WHEN THOSE WHO CAN, TEACH: UNDERSTANDING THE ENGAGEMENT OF
ADJUNCT PRACTITIONERS – A CASE STUDY.

A thesis presented

by

Natalie M. Williams-Munger

to

The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in the field of

Higher Education Administration

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
March 15, 2018
Abstract

Adjunct faculty members have become the dominant faculty demographic in American higher education, as the majority of all new faculty appointments are now part-time. Despite this, there remains a lack of comprehensive data regarding the adjunct experience, particularly in regards to specific subgroups of adjunct faculty. While some adjuncts function as replacements for full-time faculty, adjunct practitioners have a unique value-add in that they bring professional knowledge and field experience into the classroom. For this reason, they play an integral role in practice-based programs. In order to become successful instructors, they must be supported by the administration and integrated into the academic community; however, much about the experience of this group is unknown. Therefore the purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners. Using Kahn’s (1990) theory of employee engagement, this study sought to answer the following research question: How do adjunct practitioners experience engagement at a mid-sized private university on the West Coast? Data gathered from interviews and a document review produced four key findings: first, participants feel teaching is personally meaningful, though they lack a sense of community with other faculty and the institution as a whole. Second, participants do not feel entirely secure in their roles and are concerned about their future security with the institution. And third, participants believe they possess the necessary basic resources to perform their role, but would appreciate more accessible development opportunities. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: adjunct faculty, employee engagement, faculty experience
Dedication

This study is dedicated to the adjunct faculty who continue to power the engine of higher education despite being invisible to many of those in power. They receive far less than they are due, and without them we would be lost.
Acknowledgements

This doctoral study would not have been possible without the help of many people. First, I would like to thank my mother, Gretchen Williams, for raising me to be the person I am today and instilling in me the confidence to always aspire to do and be more. I would like to thank my father, John Munger, for his example of entrepreneurial spirit and tireless commitment to lifelong learning. Though he did not get to see me finish this program, I feel his support in all things. A very big thanks to my husband, Michael Babayev, for his never-ending support and encouragement, especially though two cross-country moves and multiple jobs. I am grateful to have a partner in life who understands my need to keep earning degrees and progressing in my career. (And am very proud to witness him earn the first bachelor’s and master’s degrees in his family!)

I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Sandy Nickel, whose insight and guidance in this process has been incredibly helpful and essential to my success. I would also like to thank Dr. Nancy Pawlyshn, who as the second reader provided insightful comments and feedback that helped take this study to the next level. Finally, I must thank Dr. Cherron Hoppes, who has been my colleague, friend, and mentor since I began my career in higher education. It is because of Dr. Hoppes that I entered this program, and I can only hope to achieve a similar level of success in work and life that she has in hers. I thank her for serving as the third member of my thesis committee and taking the time to support me in my educational and career goals.

And to Dr. Levin: It took 10 years, but I got there!
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 2
Dedication ............................................................................................................................. 3
Acknowledgments .............................................................................................................. 4
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................. 5

Chapter 1: Introduction ...................................................................................................... 7
  Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................... 7
  Significance of the Research Problem .......................................................................... 14
  Positionality Statement ................................................................................................. 19
  Purpose Statement and Research Question .................................................................. 23
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 23
  Key Terms ..................................................................................................................... 32

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature ................................................................................. 36
  Adjunct Faculty Member Roles and Implications ...................................................... 37
  Job Satisfaction and Engagement ................................................................................. 46
  Faculty Training and Development Programs ............................................................ 55
  Conclusions .................................................................................................................... 65

Chapter 3: Methodology .................................................................................................. 68
  Rationale for Choosing a Qualitative Approach ............................................................ 68
  Rationale for Choosing Case Study Methodology ....................................................... 71
  Research Tradition ........................................................................................................... 71
  Participants and Data Sources ....................................................................................... 76
  Recruitment and Access ............................................................................................... 82
  Data Collection ............................................................................................................. 86
  Data Analysis ................................................................................................................ 90
  Trustworthiness ........................................................................................................... 94

Chapter 4: Analysis and Presentation of Data .................................................................. 96
  Demographics for Primary Group of Study Participants .............................................. 97
  Primary Group’s Definition of Engagement ................................................................. 97
  Primary Group’s Definition of Their Role as Adjuncts ................................................ 100
  Primary Group Data Sorted Into Kahn’s (1990) Three Domains ................................ 100
  Secondary Group Interview Data ............................................................................... 119
  Data from Document Review ....................................................................................... 124
  Summary and Closing ................................................................................................. 130

Chapter 5: Interpretation and Discussion of Findings .................................................... 134
  Findings ....................................................................................................................... 135
  Findings in Context of the Theoretical Framework ..................................................... 136
  Findings in the Context of the Literature ..................................................................... 142
  Implications for Practice ............................................................................................. 149
Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

With steady increases since the 1970s, adjunct faculty employment has dramatically altered the picture of academic work in the United States. Changes in enrollment, decreases in state funding, faculty retirements, and changes to program offerings have all contributed to the need for part-time instructors (Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Green, 2007). Students in particular also appreciate part-timer instructors who bring real-world expertise to the classroom (Green, 2007). Stats are impressive; between 1975 and 1995 the number of part-time faculty increased by 103%, while the number of tenure-track faculty decreased by 93% (Umbach, 2007). In 2012, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (as cited in Magda, Poulin, & Clinefelter, 2015) reported that 75% of all faculty were in contingent positions, with 70% working as part-time or adjunct faculty.

These numbers have remained steady over the past few years, holding up the 3-to-1 ratio for part-time to full-time faculty appointment as the new norm (Maxey & Kezar, 2016). Not only do adjunct faculty members form the majority of instructors at two-year colleges, they represent the bulk of all newly-hired faculty members (Curtis, 2014; Strope, 2015). In some states, this is not entirely in compliance with regulations. In California, for example, though the state legislature and community college board of governors approved AB 1725 to ensure a 75 percent ratio of tenure-tracked teachers, the regulation was never fully implemented. The University of California system has managed to skirt the regulation, while other institutions simply pay a fine each year – the cost-cutting nature of adjunct faculty employment is simply too appealing to ignore. Although part-time faculty employment has increased at what some might consider an
alarming rate, the fact remains that the profile of faculty in the United States has changed, though not without controversy.

Despite a critical need to understand and interpret the adjunct faculty experience, there is still a lack of comprehensive data. In researching this area, “it is important to understand that [adjuncts] are not a homogenous group” (Maxey & Kezar, 2016, p. 5), and many subgroups remain uninvestigated. One such subgroup is the adjunct practitioner – a part-time instructor employed in a field outside of teaching who brings professional knowledge or experience to the classroom. These faculty members have become particularly popular in practice-based and adult-serving programs due to their extensive job-based knowledge and professional expertise (Beem, 2002; Strope, 2015). This group is not always considered in the adjunct conversation, however.

It is important to note here that adjunct practitioners, who form the focus of this study, are highly distinguishable from the group of adjuncts characterized by their involuntary employment status. These adjuncts, sometimes referred to as “freeway flyers” (Strope, 2015), function as part-time replacements for full-time or tenured faculty, and piece together a career based on multiple teaching assignments, often at multiple institutions. (Their nickname stems from the literal space they have to cover while being constantly on the road from school to school – in New York City, they are called “subway schleppers” (Strope, 2015).) A breakdown of the differences between practitioners and freeway flyers is detailed in Figure 1 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adjunct Practitioners</th>
<th>&quot;Freeway Flyers&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>Mostly Master's level, some Doctorate</td>
<td>Mostly Doctorate-level, some Master's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>Employed full-time in their industry, employed part-time in education</td>
<td>Employed part-time in education, often at multiple institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for hiring</td>
<td>Bring industry or specialized knowledge to the classroom</td>
<td>Economical replacement for full-time faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Courses Taught</td>
<td>Specialized or concentration courses</td>
<td>General education or introductory courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Course Load</td>
<td>Part-time load: One or two courses per term at one institution</td>
<td>Full-time load: Multiple courses at multiple institutions, equivalent to one full-time appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other names</td>
<td>Adjuncts, voluntary part-time faculty, contingent faculty</td>
<td>Adjuncts, involuntary part-time faculty, non-tenured faculty, lecturers, contingent faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: General characteristics of adjunct practitioners vs. freeway flyers*

These “flyers” are the dominant demographic amongst part-time faculty (Strope, 2015), and thus they are the study group for most of the existing literature on adjunct faculty. Data gathered from community and two-year colleges in particular is focused on this demographic. Research regarding adjunct practitioners specifically is generally absent, especially from the contemporary conversation about ethical faculty employment models and the ever-decreasing availability of full-time positions (Curtis, 2014). Colleges and universities that educate adult students in practice-based fields (business, social work, medicine, etc.) have also been less-represented as study sites in the literature. This is highly problematic considering that many of the negative sentiments and findings regarding adjunct employment are targeted toward the freeway flyer employment model rather than the practitioner model, based on data gathered from
community college or large public university environments. The model of employing adjunct practitioners at adult-serving and practice-based institutions is less studied in the literature.

