball sampling. We started by contacting career professionals we knew who worked as adjunct faculty at the university level. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to refer us to another individual who was an adjunct faculty member engaged in collaborative research (Merriam, 2017). Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their confidentiality.

Participants

The collection of demographic data yielded diversity about the participants in a number of ways. The eight study participants varied in: (a) the length of professional experience as an adjunct in online environments, which ranged from 1 to 17 years; (b) the number of online research team participations, which ranged from three to seven prior teams; and (c) identified gender, which consisted of six female participants and two male participants. The adjunct faculty voluntarily participated in the research projects as a way to meet their universities' requirements for continued status as an adjunct faculty. Collegial associations and interest in common research topics lead to the formation of online collaborative research teams. None of the participants reported substantial financial support for their research but their university affiliation allowed access to university-wide resources such as the library and related search engines or other features (i.e., interlibrary loans, etc.).

All participants reported currently working as adjunct faculty and represented at least four different universities. Several participants reported additional higher education roles as dissertation chairs and/or administrators.

When asked about online research team roles, all participants identified themselves in a leadership role in at least one prior team experience. Additional roles were specified by research skills: methodologist/analyst, writer, designer, transcriber, editor, and/or member.

Data Collection

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with an Informed Consent document to read and sign, including the acknowledgement that phone interviews were going to be taped. One researcher conducted all eight interviews to help maintain consistency in the interview process. Each interview began with a casual introduction, gathering of demographics, and a description of the intent and process of the interview. The interviewer established a relaxed tone as the adjunct faculty were encouraged to tell their stories guided by the semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants as a process of establishing credibility and reliability (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 2017). Participants were encouraged to revise or add narrative to the transcription as needed to ensure an accurate interpretation of the interview. Only one participant added additional comments to clarify a point.

Data Analysis

We used an inductive thematic process involving multiple rounds analyzing the text from the stories of the eight participants to gain insights into their experiences using a holistic analysis of the narratives (Caine et al., 2013; Hiles, Cermak, & Chrz, 2017). The transcription of each story was divided into sections of two to three sentences and entered into a spreadsheet with each section sequentially numbered. Each team member read the interview texts independently looking for codes and themes. Then, we compared our notes conducting a thorough analysis looking for common codes and themes resulting in four rounds of analysis by the team. Unique ideas and

different perspectives were recorded in a separate column of the spreadsheet to save the thoughts for future reference. Similarities of ideas among transcripts led to the emergence of key themes. As online collaborative researchers ourselves, we strived to avoid our own bias and to seek coherence as it arose from the narrative stories.

Narratives

This study focused on the experience of adjunct faculty who engaged in online collaborative research projects leading to publication. A brief description of each of the online collaborative researchers follows with a summary of their experience as a member of an online team.

Karly. Karly started teaching in the online environment in 2004 and is currently adjunct faculty with two universities. While not compensated financially, Karly took advantage of an emerging university structure that allowed faculty members to connect with others who had similar research interests. Karly became engaged early and describes the process in positive terms motivating her to join additional research teams. She has been on seven online collaborative research teams serving in the roles of leader, writer, and designer. Karly described her team experiences as mostly positive, although she did acknowledge that problems can emerge and it can take time and energy to resolve issues. Karly believed having roles, recognizing the different experience levels of the team members, and seeing the structure as a professional development opportunity for faculty can result in a rewarding collaboration. In addition, Karly found that through online collaborative teams she became a member of a community of practice, connected with others who had similar scholarly interests, and engaged in stimulating discussions. The online collaborative structure provided her with opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the collaborative process, various aspects of research, and expectations for journal publication. Karly acknowledged online collaborative research teams are continually defining and redefining the optimum strategies for becoming a productive team. Karly believes the benefits of online collaborative research teams are "enormous!"

Tom. Tom is an adjunct faculty member for two universities and serves as a research fellow and dissertation chair. He has been part of four online collaborative research teams and supervised an additional three teams. While on teams, he took the role of writer, analyst, methodologist, and team leader. Tom found the online collaborative research process "surprisingly rewarding" and more productive than some on-ground teams. Being accountable to the group generated efficient and productive motivation for Tom in completing tasks. Through working in the teams, his knowledge of the research process was improved from inception to organization, to facilitation, and completion. He believes effective research practices are transferable to any environment. Staying organized, on track, and accountable to the group is vital to an effective team. One of the challenges Tom found was in keeping team members actively engaged in the team research process over time. Occasionally, team members would, for one reason or another, become disenchanted with the collaborative online team research and withdraw from the team during the project. On a personal note, Tom was pleased by how quickly one can develop personal relationships through online collaboration.