This is an intriguing phenomenon, considering adjunct practitioners were one of the first groups of part-time faculty to be employed by schools. According to Maxey and Kezar (2016), the part-time or adjunct faculty model was first used as a way to bring practitioner knowledge into the classroom, particularly at two-year and community colleges. For this reason, these short-term teaching appointments were not necessarily viewed as problematic because they were not a replacement for full-time faculty employment. Since its inception, the adjunct employment model has rapidly expanded as institutions sought ways to deal with rising costs, unfortunately with “serious and negative implications for student learning outcomes” (Maxey & Kezar, 2016, p. 6). Since these employment numbers show no sign of slowing, the need to understand the realities and implications of adjunct employment has only increased over time.

As adjunct practitioners have not been formally trained as educators and may be new to academic work, the need to adequately train and develop them is crucial to student and institutional success (Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Beem, 2002). In spite of this need, few training and development programs have been designed with this population in mind. Increasing reliance on part-time or non-tenure-track faculty who receive little support and are limited by their working conditions has been shown to affect student learning and success outcomes in a major way (Kezar & Sam, 2010). A lack of institutional support overall has also contributed to low levels of adjunct engagement and the perception that adjuncts are not full members of the academic community. It also impacts an institution’s sense of community, and limits faculty participation in governance activities. At-will employment has been labeled as a threat to academic freedom
by the AAUP, and institutional memory is lost as faculty turnover increases (Maxey & Kezar, 2016).

While adjunct faculty members are not unstudied in the literature, the research is not comprehensive. Several landmark studies regarding the experience of adjunct faculty members have been conducted in recent years yielding important data surrounding adjunct satisfaction and engagement. Findings are conflicted: Some studies have showed that adjuncts do not feel satisfied or appreciated by their institutions and have concerns about job security, while others have suggested that they experience the same level of job satisfaction as full-time faculty members (Antony & Hayden, 2011; Kramer, Gloeckner, & Jacoby, 2014). Maynard and Joseph (2008) revealed that involuntary part-time faculty (those who would rather have full-time work) were the least satisfied group of instructors, while voluntary part-timers (such as adjunct practitioners) experienced similar levels of satisfaction as full-timers.

Other studies regarding the adjunct faculty member experience show the disparity between part- and full-time faculty members. In 2002, for example, the School Superintendent Association (AASA) conducted a survey to see how many of their current members were teaching or had taught as adjuncts in educational administration programs. The survey asked about their experience as adjuncts instructors – how they were evaluated, how they found resources, how they interacted with full-time faculty, etc. Survey results overwhelmingly indicated that they felt like “add-ons”, and rarely interacted with other faculty or received constructive feedback to improve their teaching. The AASA’s deputy director remarked, “these [adjunct faculty members] are completely isolated” (Beem, 2002, p. 3). Few had any professional development relevant to their teaching (Beem, 2002). With their short-term contracts, incorporating part-timers into time-intensive institutional governance and decision-
making processes is problematic for institutions (Maxey & Kezar, 2016). Data such as this reveals that intuitions of higher education are still unsure how to use part-time faculty in a way that preserves academic quality and creates a satisfying experience for part-timers (Beem, 2002). Considering how many adjunct faculty members are now employed, this is a concerning fact.

Researchers have also become interested in the impact of adjunct employment on institutional effectiveness. Some view adjuncts as a threat to the quality of academic programs (Eagan, 2009, Jaeger & Eagan, 2009), while others have raised concerns about the negative impact adjuncts may have on the academic environment (Kirk & Spencer, 2009). This may be a fair concern, as a correlation between an increase in adjunct employment and a decrease student learning outcomes, retention, and transfer/graduation rates has been documented (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). In the AASA survey cited above, data also revealed that a third of adjuncts developed their own syllabi independent from the college or university, 40% had to select their own textbook, and 85% did not meet regularly with other faculty or administrators in the department (Beem, 2002). These issues were thought to affect not only course consistency but the overall student experience. Despite such concerning data, many researchers place blame not on the adjuncts but the administrations and leaders who dictate their role and relationship with the institution (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Ronco & Cahill, 2004; Umbach, 2007).

Research also indicates that the lack of sufficient faculty training and development is keenly felt by adjuncts. Though adjuncts have been rated lower than full-time faculty in student evaluations, Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, and White (2006) suggested that these phenomena may be related to a lack of instructional training rather than a lack of content knowledge, as studies comparing student performance on exit exams found no difference in
performance between students taught by adjuncts and those taught by full-time faculty. Clark, Moore, Johnston, and Openshaw (2011) concluded that adjuncts need to receive an orientation and continual training in order to prepare them for instruction and make them aware of university policies.

For adjuncts, there is a clear connection between their engagement as academic workers and the support provided by the institution. The more support provided – the more training and development, specifically – the more potential for engagement and effective role performance (Kahn, 1990). While faculty members have noted the difficulty of finding “a practicing administrator who has the breadth of experience to deliver a whole course” (Beem, 2002, p. 3), such concerns are commonly overlooked in favor of “more pressing” financial woes. This has led to a problematic relationship between institutions that have not accepted the reality of part-time faculty employment, and the adjuncts they employ.

**Gaps in the research.** Research on part-time faculty members has historically been limited. Minimal research attention has been paid to specific adjuncts populations with the intention of developing faculty training and development programs from the ground up, though it has increased in recent years. Despite the noted flexibility of part-timers, researchers cannot view adjuncts as a single group because of the many distinctions and valuations in each subgroup (Levin, 2007). Adjunct practitioners – hired for their professional (workplace) expertise, not to replace full-time faculty members – are perhaps the least controversial group of adjuncts to employ, and yet we know little about their specific needs. Existing studies have indicated that training and development programs are beneficial, but programs must be specifically designed with adjuncts in mind in order to be effective. Studies that examine adjuncts on a macro level
(focusing on thousands of adjuncts at once, for example) do not provide the specific data necessary for program design.

**Significance of Research Problem**

It is undeniable that contingent faculty members play an important role in higher education (Maxey & Kezar, 2016). On a national level, they can impact the success of the country’s educational system as a whole. For example, the Department of Education is currently working towards Goal 2020, which aims to have an additional eight million students complete college in the next several years (Kezar, 2012). Many of the students who need to succeed in school to meet this goal come from historically under-represented and at-risk populations (first generation, low socio-economic status, and minority students), and part-time faculty members now teach the majority of these students (Maxey & Kezar, 2016). Adjuncts may also teach up to 75% of general education courses, where many students begin their college experience (Kezar, 2012). These numbers are also thought to go above 75% for the most at-risk student populations (Kezar, 2012). For these students, contact with contingent (rather than full-time) faculty plays a large role in their future academic success.

When employed responsibly, adjuncts can enhance the student learning experience and help address the complaint that college does not prepare students for the reality of the workplace (Beem, 2002), which is also one of the most pressing issues facing higher education today. Adjuncts have the power to “keep curricula fresh” (AACC, 2015) but they are historically less-integrated within the academic community. This lack of integration can sometimes overshadow the reality that they work part-time faculty do is “tremendously important” (Maxey & Kezar, 2016, p. 5). By situating the research problem in terms of engagement and institutional support,
this study frames the issue in a way that respects and appreciates the work and use of adjunct practitioners. It will also add to the existing scholarship concerning the adjunct experience.

**Personal significance.** As a current adjunct practitioner and academic administrator, I have seen firsthand the issues resulting from the increase in adjunct employment. At one institution where I worked, adjuncts were routinely assigned contract hours in such a way that would allow them to teach the maximum number of courses each year without earning full-time status, sometimes up to 999 hours (institutions must offer benefits to those working 1000 or more hours). While we relied on these faculty members for the success of our programs, there was no extrinsic incentive for adjuncts to attend events such as monthly department meetings or smaller meetings with chairs. While the school offered one day-long development session for all faculty members per term, it occurred on a Saturday. As many of our adjuncts worked full-time during the week, giving up an entire Saturday was not ideal. While our office provided what resources we could, we were eventually forced to give up things like the adjunct office space and funds for professional development. Adjuncts who were able to attend department events did so at the cost of their personal time. If classes were cancelled due to low enrollment, payment was not issued for any coursework the adjunct had done prior to the start of the term.

When I was hired as an adjunct, I saw how little support was provided from the university upon the start of employment. My orientation consisted of a copy of a book about teaching and the part-time faculty policy, which arrived in the mail some months after I had already begun teaching my first class. Each department seemed to have their own guidelines for onboarding and resources for new instructors. While I had some pedagogical training in graduate school (as an M.A. student I served as a T.A. and a graduate instructor), I wondered how the
instructors working in our business programs learned to teach. I also suspected that the learning curve for new instructors was negatively impacting student outcomes.

As an academic administrator, I saw this effect demonstrated in the undergraduate course evaluations that came through my office as I passed them on to the dean and relevant department chairs. From this data, it was clear that while some instructors were excellent educators, others struggled with the more basic aspects of teaching. While they had clear subject-matter expertise, their ability to effectively use the online learning management system or follow a master syllabus, for example, was limited. While department chairs were supposed to monitor instructor engagement throughout the term (checking on participation in online discussions, etc.), often the chair did not log in to check on progress (which I could see because I managed the administrator login). While full-time faculty members are understandably busy, this lack of evaluation throughout the term fostered a less-than-supportive environment.

When we offered multiple sections of the same course, enrollment patterns would favor the courses taught by full-time or well-known faculty members over those taught by adjuncts. These enrollments came from new and returning students, suggesting that a negative perception regarding adjuncts may have existed amongst students. In addition, established faculty were more likely to have a faculty bio on the university website, which meant students could find information about them before registering. Full-time faculty were also more likely to appear on sites like Rate My Professor, and therefore may seem more “legitimate” to students. While preparing for this study, my suspicions surrounding these issues were confirmed by other researchers’ findings on adjunct employment.

Despite all this, the university still had a group of adjunct faculty members who were loved by students and fully engaged in their roles as educators. From these instructors, I saw how
adjuncts had the potential to meet institutional needs and create effective and impactful learning experiences for students. But the responsibility fell on the administration to train and support all faculty members, and that responsibility was not always met.

While research suggests that adjunct practitioners are not necessarily searching for tenure-track or full-time faculty roles (Levin, 2007), it also reveals that they do want the same level of respect and support from schools that full-timers receive (Beem, 2002). While full-time faculty members may continue to struggle with the balance between research, teaching, and other institutional obligations, these adjuncts simply need to teach, and teach well. Providing support for these faculty members is therefore a powerful action for both adjuncts and institutions.

**Levels of impact.** Any data surrounding the use of adjuncts is likely to have both a local and widespread effect due to the large numbers of adjuncts employed at institutions nationwide – more than 70% of all faculty populations by recent accounts (American Association of University Professors, 2017; Curtis & Thornton, 2014). It is also estimated that community colleges employ the largest percentage of part-time faculty members (Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Eagan, 2009). Since community colleges educate more than half of the country’s undergraduate students (Eagan, 2009), it is likely that adjunct and part-time faculty members educate more students than traditional, full-time instructors. In online programs, which serve students across the globe, the number of adjuncts has risen at even higher rates as the demand for flexible, practical degree programs has increased (Magda, et al., 2015). With today’s emphasis on enrolling and retaining more students in order to meet financial goals, the student-adjunct relationship is therefore a significant factor for institutional success.

Studies have also shown that student success is dependent on an instructor’s effectiveness and integration within the institution. Student perceptions of adjuncts are incredibly important,
affecting both student persistence and retention rates (Jaeger & Hinz, 2009). Findings suggest that students respond less to “contextual effects of their institution and more to individual factors affecting their experience” (Eagan, 2009, p. 183), therefore if students perceive that their adjunct instructors are not engaged it is likely to have an overall negative effect on the learning experience.

This effect has been well documented: Eagan (2009) found a significant, negative correlation between increased exposure to part-time faculty and students’ chances of transferring from a community college to a four-year institution; Jacoby (2006) found that the increase of part-time faculty members at community colleges had a “highly significant and negative impact upon graduation rates” (p. 1092); and Jaeger and Eagan (2009) found that students who took roughly 50% of their courses from part-time instructors were 5% less-likely to graduate.

According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2017), the high turnover of contingent faculty may also prevent students from developing long-term academic relationships with their instructors. This is not to say that adjunct faculty are not invested in student success or engaged in teaching, but that the conditions and realities of their employment and faculty role are not necessarily set up to produce positive student outcomes.

However, rethinking the nature of part-time faculty work with student success in mind may have a positive effect on students and institutions that depend on enrollment for financial sustainability (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Investigating the needs of adjuncts (who often serve at-risk student populations) may lead not only to a better experience for instructors but for the students they serve, and the academic community at large. Training and development programs have been shown to increase engagement and lead to more effective teaching methods (Lancaster, Stein, Garrelts MacLean, Van Amburgh, & Persky, 2014; Rutz, Condon, Iverson,
Manduca, & Willett, 2012) but the programs must take into account specific adjunct needs in order to make an impact. To accomplish this, more in-depth research into the adjunct experience is needed.

This study has the potential to create impact at the multiple levels. Immediate focus is on the individual level, as this study examines individual experience. Here, insight into the adjunct experience may help improve the conditions of adjunct employment on a daily basis by exploring the conditions of engagement are met in the workplace. As this study also intends to produce recommendations for adjunct practitioners as a group, impact may also be felt on a collective level. By connecting the individual faculty experience to institutional practices and policies, this study may also have an impact at the university or institution level.

**Positionality Statement**

This study focuses on the experience of a single group of adjunct faculty members: adjunct practitioners. As past researchers have “decried the relative disregard for the specific” (Fennell & Arnot, 2008, p. 533) in existing literature, this study targets the specific through a careful and thoughtful investigative process. To realize this goal, it is important to understand the relationship between positionality and the group under study (Carlton Parsons, 2008). It is also important to understand the reality that I and these faculty members envision in order to reveal how they perceive their place within the academic environment, and how that position might be improved. As consistent with a constructivist, case study approach (Creswell, 2012), researcher positionality will be ever-present in the context of this study (Jupp & Slattery, 2010). The following sections detail this researcher’s relevant perspectives, influences, and biases.

**Researcher background.** I approach this topic from a chiefly insider perspective. For me, education is not simply a pastime or requirement; it is a way of life. I have been
academically orientated for as long as I can remember, and have been involved with academic or university work since my freshman year of college. As an academic administrator, part-time instructor, and tutor, higher education is not only my first career but my second and third as well. Lifelong learning is a major influence in the way that I color the world, and therefore a key component in my positionality (Carlton Parsons, 2008).

Also key is the positive experience that I’ve had with education. I have always loved school but I was lucky to attend fairly affluent institutions that introduced learning in a way that felt natural and impactful. My family also valued learning and encouraged academic achievement. As an undergraduate student, I was allowed to explore different subjects and go in the direction that was most appealing. As a result I chose to study English, which gave me a firm theoretical base for interpretation and critical thinking. This major also allowed me to develop writing skills that have formed a major part of my professional experience.

I began forming the major pillars of my research perspective as a graduate student studying English. During this time, I began to teach writing and study rhetorical and instructional theory. I focused my theoretical perspective on feminist and gender studies and began to approach issues and texts with a more targeted outlook that I carry to this day. Through the lens of medieval literature (the focus of my Master’s thesis) I studied the appearance and significant of the “other”, which also permeates the field of education research (Briscoe, 2005).

My interest in higher education can be traced to graduate school, where I began to work in academic administration, but it has since crossed institutional boundaries. After graduation I worked as a program administrator and then administrative manager at a mid-sized private university (which serves as the research site for this study) serving adult students through business, law, and accounting programs. During this time I also began to work part-time as an
adjunct and tutor in the English department. While teaching is not my full-time occupation, it allows me to view education issues from both a faculty and administrator perspective.

I currently work full-time as an academic program manager at a large public university. In my previous roles I have managed the administrative processes concerning adjunct faculty employment. I issued contracts and managed hiring, recruitment, and evaluation process on behalf of department chairs. This provided insight into the university’s practices surrounding part-time faculty employment. It should be noted that while I did interact with adjunct faculty members through my role, I did not have authority over hiring or employment decisions, nor did I interact with them regarding performance.

Today, my only connection to the study site is through my role as an online tutor and adjunct faculty member in the English department. In this respect, I am a peer to the study participants. As adjunct faculty members (especially those who teach online) do not regularly interact with each other, I am not known by most instructors.

**Research positionality.** My positionality is therefore based on a multifaceted look at education and a combination of insider and outsider perspectives. As detailed in the significance statement above, the problem of practice for this study emerged directly from my experience as an adjunct practitioner and full-time administrator. In framing this study in terms of a hegemonic center, its margins, and the struggles that emerge as a result of their interaction (Jupp & Slattery, 2010), I have focused on not aligning myself with one group over another. (I believe the theoretical framework for this study also supports this more neutral look at engagement, as will be discussed below.) In order to gain new insight into this subgroup of faculty, decentring must occur, which requires a repositioning and “an overturning of the master narratives, a disordering of existing hegemonic knowledge construction” (Fennell & Arnot, 2008, p. 534). Breaking
through the hegemonic structures that reproduce oppressive environments is, for me, a critical component of research.

My positionality also impacts the ultimate goal of this study. My professional experience has led me to reject the notion that all faculty members should be full-time, traditional tenure-track employees. Adjuncts deserve respect and greater institutional support and inclusion – they should not be viewed as “second-class citizens” (Ellis, 2013; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014). I’ve also witnessed the issues associated with employing adjuncts – problems with instructional methods, availability to students, student attrition, etc. – therefore I cannot ignore my perspective as an administrator responsible for programmatic success.