Joan. Joan is an adjunct faculty member for several universities and has served as a chair, committee member, instructor, and faculty administrator. She reported participating on five online research teams. While on teams, she had roles as a leader on four teams and a transcriber on the fifth. Four teams involved her colleagues and the "online" component was mainly via phone calls. She reported the comfort in working with people she already knew and acknowledged her own willingness to do most of the work in these informal teams. She also acknowledged that the more recent team, the one with new acquaintances, rather than friends, made her feel less

comfortable to just pick up the phone and ask a question, but, in the end, she preferred the more formal team structure with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities. When team roles were seen as too individualized, such as her role as a transcriber, she commented that the intimate knowledge of the research got lost and she needed to spend time developing ownership of the research since she had too specific a role and needed to acquire the big picture.

Patty. Patty is an adjunct faculty member and has been working in the online educational environment for less than a year. She is a senior corporate trainer and compared the differences between higher education and corporate training. She has been involved in three online collaborative research teams which she categorized as all positive experiences and felt everyone did their part on each. Patty identified her roles on these teams as an editor and an analyzing contributor. Her team communications have been via the Skype app and she acknowledged challenges of not using face-to-face and non-verbal cues to confirm her understanding. Because of this, Patty admitted taking advantage of the ability to "step back and think about the intent" of actions while a member of online teams.

Logan. Logan has 15 years of experience as a professional using an online environment and has been involved in three online research teams. He has had a variety of roles on those teams such as: co-author, analysis and technology support, and team lead. The primary form of online communication was held using Microsoft Teams. He described his experience working on online research teams as being productive with a built-in tracking system that held everyone accountable for homework between weekly online meetings. He also explained that when another member felt they could not participate fully they usually dropped out. Logan describes how he does not see the online environment differently than how he works in a face-to-face environment; however, he appreciated the fact that online research members came from various parts of the world. In addition, he added that having structure and support were important for team success.

Vicky. Vicky has 15 years of experience as a professional working on collaborative research teams and has held the role of principal investigator twice. She stated her teams mostly used email, phone, and WebEx to communicate. Vicky discussed how communication is a vital component of online research teams and that one needs to use follow-up to ensure everyone is aware of what is needed. She also brought up the problem of miscommunication, mediating relationships, and troubleshooting when issues arise. She stated she has had to become "sharper in my thinking, more effective in my communication…." From being in online collaborative research teams, she has gained skills in mediation, technology, project processes, and accountability. Vicky summed it up by saying that she prefers to work alone or with students because other professionals come with "egos."

Kim. Kim is a special education teacher, who has 8 years of experience working in an online environment. She has participated in over 15 online collaborative research teams and the most frequent form of online communication in those teams were by email. Kim expressed that working in collaborative teams gets better progressively to the point that you get to a "comfort zone." Kim is usually the lead researcher in projects. She expressed frustration and lack of understanding with novice researchers on teams. Kim has learned to be patient with new researchers. She has learned to work with diverse individuals. Her online education and her career working with students with different learning styles has helped her adapt well in online collaborative teams.

Peggy. Peggy works for several online universities and has 17 years of experience working in online environments. She has participated in four online collaborative teams as either a member or leader. Most team communication was by email. Peggy had a negative first

experience with online collaborative teams with high attrition and unequal contribution by members. The negative experience changed with time. She attributed the better experience with more structure and organization within teams. Peggy learned collaborative and communication skills working with online teams. Peggy recommends the need for professional development research skills for faculty.

Findings

Three themes emerged from the content analysis of the participants' stories reflecting their experiences working with an online collaborative research team: organizational skills, interpersonal skills, and professional growth and development.

Organizational Skills

The theme of organizational skills was apparent as participants reflected on their experiences with the structure of the research teams, leadership qualities, the division of tasks, commitment, and level of communication. Overall, participants believed online teams were more productive than on-ground teams due to regularly scheduled formalized virtual meetings with agendas and specific tasks. Participants indicated they liked the formalized approach, because it generated a high level of accountability for each team member.

One team took the first 5 minutes of each virtual meeting to chat and share personal stories building a sense of camaraderie within the team. The advantages of building a sense of community was evident in Patty's experience where one member in the group had a family emergency, and the other team members "picked up the slack and got the work done" until she was able to rejoin the group. Even though teams had an established structure and focus, the importance of flexibility in adjusting to the unexpected was evident.

All participants reported having been, at one time or another, the role of leader. While leadership itself is episodic, having one person designated as the leader can help organize meetings, locations and agendas, and be a point person to defer to for expectations, intervene when necessary, and make executive decisions, such as setting timelines for task completion. Interesting to note, not all participants joined their group as a leader but rather gained the role through attrition of other members. The style of leadership is important and a flexible approach, using a growth mindset, seemed to be the most appropriate in all areas examined.

Several participants noted disappointment or frustration with the lack of accountability and based it on skill level or time management of others. A lack of presence by a team member can be a problem. There may be a low level of commitment where individuals disappear or become sidelined and fail to interact or produce a minimal effort. This can lead to attrition, causing a delay in a team's research efforts. To help prevent such issues, leaders can guide discussions towards task expectations and individual expectations.

Some participants expressed frustration with novice researchers and with those who come to the team unprepared. Karly believes understanding the level of research knowledge and skills of team members who are new to the research process can assist in being patient and supportive as they develop and mature as researchers. In a collaborative team, there is the advantage of tapping into team members' strengths while building on areas of weakness. One participant shared concerns that roles were too specific and team members faced the possibility of not fully understanding the scope of the whole project. This concern aligns with the cooperative research team approach where each team member has a specific and independent task as opposed to a more collaborative research team approach where sharing and ongoing discussions are the norm.

The importance of open, clear, and frequent organizational communication (Jeong & Choi, 2015) repeatedly surfaced from stories from all participants throughout their interviews. Team members reported using virtual meeting applications, including Skype, Zoom, Shindig, and WebEx as well as phone conferencing, email, and real-time documentation using Google and/or Microsoft Teams to facilitate organizational communication. Additionally, virtual face-to-face applications supported positive relationships with editorial decisions, as compared to solely using email (Berka et al., 2014). Using virtual or phone meetings versus email differed in fostering conversations, as one participant noted. Patty talked about an experience where an email was posted to the group that she found concerning. It was important for her to, "take the time to step back and think about the intent of it." Once she thought about it, she was able to understand the intent of the email and respond in a positive tone. While email allowed her to reflect first, virtual meeting spaces allow for immediate continuation of conversations and to engage a higher cognitive level more quickly (Vuopala et al., 2016).

Interpersonal Skills

The importance of interpersonal skills was reflected in the participants' beliefs in the value of collegial friendships that developed through online teams and the importance of engaging in conflict resolution strategies. The synergy generated by being part of a community of practice connecting with others who have similar interests also surfaced in the participants' stories (McGinn et al., 2005). The online collaborative process established a place where individuals could shape personal relationships in an unbounded geographical space and engage in "lively" discussions surfacing new ideas and new approaches. Kim appreciated the "comfort zone" established by working together, and Tom expressed pleasure in how quickly personal relationships could emerge through online collaboration leading to future collaborative efforts. The belief in the importance of organization was expressed in Logan's comment:

> [W]e don't have to make this all up as we go. I always find that helpful. It's not that you need strong guidance, it is just nice to know there's something that's a successful pattern, so just follow this pattern. And, there is support.

Several participants acknowledged that problems could occur when team members fail to contribute equitably, disengage, or drop out, and it takes time and energy to work through the issues to continue as a productive team. Learning patience with novice researchers, understanding different learning styles, and having empathy with personal issues that may arise assisted members in maturing as part of a team. However, not every participant found the collaborative online team structure as a personally satisfying approach. The desire to work alone, along with the frustration with high attrition rates, unequal contributions, and tensions among personalities can lead to researchers deciding to engage in scholarly activities independently. It is important to remember, while the focus is on a shared collective team vision where team members can tap into the knowledge and skills that each member brings to the collaboration, there needs to be opportunities for individuals to work alone and not perpetually exist as a groupthink (Wray, 2014).

Personal Growth and Development

Personal growth and development flowed from the theme of interpersonal skills as reflected in the participants' comments. A deeper understanding of the research, writing, and publication processes were viewed as positive aspects of being a member of an online collaborative research team. Tom shared, "In working through projects, I have improved my knowledge of the entire research process."