Finally, my theoretical perspective also forms a significant influence – if I envisioned my positionality as a collection of concentric circles, theory would likely form the outer-most loop. My interest into the other may help explain why I’ve chosen to study adjuncts, who are often envisioned as a marginalized group within the academic community. For me, the theoretical history of the adjunct and the rise in adjunct employment is similar to that of the other in literature and popular culture – each indicates a fundamental change to the world in which they appear. The act of boundary crossing and the erasure of traditional borders are highly significant for the world of higher education. Ultimately, such theoretical perspectives are unavoidable in my work.

It is the intent of this researcher that positionality is not be overshadowed by one particular perspective. Instead, a multi-faceted background will help gain entry and insight into the research process. While I believe that a scholar should be able to study any group they choose as long as they remain aware of their positionality and personal backdrop (Briscoe, 2005; Jupp & Slattery, 2010), I acknowledge the privileges I hold. Though I tend view issues from a
positive change standpoint, I do not intend to abandon my sense of hope in researching this problem, as maintaining affection for and positivity towards the world is essential for any scholar-practitioner who desires to impact change.

**Purpose Statement and Research Question**

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a mid-sized, private university on the West Coast. Institutions employing adjunct practitioners are the main audience for this study, though the implications of the research may also reach adjuncts and the students they serve. The intent of this study is to generate qualitative information regarding the experience of adjunct practitioners that is both relevant to the current debates regarding adjunct employment and timely for the development of more effective faculty training and development programs. The research will be aimed at improving institutional practice of employing and supporting adjunct faculty members. Findings will highlight not only the experience of adjunct practitioners but the ways in which the criteria for psychological engagement has been met or not met by the institution.

**Research question.** How do adjunct practitioners experience engagement at a mid-sized private university on the West Coast?

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is employee engagement theory, with a focus on the work of William A. Kahn (1990). Employee engagement has been a hot-button issue since the mid-90s, with increasing amounts of research in both business and psychology (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). This trend is logical, as outcomes of engagement align with what most organizations are looking for: employees who are more productive, safer, less likely to turn-over, and more willing to engage in company efforts (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).
Although employee engagement theory does not specifically address those working in higher education, it provides a strong theoretical base for determining the specific needs of adjunct practitioners. Not only does it look at the psychological and sociological conditions of work, it examines individual experience and provides an in-depth definition of engagement that could be used to create guidelines for future faculty training and development programs. Since employee engagement theory addresses the individual instead of the organization, it is as readily applicable to academia as it would be to the corporate sphere.

**Historical and contemporary foundations of the framework.**

**Kahn’s approach.** Employee engagement theory has a clear timeline, beginning with a small number of seminal works. In a comprehensive survey of over 1,000 articles, Shuck and Wollard (2010) concluded that Kahn’s 1990 article, “Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work”, appearing in the *Academy of Management Journal*, contains the first mention of employee engagement. Despite being one of the first major authors in this field, Kahn remains relevant and timely in engagement research.

Kahn (1990) first began working on engagement in an effort to create a descriptive theory grounded “in the behaviors, experiences, and perceptions of organization members” (p. 695). Using an ethnographic, qualitative approach, his theory was first developed in an organizational context, and then redeveloped in a different setting. In the first study, Kahn was both participant and observer as he gathered data at a summer camp. The second study was conducted at an architecture firm, where he was an outsider. The summer camp data provided categories of data, initial explanations to explain that data, and questions that would guide the second study. A third phrase of data analysis was also taken on in order to combine and revise the information from the
first two. The result of this work was the first theory to specifically address employee engagement.

Kahn’s theory was influenced by the work of psychologists (Freud, 1922), sociologists (Goffman, 1961; Merton, 1957), and group theorists (Slater, 1966; Smith & Berg, 1987). Underpinnings of Kahn’s theory include Goffman’s (1961) classic sociology text *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In this text, Goffman (1961) argued that a human’s attachment to their life roles varied depending on interactions during quick, face-to-face encounters. While Kahn agreed with this concept, he felt that a new perspective was needed for interpreting organizational life (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). While Kahn (1990) made direct references to Goffman’s (1961) interactionalist theory, he focused specifically on the attachments and detachments employees displayed during role performances in the workplace.

Kahn’s (1990) article provided a working definition as well as specific domains of engagement. He defined personal engagement as “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s ‘preferred self’ in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances” (p. 700). The major tenet of Kahn’s (1990) theory is that the domains of meaningfulness, safety, and availability are important to understanding why a person would become engaged in their work. Kahn (1990) defined the three domains as follows:

*Meaningfulness:* A sense of return on investments of self in role performances.

*Safety:* A sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.

*Availability:* A sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances. (p. 705)
Kahn (1990) broke down each domain into multiple dimensions: definition, experiential components, types of influence, and influences. He also detailed the associated task behaviors, role characteristics, and work interactions.

**Historical trajectory.** Kahn’s conceptualization of employee engagement was the sole theory on engagement until early 2001, when Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) began researching employee burnout. This purely conceptual research suggested that employee engagement was the positive opposite of burnout, and that high levels of “activation and pleasure” (Maslach, et al., 2001, p. 417) were markers of employee engagement. Contemporary research on employee engagement has generally focused on a version of Kahn’s engagement/disengagement or Maslach, et al.’s (2001) employee burnout.

Building on these first two works, the following represents a timeline of significant developments in employee engagement theory:

- Kahn (1990): Introduced the three domains.
- Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002): First study of business units and first to link profit and engagement and to discuss employee satisfaction.
- May, Gilson, & Harter (2004): First empirical testing of Kahn’s concepts.
- Saks (2006): First academic research into the causes and effects of employee engagement that identified engagement drivers.
- Vance (2006): First to address engagement as imagined by consulting and commercial organizations.
- Macey & Schneider (2008): Separated engagement constructs; added credibility to
engagement theory in academic business literature.

- Rich et al. (2010): Using Kahn’s (1990) definition, suggested that individuals are engaged when their hands, head, and heart are invested in job performance.

While it had a somewhat slow start, research into employee engagement has exploded during the past ten years. Although Kahn’s (1990) study was infrequently cited up till 2010, it has garnered over 1,800 academic citations in the past five years (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Although Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma, and Bakker (2002) provided another oft-cited definition of engagement, Kahn’s (1990) definition is considered to be deeper and more substantial (Saks & Gruman, 2014). According to Shuck and Wollard, (2010) the one study that empirically tested Kahn’s three domains found that they were crucial to understanding engagement at work. This suggests that the framework Kahn (1990) created in his research is foundational to the study of engagement.

Employee engagement theory has also been applied to the field of faculty research in recent years. For adjuncts specifically, most studies look at the overall satisfaction and engagement levels experienced by part-time faculty members. As a seminal work, Kahn’s 1990 article is often used to provide as a working definition of engagement, but in reviewing the literature for this study, no studies on faculty using Kahn’s (1990) work as a theoretical framework were found. Since employee engagement literature can be considered a relatively
new endeavor, this finding suggests an underdeveloped field of research rather than a weakness in the theoretical framework itself.

**Criticisms of the theory.** While researchers are accepting of Kahn’s (1990) work, there are some lingering issues with his theory, and employee engagement theory as a whole. First, there are certain inconsistencies when it comes to defining engagement. In some cases, researchers have been unable to narrow down a name; some say it should be called employee engagement, while others prefer job or work engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). It has also been difficult for researchers to define specific types of engagement due to the lack of a single accepted theory of employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Numerous categories have been put forward, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, all which can be defined and assessed separately. Later researchers like Macey and Schneider (2008) found that types of engagement build on each other, which is inconsistent with Kahn’s (1990) and Maslach et al.’s (2001) frameworks, which separates the types. Little empirical evidence exists for rationalizing the separation of engagement types, however, though it is a field ripe for future research (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

There is also some confusion over when the decision to become engaged occurs or develops (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). For some researchers, the decision is personal; for others, it resides on an organizational level. The latter conception may help explain why some researchers and practitioners have had trouble developing specific strategies to increase engagement; their focus is too wide, and doesn’t play enough attention to the individual (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). In addition, scholars now agree that employee engagement is about the behaviors focused on achieving outcomes associated with a person’s specific job duties. It should not be confused with
extra role behaviors that exist outside one’s primary area of responsibility (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

For this study, it is important to highlight engagement theory’s emphasis on individual role behaviors over organizational outcomes. Efforts to increase engagement for the profit or productivity of an organization rather than the personal and psychological wellbeing of the employee may be ultimately unethical. Employee engagement for faculty members will therefore concern only those responsibilities outlined in teaching contracts or work-plan agreements. It does, however, include the employee’s connection or sense of community with the institution.

**Rationale for using the theory.** Kahn’s (1990) version of employee engagement theory was chosen for this study because of its ability to draw connections between individual experience, engagement, and organizational structures. As the main source of data for this study is qualitative one-on-one interviews, it is important that the theoretical framework address personal experience. Kahn (1990) and the other seminal authors in engagement theory agree that engagement concerns one person’s experience of work, as it is an individual construct. According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), “employee engagement concerns the individual, not the masses, and is a personal decision that cannot be mandated or forced. Engagement in work is a personal experience inseparable from the individualistic nature of being human” (p. 102). The question, then, is how institutions could encourage faculty members to be more engaged in their work without simply mandating it, as many schools have done in the past. Employee engagement theory can help answer this question. While training and development programs can improve teaching quality, creating an atmosphere that fosters adjunct engagement is essential. To accomplish this, institutions must better understand the adjunct experience.
In breaking down the conditions of adjunct employment, it is difficult to locate the source of various issues, and whether it lies with the faculty programs, the administration, or the adjunct faculty members themselves. Employee engagement theory takes a unique approach in that it focuses on the employee-level without placing blame on the individual. While past studies have made more negative comments about the lack of engagement displayed by part-time faculty members, implying that they are less interested or committed than their full-time counterparts, engagement theory has suggested that this is not the case. Lack of engagement is not simply a negative reflection on the employee; rather, the organization has just as big a role to play in providing the conditions for increased engagement. Engagement theory expresses the extent to which a job is performed as well as the employee’s satisfaction and sense of fulfillment in that job.

**Application to the study.** Kahn’s (1990) theory helps interpret and frame engagement in a way that makes sense for this study and allows for a more targeted approach to investigation. In order to get a complete picture of adjunct practitioner engagement, each component of Kahn’s (1990) major tenet will be examined. In other words, the three domains – meaningfulness, safety, and availability – will be examined together as a group, individually, and in relation to each other.

Kahn’s (1990) theory has impacted the design of this study, beginning with the development of the central research question. Though it will be further addressed in Chapter 3, it should be noted that this is a qualitative study. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on an issue (part-time faculty employment) that needs to be explored rather than quantified or analyzed from a statistical perspective consistent with a quantitative approach (Creswell, 2007). Establishing a primary hypothesis, as often required in quantitative research,
would also be preemptive for this study. It could create a bias during data collection, causing the researcher to focus on one area of data over another. In this study, the objective is not simply to measure faculty engagement, but to explore the experience of engagement, which falls clearly in the realm of qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2007). The theory has also confirmed that a qualitative approach is well-suited to this study, as Kahn (1990) used a qualitative methodology for his work.

In asking how adjuncts experience engagement, this study focuses on individual experience and support received from the institution. Interview protocols were built to reflect the structure of Kahn’s (1990) theory and investigate the three domains of personal engagement. Additional data sources were also chosen to investigate the culture of engagement created by institutional policies and leadership.

One limitation of using employee engagement theory is that results will be related to the institutional context of the study (though the case study design will help overcome this limitation to some extent, as discussed in Chapter 3). This study is not a wide-sweeping project that provides conclusions for every school using adjuncts. Results will be individualized, as engagement is inherently personal, but the patterns that emerge from the data may provide clues to the larger issue of employing and supporting part-time faculty members.

**Summary.** Employee engagement theory has helped frame the issue of adjunct practitioner engagement from a more hopeful perspective. While the current research and public sentiment can be quite negative toward part-timers, the positive aspects of employing adjuncts should not be ignored. Adjunct practitioners, in particular, possess insightful and useful knowledge that is a real value-add for students. But it is clear from the literature that these instructors are not being used to their full potential, or being adequately supported.
Kahn’s (1990) three domains allow this study to approach the topic without the stigma that often comes with using adjuncts. In framing adjuncts as a type of employee that needs to be engaged by their employer, it is then up to researchers to figure out how this can be done. The question of whether or not the effort should be made is not in question. As a theoretical framework, Kahn’s (1990) theory plays into this study’s desire to improve the adjunct situation. More research into specific faculty populations is needed, and it is not enough to simply say that faculty members aren’t engaged – institutions need to know why, and how it might be fixed.

**Key Terms**

**Administrators.** Those employees at a college or university who have administrative responsibilities or duties. May include both faculty (department chairs, associate deans, deans, etc.) and staff (managers, advisors, assistant deans, etc.). Collectively referred to as “the administration”.

**Adjunct faculty.** Those instructors employed as part-time faculty members at a college or university whose main or sole responsibility is instruction. May hold the rank of adjunct professor, lecturer, or instructor. Employed in a contingent basis without the security of full-time employment. Usually paid by contract rather than salary, and without benefits. Also referred to as part-time faculty.

**Adjunct practitioners.** Part-time faculty members primarily employed (or with expertise) outside the field of teaching who teach on a part-time basis for a college or university. Hired to bring professional knowledge or industry experience to the classroom.

**Contingent faculty.** Those employed as either full- or part-time faculty members appointed off the tenure track at a college or university. Commonly refers to those in an
uncertain or unsecured position with little job security. May hold the rank of non-tenure track faculty, lecturer, part-time faculty, adjunct, non-senate faculty, or postdoc.

**Credit hour.** Also known as the Carnegie unit, the unit of measuring educational credit. Usually based on the numbers of classroom hours (both online and in-person) and work out of the classroom a course requires per week. A course with three credit hours confers three units of credit to students upon completion.

**Faculty development.** Faculty support focused on improving a faculty member’s knowledge or competency in a specific area, facilitated through a variety of deliver methods including workshops, courses, online resources, learning communities, and seminars. May be directly related to job duties (teaching, research, etc.) or more broadly focused on professional development.

**Faculty support.** Resources, services, or guidance provided to faculty members on behalf of the institution. May include academic, pedagogic, or technology support, as well as faculty training and development. May also include shared governance (faculty senate, unions, etc.).

**Faculty training.** Support an institution provides to their faculty members intended to help train them in specific subject matter areas (ex: online learning, educational technology, assessment, etc.) and provide relevant knowledge or information. May also include onboarding or new faculty orientation.

**Full-time faculty.** Those employed full-time (100%) with a college or university in a position that grants all the benefits associated with full-time faculty employment. May be employed via an appointment with specific start and end dates (per grant funding, etc.) or indefinitely. Includes both tenure-track and non-tenure track appointments. May include all
rankings assigned to full-time faculty members. May include teaching, research, and institutional obligations or duties.

**Freeway flyers.** Those part-time faculty who function as replacements for full-time faculty, and piece together the equivalent of a full-time course load from usually multiple part-time teaching appointments. Consider teaching to be their full-time career, but are unable to obtain a full-time or tenure-track faculty role.

**Graduation rate.** The rate at which students are able to graduate from a college or university, earning a degree or certificate.

**Institutional effectiveness.** Ongoing and systematic practices that include planning, identification and measurement of outcomes, program and service evaluation, and the use of data and assessment in institutional decision-making. May also refer to an institution’s ability to meet or exceed goals or benchmarks set by the institution or governing/accrediting bodies. Often broadly measured by an institution’s retention and graduation rate.

**Involuntary part-time faculty.** Those faculty members employed part-time who desire full-time employment and have been forced to accept less than full-time work for economic or other reasons.

**Non-tenure track faculty.** Those employed as either full- or part-time faculty members at a college or university who are not eligible for promotion to the rank of tenured professor. May hold the rank of instructor, lecturer, visiting assistant or associate professor, adjunct professor, or emeritus faculty.

**Part-time faculty.** Those faculty members employed on a part-time basis (less than 100%) with a college or university. Depending on the institution, may be granted benefits or a percentage of full-time benefits based on course load or appointment. May hold the rank of
adjunct, teaching assistant, postdoc, clinical faculty, or instructor. Used interchangeably with adjunct faculty.

**Student attrition.** The number of students who leave a program of study before it is finished. Also refers to the rate at which students drop a particular class over the course of a term.

**Student persistence.** The rate at which a student completes a prescribed course of study, which may or may not include graduation. Often used as a student measure to determine individual rather than institutional success.

**Student retention.** Also referred to as student persistence, the rate at which a student is retained (kept enrolled) by their school term-to-term or year-to-year. Often used as an institutional measure of effectiveness.

**Tenure-track and tenured faculty.** Those employed full-time (100%) with a college or university in a teaching position at the rank of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor, with clear steps to advancement/promotion to the rank of tenured professor. Roles likely include teaching, research, and institutional obligations or duties.

**Transfer rate.** The rate at which a student is able to transfer from a two-year school (often a community college) to a four-year college or university. May be used as a marker of student success for schools that do not issue bachelor’s degrees.

**Voluntary part-time faculty.** Those faculty members (including adjunct practitioners) employed part-time who do not desire full-time employment, and consider teaching as a part-time vocation or supplement to other income.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

As outlined in the previous chapter, the increased employment of adjunct or part-time faculty\(^1\) members is now one of the most pressing issues facing higher education today. Although the number of adjuncts employed at two- and four-year schools has increased exponentially since the 1970s (Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Green, 2007), the response from researchers has not been entirely proportionate. Much of the research since the 1990s has been conducted by those who appear to favor the traditional tenure-track model of faculty employment. Much of the data gathered from these studies supported the hypothesis that adjuncts are harmful not only to the student experience but institutional success as well. Conclusions called for a rethinking of the faculty employment model and a reeducation of short-sighted administrators.