Engaging in rich discussions, learning specific skills, gaining confidence as a researcher and writer, and expanding collaboration techniques were also discussed. Patty mentioned how her emotional intelligence improved because of the online team format. Participants believed what they learned working with a collaborative team was something they could apply to their professional careers. Some teams were not as successful as others, and Peggy wished she had learned more from her collaborative research team and has hopes of doing so in future collaborative teams. Participants believed the online collaborative research project was a valuable development opportunity for faculty, and, as Karly acknowledged, "We are still learning the optimal strategies for working together. But the promise is enormous."

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study could be of interest to university administrators, colleges within the university, and adjunct faculty who are continually exploring ways to enrich and expand the body of knowledge through academic research and expanding opportunities for professional development, while overcoming a sense of faculty isolation. Participants expressed the extent of personal and professional growth they experienced as part of an online collaborative research team, providing them with a renewed energy towards embracing research and an inspiration to join future online collaborative teams. It is interesting to note that even though a variety of technology-enabled platforms and software tools were used to enable communication, few participants commented on the tools creating any challenges or distractions for the online collaboration process. Participant comments focused more on the organization and the personal interactions. Having an online collaborative team leader who establishes a strong organization structure with goals, schedules, timelines, and open and regular communication, along with the identification of a digital platform accessible by all team members, can assist teams in forming for research and publication success. In addition to the organizational aspect of teamwork, appreciating the individual personalities and the individual talents and skills each member brings to the team nurtures camaraderie and helps generate trust and commitment to the team and to the project. One limitation of the study is the size of the sample drawn from the population. Another is the criterion established where only participants who were part of a team who had successfully published were considered.

A future study can focus on teams who did not complete their research goals and did not publish to gain additional insights to the challenges and barriers to successfully completing online collaborative research projects. It would also be of interest to explore the structures, resources, and incentives available at various universities established to assist in promoting and encouraging adjunct faculty in continued research efforts to assess the extent to which the personal and professional growth of faculty was influenced by the university efforts.

Researcher Reflections

As online collaborative researchers ourselves, we found the insights and experiences of the participants to be similar to those we have encountered in our role as members of an online collaborative research team. Online research teams can be energizing, rewarding, and challenging. Following are each of our reflections on working in an online collaborative research team.

Rita: I have facilitated six online collaborative teams with five reaching publication and the remaining one in progress. Each team has had its own personality and each team member has brought valuable skills to the project. Appreciation and respect for each other, open communication, commitment to the project, and flexibility and compassion for life events are

essential for an online collaborative team to form and focus on research to writing to publication. One thing that stood out for me was the very engaging nature of the experiences. A type of synergy can be generated through the process, providing excitement and motivation to participate in future online collaborative research projects.

Danielle: I felt this particular collaboration was supportive for me when I felt pressures from outside influences. Understanding that during these long-term relationships, events are happening in our personal and professional arenas. Whether these events are planned (class schedule changes, conferences, weddings) or unplanned (hospital stays, emergency work meetings), each member understood that occurrences, well, occur. Sometimes that meant changing meeting times, or ownership of tasks and timelines, or even re-prioritizing one's workload in order to find the time and effort to keep the project moving, however slowly at times. I believe that staying flexible to the ebb and flow of a project leads to greater satisfaction and success.

Christa: Collaboration was certainly important in this effort and this allowed for diversity of thought to blend well. Being that I am an adjunct faculty member who does not work full time in academia it allows me to be involved in research I might not otherwise be able to participate in. In addition, I can do research outside of my comfort zone and advance my skills with mentoring and support from fellow researchers. This has also allowed me to publish and to stay in compliance with faculty expectations at the universities that I work for. Our team was quite diverse being that we were from different areas within the United States. We come from different professional backgrounds, different stages in our careers, different age groups and cultural identities, and different academic specializations. We have different experiences with research and different perspectives. I believe that communication and using deadlines is an important thing to consider when doing collaborative research so that each member is aware of what is due and when.

Patricia: Working with this group of talented women was a privilege. We exchanged ideas and got the work done with a strict timeline schedule. Having portions assigned at each stage made the work smoother and not overbearing for anyone member. When my daughter was having a baby, I stepped out of the room to join the team conference call. Once the team realized what was happening, the team told me I should have said something, and I needed to be with my daughter and the baby instead of on the conference call. I came to understand that it was OK to take time off to care for family. Members were very understanding and supportive when we experienced personal conflicts with meeting times. Online collaborative research is doable and possible as this paper is a result of one.

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