It is not surprising, then, that this line of thinking has allowed institutions to use adjuncts without fully-considering the implications of their employment or providing the adequate support. The feeling that adjuncts are second-class citizens (Christensen, 2008; Ellis, 2013; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014) is widespread across academia. This rise in adjunct employment coupled with a general dislike of adjunct employment has created a bleak outlook for all involved.

However, research conducted in the past ten or so years has revealed a possible light at the end of the tunnel. Hypotheses put forth in previous studies have not all stood the test of time. The literature has become more specific, targeted, and proactive towards adjunct employment. In accepting that part-time faculty members are an undeniable presence in higher education – the

\(^1\) The terms “adjunct” and “part-time” faculty members are used interchangeably here.
majority, in fact (Magda, et al., 2015) – researchers have paved the way for data that may actually improve the adjunct condition. Programs that have always relied on adjuncts (business and medical education, for example) are leading the way in supporting and developing their part-time faculty. Despite this, low levels of adjunct engagement are still reported across the board, and adjunct practitioners often lack the necessary instructional knowledge and experience (Beem, 2002).

Targeted faculty support programs therefore represent a great opportunity for institutions to improve instructional quality and the adjunct experience. There remains, however, much room for improvement. Research has not been detailed enough in studying specific adjunct populations, though important insights can be gained from the existing literature. The purpose of this literature review is to provide contextual information for adjunct faculty members as a group and highlight the importance of institutional support. The review presents current scholarship regarding adjuncts in the following categories: adjunct faculty member roles and implications, job satisfaction and engagement, and faculty training and development programs.

**Adjunct Faculty Member Roles and Implications**

Part-time faculty members continue to grow in popularity at both two-year and four-year institutions, now forming the majority of instructors at community colleges in particular (Eagan, 2009). While the percentage of faculty working part-time has hovered around 70% since 2008 (Magda, et al., 2015; Maldonado & Riman, 2009), the number of adjuncts teaching online continues to rise. A 2015 survey by The Learning House found that more than half of institutions indicated that their online adjunct population had grown over the previous year (Magda, et al., 2015). This puts significant pressure on institutions and adjuncts alike to become more versed in innovative teaching methods and strategies.
But despite these more recent increases, debate has raged over the use of adjuncts since the role was introduced. This debate has been contradictory, with many researchers believing that “adjunct faculty can be both a help and a hindrance to universities” (Forbes, Hickey, & White, 2010, p. 117). As departments face new challenges to make programs more relevant with fewer funds, “a new call has been made to reexamine the role of adjuncts in the professoriate” (Stenerson, Blanchard, Fassiotto, Hernandez, & Muth, 2010). As financial issues cause institutions to hire more adjuncts, this call reflects an urgent need.

**Institutional identity.** Due to the variable nature of higher education and the variation in the adjunct profile, the function of adjuncts is constantly changing (Langen, 2011). Not only have they become an economic necessity, they can adapt quickly to changing instructional circumstances, which makes them attractive to employers (Levin, 2007). According to Levin (2007), “part-time faculty are best understood as extensions of institutional identity. In the twenty-first century, the identity of community colleges makes part-time faculty central to the organization’s goals” (p. 15). Adjuncts are used to fill critical needs (Beems, 2002), both in online and in-person courses. Programs that are more practice-based (business, engineering, health, etc.) have seen an increase in adjunct use (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006). A study by Magda, et al., (2015) found that the highest percentage of online adjuncts taught business courses (35%), followed by English (29%), general studies (24%), education (22%), psychology (20%), and nursing (15%). Communication (9%) was the least likely discipline for online adjuncts.

Adjuncts possess a unique “praxis” orientation, bringing fresh knowledge from their current workplace into the classroom – something even the best tenured faculty member serving as a consultant cannot claim (Greisler, 2002). This contribution may be unparalleled in a market-focused academic setting (Greisler, 2002). Full-time faculty members cannot always
meet the demands of specific programs that rely heavily on up-to-date professional knowledge. Surveys given by Clark, Moore, Johnston, and Openshaw (2011) indicated that adjunct faculty members provided a “value added” component to such programs.

Recent hiring trends also highlight the important financial role that adjuncts play at their institutions. Adjuncts often are brought on to save costs, as part-time faculty allow institutions to be more economically efficient and offer greater flexibility (Beem, 2002; Eagan, 2009; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Magda, et al., 2015). On paper, adjuncts are cost-effective; Forbes, Hickey, and White (2010) estimated that part-time faculty members are approximately 33% – 40% of the cost of full-time faculty members teaching the same course (mainly due to the difference in employee benefits). Eagan and Jaeger (2009) found that adjuncts were as much as 80% cheaper to employ than full-timers. Jacoby (2006) also found that part-time faculty members were paid approximately one quarter of the salary paid to full-timers, despite spending slightly more time in the classroom.

At the same time, cost-benefit research on the use of adjuncts is limited, and the relationship between savings and the effect adjuncts have on institutional effectiveness is not fully understood (Eagan, 2009). Despite this, most critics agree that schools, especially community colleges, will continue to hire adjuncts for financial reasons (Green, 2007; Wallin, 2007). They will also use adjuncts to keep up with market demand and the changing student population (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Therefore, it is likely that the percentage of part-time faculty at all colleges and universities will continue to rise above 70 or 75% in the near future (AAUP, 2003).

_Lack of a single profile._ Stepping onto a college campus, however, you might not notice the change in faculty make-up, as there are fewer differences between part-and full-time faculty
members than is often assumed (Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Despite system changes, the majority of universities have not yet fully defined the part-time role. Most of the current knowledge on adjuncts comes from publications like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010), and tends to be less empirical. Though adjuncts are often portrayed as less qualified and committed to their institutions (Jaeger & Hinz, 2009), and they hold fewer credentials (Ph.Ds.) than full-time faculty members, the data concerning this critique is not necessarily founded in data on specific faculty populations (Eagan, 2009). For example, PhDs. are not required for community college instructors so the baseline for comparison is not necessarily the same (Eagan, 2009). Although adjuncts have become an economic necessity and can adapt quickly to changing instructional circumstances, it is difficult to come up with a single profile of adjuncts because they are a diverse group (Christensen, 2008). In fact, these distinctions and valuations suggest it would be unhelpful, even unwise to view adjuncts as one faculty demographic (Levin, 2007).

Despite this, existing research has revealed several implications for part-time faculty as a group. Levin (2007) found that there are essentially two groups of part-time faculty: those hired for contract labor and those hired for specialized labor. In other words, there are those who make a career of part time work, and those who consider it supplementary to a full-time career elsewhere or some other life pursuit (retirement, etc.) (Liftig, 2014). Both are essential to academic programs but hold different roles and may have their own specific needs as instructors. Institutions that require adjuncts to take on extra work or training can exploit both groups, therefore exhaustion should be an important ethical consideration when constructing adjunct workloads. Considering the lack of a comprehensive legal definition of adjunct employment, the lack of available legal resources or remedies, and the tenuous relationship between adjuncts and
institutions, it is not surprising that many part-timers feel uncertain in their roles as educators (AAUP, 2003; Duncan, 1999; Kezar & Sam, 2013).

The literature has also highlighted the significant distance adjuncts perceive between themselves and the institutions they serve (Kezar & Sam, 2013; Rogers, 2015). The job title itself suggests a divide, as “adjunct” can be defined as “something joined or added to another thing but not essentially a part of it; something that completes the meaning of something else and is not itself one of the principal elements; a person associated with or assisting another” (Greisler, 2002, p. 1127). From a basic linguistic perspective, adjuncts are set apart from their full-time counterparts in a rather negative way – it is logical, then, that some part-timers have argued for the term “contingent faculty” instead (Greisler, 2002).

While this distance can be a benefit for some (providing a flexible, independent work environment), it can also have an undesired effect on instructional work. Research by Smith (2010, as cited by Akroyd, Patton, & Bracken, 2013) indicated that while part-time faculty members are accustomed to functioning autonomously, the search for efficient work practices can lead faculty members to unbundle academic work, creating a disconnect between teaching duties and teaching philosophy or motivation. This can lead to “a loss of professional identity and functioning in more mechanized, uniform ways that are not pedagogically sound nor desirable in the long run” (Akroyd et al., 2013, p. 194). Instead of having specific time allocated for course work, adjuncts may feel pressure to complete their teaching duties as quickly as possible. They may also feel they have little allocated time for development activities or for interacting with students outside the classroom (Akroyd et al., 2013).

There is no doubt that adjuncts will continue to hold an important role in higher education (American Federation of Teachers, 2010, as cited by Stenerson et al., 2010). Adjuncts
offer professional expertise, help bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace (Greisler, 2002), and often teach simply because they enjoy working with students (Beem, 2002). They can effectively cultivate a presence within an institution by serving for many years and bringing significant knowledge to the classroom. They may also be natural mentors for students both during school and after graduation (Greisler, 2002). This position is perhaps best summed thusly: “adjuncts are not a threat to the professoriate, but positive contributors to the academic community” (Stenerson et al., 2010, p. 4). Moving beyond the boundaries of the traditional faculty profile may reveal new possibilities for innovative course offerings and student success.

Conflicted findings. Despite these encouraging implications, conflicting literature exists on the benefits of using adjunct faculty members. In addition to their incursion on the traditional faculty role, some view adjuncts as a threat to the quality of academic programs (Eagan, 2009, Jaeger & Eagan, 2009), and others have raised concerns about the negative impact adjuncts may have on the academic environment (Kirk & Spector, 2009). Research indicates that new adjuncts often begin teaching with little to no knowledge about teaching practices (Greisler, 2002), which is problematic for all involved.

Students’ perceptions of adjuncts are particularly important in this debate, as their perception of faculty members’ availability, expertise, and concern has a documented effect on student persistence and retention (Jaeger & Hinz, 2009). Interactions between students and faculty have been found to encourage students to devote more time to educational activities during college, which is especially important for first-generation or at-risk students (Kuh & Hu, 2001). However, previous studies have found that students often view adjuncts as inaccessible and therefore uninterested (Jaeger & Hinz, 2009). Data also suggests that adjuncts are less available to students outside class, have less scholarly authority, and are less integrated into
campus community than full-time faculty members (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). But many adjuncts lack offices, are not compensated for spending time in office hours or meeting students outside of class, and may have time conflicts that prevent them from holding daytime office hours (Christensen, 2008). If adjuncts choose to teach for personal or professional enrichment (Beem, 2002; Martinak, Karlsson, Faricloth, & Witcher, 2006), then not being available outside of class may be due to institutional barriers rather than personal desire.

Research has also shown that students respond less to “contextual effects of their institution and more to individual factors affecting their experience” (Eagan, 2009, p. 183) – in other words, students are not so much affected by the proportion of part-time to full-time faculty at an institution as they are by the level of engagement they perceive from their instructors. Since part-time faculty members are historically less-engaged – due to a variety of factors, the majority falling not on the adjunct but on the administration – this experience may be automatically lower in courses taught by part-time faculty members. But, again, this data is mixed; while students ranked full-time faculty members as more available than adjuncts, results in other categories varied by school and department (Ronco & Cahill, 2004).

Adjunct teaching effectiveness is also an important area of research that several impactful studies have investigated in recent years. Christensen (2008) noted that many adjuncts have trouble with the basics of teaching, like constructing a syllabus, using available technology, or making use of effective teaching methods. Jacoby (2006) also found that an overreliance on adjuncts could undermine student success with adjuncts’ use of less-rigorous instructional methods. Differences in grading patterns (Jacoby, 2006) and grade inflation (Forbes et al., 2010) have been noted as an issue. However, a lack of job security may help explain why part-timers are less willing to enforce rigorous grading standards, as they may be more concerned that
students’ reactions to grades may impact their course evaluations (Jacoby, 2006). Part-time faculty members may also limit their teaching methods to what will save them time. In one study, for example, part-timers were found 50% less likely to use essay exams than full-time faculty members, perhaps due to the difference in grading time (Christensen, 2008).

Beyond course-level grading patterns, the relationship between adjunct employment and student learning outcomes, retention, and transfer/graduation rates has also been examined by researchers (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). Schibik and Harrington (2004) found that increased exposure of part-time faculty to students (in number of courses taught) had a diminishing return to the institution due to lower retention rates. Jaeger and Hinz (2009) replicated this study and found a negative correlation between the increase in part-time faculty and student persistence. Ronco and Cahill (2004) also found this result in first to second-year persistence rates. Studies have also revealed that exposure to part-time faculty members produced a moderate but negative effect on students’ likelihood of earning an associate’s degree (Eagan, 2009; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). While the results of a similar study conducted by Umbach (2008) were not conclusive, they indicated that part-time faculty members tended to be less-effective educators than their full-time counterparts in working with undergraduates.

However, research conducted by Ronco and Cahill (2004) had different implications. From a large study of 3,700 students, little evidence was found to suggest that instructor type had any impact on student outcomes – rather student success was directly related to a student’s background and educational experience. Studies focusing on part-time faculty have been limited by the use of institution- and population-specific data that may not accurately apply to all groups.
Researchers have also become critical of previous studies that associated negative outcomes with the increase in part-time faculty employment, particularly those that were originally conducted in the late 90s when the adjunct effect was just beginning to come into focus. Rogers (2015), for example, retested the hypothesis put forth in Burgess and Samuels’ (1999) study on the effect of part-time instructors on student success. Rogers (2015) found that student success was not directly related to faculty employment status as Burgess and Samuels (1999) suggested. The new study revealed that students were not negatively impacted by the heavy use of adjunct faculty members at two-year colleges, and concluded that “the argument to increase the number of full-time faculty teaching courses at community colleges in order to improve student success appears to be fallacious” (Rogers, 2015, p. 682).

Recent white papers on this topic have also suggested that this argument can be applied to tenured versus non-tenured faculty as well (Rogers, 2015). To suggest that full-time faculty members are automatically better than part-timers “demeans, marginalizes, and demoralizes an entire class of professionals who are often bringing in real-world knowledge into the classroom that career faculty do not possess” (Rogers, 2015, p. 682). Rogers (2015) concluded by stating that an institution looking to increase student success should focus their funds not on increasing full-time positions but on faculty development programs (which will be discussed in the final section of this review).

The institutional effect of adjuncts is, at this point, highly unrealized. Despite negative findings, most part-time faculty members remain competent and committed to education (Christensen, 2008). Though the majority of the studies detailed above found a negative relationship between adjunct employment and institutional effectiveness, many researchers place blame not on the adjuncts but the administrations and leaders who dictate their role and
relationship with the institutions (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Ronco & Cahill, 2004; Umbach, 2007). The problem, according to some, is not the simple increase in numbers but the subsequent lack of growth in programs and services directed towards part-time faculty members (Jaeger & Hinz, 2009). Since employees are likely to mirror the level of commitment that they receive from the institution, administrators must make a greater effort to provide the necessary structures and supports (Umbach, 2007). Adjuncts can benefit programs, but only if they are experience a greater connection to the university (Beem, 2002).

As long as traditional, full-time faculty roles exist, there will be detractors and supporters of adjunct faculty members. Some will believe they bring value to academic programs, while others will worry they signal the end to traditional faculty roles and instructional quality. The most justifiable cases seem to be institutions that use adjuncts to meet specific instructional needs rather than budgetary ones, though financial concerns remain an important and undeniable consideration. What is clear from the literature is that future research is needed to keep up with increases in adjunct employment. Student success should be the catalyst for institutional decisions, therefore better training, development, and evaluation methods need to be developed for adjuncts to ensure that quality learning opportunities are being provided to students (Langen, 2011).

**Job Satisfaction and Engagement**

Faculty engagement is a crucial component of student and institutional success, but understanding what leads people to be “psychologically present” (Kahn, 1990, p. 693) at work is a complex task for any researcher or organization. As the first researcher to identify the term “employee engagement”, Kahn (1990) hypothesized that the psychological experience of work was what drove people’s attitudes and behaviors. This experience is influenced by individual,
interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organizational factors. Based on the idea that people have parts of themselves that they prefer to use in role performances (the act of putting on one’s “teacher hat”, for instance), it is the employment and expression of this preferred self that creates behaviors that enliven the connection between self and role. These behaviors promote connection to work and full, active role performance, and create the conditions for personal engagement (Kahn, 1990). In this state, employees can perform their roles and feel a deep connection with work and the work community without losing their sense of self. Under this definition, an engaged faculty member would feel psychologically connected to their students and the act of teaching, with an increased desire for creativity and productivity.

On the other side, personal disengagement is a distancing of self and role that leads to a lack of expression and energy in role performance (Kahn, 1990). Work is done robotically, with employees acting as “custodians rather than innovators” (Kahn, 199, p. 702). Employees become less involved in their tasks and emotionally disconnected in a way that hides their emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and values (Kahn, 1990). In this state, faculty members would perform their teaching responsibilities but would not form personal or psychological connections to students, and would not feel a personal obligation to be innovative. They might also feel that their academic integrity was not respected by the institution.

Taking Kahn’s (1990) definition into account, engagement can be examined from the perspective of both the adjunct and their institution. It is important to note that engagement includes both the effort on part of the employee and those efforts made by the institution to engage that employee (Jolley, et al., 2014). These efforts may be manifested by access to teaching resources, compensation, community integration, job security, faculty voice, etc.
Employee engagement is therefore a responsibility of the institution as well as the adjunct (Jolley, et al., 2014).

**Satisfaction levels.** Several landmark studies regarding the experience of part-time faculty members have been conducted in recent years yielding important data surrounding adjunct satisfaction and engagement. Certain researchers have suggested that part-time and full-time faculty experience similar levels of satisfaction and engagement on the job (Antony & Hayden, 2011). Other studies have found that there was not a marked difference in responses between full-time and part-time faculty members (Maynard & Joseph, 2008), as each group experiences both highs and lows during their employment. In a study by Greisler (2002), adjuncts expressed that their frustrations connected with teaching were outweighed by their fulfillment derived from teaching. While this is a positive finding, it does not necessarily justify the existence of such frustrations.

Many researchers use the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) as an early baseline for this topic. Results of the 1992-93 NSOPF showed that part-time and full-time faculty displayed the same levels of job satisfaction overall (Antony & Hayden, 2011). The survey also revealed that part-timers were pursuing a planned career path, were satisfied with their decision to work as adjuncts, and displayed a higher commitment to their institutions than full-time faculty. They also stated that they would still make the same career decisions, given the choice (Antony & Hayden, 2011). This is not to say that the reported levels of satisfaction and engagement were high, but that they were consistent across different groups of faculty.

Maynard and Joseph (2008) also found that involuntary part-time faculty members (those who would rather have full-time work) were the least satisfied group of instructors, while voluntary part-timers experienced similar levels of satisfaction as full-timers. Select studies have
also suggested that adjunct faculty members experience a greater level of job satisfaction than their full-time counterparts because they intentionally engage in teaching. Antony and Hayden (2011) argue that adjuncts demonstrate “self-selection” and therefore must possess a certain level of satisfaction in order to continue. While these results are encouraging, researchers argue that we should not assume these numbers will remain consistent, and schools should implement policies that will improve job satisfaction over time.

Overall, the literature contains discrepant findings about adjuncts. Some studies suggest they are satisfied with their employment but have concerns about issues such as job security and benefits. Others report that adjuncts do not feel satisfied or appreciated by their institutions. (Kramer, Gloeckner, & Jacoby, 2014) Data from the 2004 NSOPF revealed that while part-time and full-time faculty members both had similarly low levels of job satisfaction, part-timers were more satisfied with their workload and salary but less satisfied with their benefits, authority to make decisions, and institutional support (Antony & Hayden, 2011). Jolley, et al. (2014) reported a general lack of engagement, as institutions fail to make the strides necessary to engage adjuncts and fail to give them significant attention.

**Engagement factors.** According to *The Invisible Faculty* (Gappa & Leslie, 1993), one of the first works to take on the plight of adjuncts, “part-timers have strong feelings about whether they are or are not ‘connected’ to or ‘integrated’ into campus life. For the most part, they feel powerless, alienated, invisible, and second class” (p. 180). This is not presented an unsolvable problem, and integration is named as one of the chief ways that institutions can help ensure part-time faculty members are successful, valued, and supported (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). But integration is not always so easily defined.
Reasons for negative findings on adjunct engagement include both administrative and cultural factors (Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, & White, 2006). Lack of job security, low wages, and a lack of health insurance, paid leave, and protections afforded by the Family and Medical Leave Act is a pressing reality for the majority of part-time faculty members (Kavanagh, 2000; Manicone, 2008). The pay structure (namely, lack of annual salary increases) may cause dissatisfaction and high turnover rates (Christensen, 2008). The lack of an all-encompassing legal definition of part-time faculty employment also contributes to the uncertainty adjuncts experience.

In general, part-time faculty are defined by course load, but similar to contract law, the classification depends on a number of factors, including location, institution type, union status, and even academic program (Rhoades, 1996). While credit hours are sometimes used to define part-time faculty, there is no clarity across the board. Restrictions include percentages of full-time load, number of course hours, and type of course taught (continuing education or night courses may be counted differently towards employee classification) (Rhoades, 1996). These variations translate to a lack of consistent job descriptions (Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006).

Indeed, a common characteristic for part-timers is that their institutions make little or no long-term commitment to them or their work (Kezar & Sam, 2013). The fact that many adjuncts piece together an academic career from multiple sources and appointments makes no difference from the perspective of institutional practice (AAUP, 2003), though two-year schools with a greater proportion of part-time faculty are more likely to have some basic policies (orientation, employee handbooks) in place than four-year institutions (Kezar & Sam, 2013). Part-time appointments are made and terminated with limited faculty input (Park, Sine, & Tolbert, 2011),
and adjuncts are actively excluded from governance, which many faculty members believe is key to inclusion in the academic community (Kezar & Sam, 2013).

Unionization and employment rights have also become a hot button issue for adjuncts. Articles on adjunct strikes and the right to unionize have appeared frequently in publications like Inside Higher Ed and the Chronicle of Higher Education. In 2015, adjuncts joined together for events like National Adjunct Walkout Day, where faculty argued for a stipend of $15,000 per course and other basic employment rights (Flaherty & Mulhere, 2015). This event was considered a success by those involved, though adjuncts on some campuses were hesitant to participate because their employment contracts bar unionization.

At other large institutions, negotiations (and protests) have begun for contingent faculty with various part-time appointments. At Ithaca College, for instance, negotiations were scheduled for late February, 2017 in order to establish new union agreements for faculty who teach part-time on a one-course basis, and for those who teach on one-year appointments (Contingent Faulty Unions, 2017). However, the current Ithaca College Contingent Faculty union voted to authorize a strike in mid-February, 2017 as a result of “escalation in the contingent faculty’s struggle for a fair first contract” (O’Connor, 2017). The battle for job security and equality among faculty employment models is far from resolved.

Such strikes are widespread and, in some cases, a shock to administrations. In Pennsylvania, thousands of faculty members went on strike in October 2016 – a first in the history of the state’s educational system (McCann & Perez-Pena, 2016). Also in 2016, two of the nation’s largest public university systems, California State University and City University of New York, came close to striking and were barely able to stave off faculty walkouts (McCann & Perez-Pena, 2016).
Adjuncts also united in 2015 with other low-wage workers in the National Day of Action for a Living Wage (Flaherty, 2015), drawing connections between academic work and any other low paying occupations. The adjunct experience has recently been situated as a social problem, a symptom of the issues facing higher education and the United States economy. These incidents reveal the disparity in expectations between part-time faculty and administrations, and it is not clear if the gap will be closed. But again, with the lack of a single profile among part-time faculty members, it is also difficult to state what is best for all involved without making generalizations that may not be accurate for all groups.

Though adjuncts have been in the national spotlight as of late, feelings of invisibility and isolation still appear across multiple studies, as does a lack of attention and evaluation from departments. Interviews conducted by Jolley, et al. (2014) revealed that adjuncts held deeply rooted opinions about their status within the institution and the corresponding academic community. Lack of engagement was found not on the onus of the part-time adjunct but on the department/institution as a whole – colleges simply did not make the effort to engage with their part-time faculty members (Jolley, et al., 2014). While adjuncts desired to participate in development opportunities (committees, etc.) they felt the extra work and lack of extra pay put them at a disadvantage. The literature here indicates that while institutions are eager to employ adjuncts, they do little to create the conditions for engagement.

**Suggestions from the literature.** Researchers have provided suggestions for improving the adjunct situation, though some are more abstract than specific. Solid suggestions can be found in work by Lighter and Sipple (2013), who found that institutions could increase faculty motivation and decrease isolation by providing time for in-depth professional development and implementing mentorship groups. Instilling high expectations with support, asking adjuncts to
share thoughts and classroom practices, providing awards, and setting up opportunities for
development were also found to increase engagement by Ellis (2013). Less concrete advice is
also common in the literature, with researchers such a Hoyle (2010) suggesting that an increased
sense of connection with students increases adjunct job satisfaction and motivation. While this
suggestion is valid, the exact implications for practice are less clear.

However, other schools may serve as case studies for increasing engagement by
increasing adjunct integration into the academic community. At Johnson County Community
College (JCCC), for example, efforts have been made to integrate all faculty (Burnstad, 2002).
With 293 full-time and 646 part-time faculty members, JCCC focused on providing resources
that take into account the adjunct experience. From the beginning, clear expectations are set for
adjuncts regarding the hiring process, salary, textbooks and syllabi, and teaching evaluations.
Adjuncts are also given a voice in various councils and in the curriculum development process.
In addition to several orientations, adjuncts are invited to attend professional development
programs put on the by Center for Teaching and Learning and the Educational Technology
Center (though they must complete an individual development plan (IDP) in order to participate).
Access to the Kansas City Professional Development Council is also provided, along with access
to other commercially-prepared resources (handbooks, newsletters, etc.). JCCC also offers
incentives for adjuncts to participate in professional development, including financial support,
grants, or funds to attend conferences. Special recognition and awards are given to adjuncts to
reward their service.

Burstad (2002), who presented the JCCC example as an exemplary model of faculty
support, concluded that institutions wishing to increase the integration of part-time faculty
members should include the following:
• A climate and culture of inclusion;
• A recognition of the value of part-time faculty as integral to the success of the college in meeting student needs;
• Institutional leadership and vision;
• Committed administrators;
• Support systems, such as the Staff and Organizational Development Council, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Educational Technology Center;
• Financing for the various components of the program;
• Outstanding, committed faculty leaders who will develop and expand such a program;
• Patience to build a comprehensive program. (p. 24)

Moving forward, it is clear that more research is needed on how to increase adjunct engagement and integration, especially that which contains clear implications for practice and plans for implementation. Although some studies have revealed that adjuncts have the same levels of satisfaction and engagement as full-time faculty members, the literature overall suggests that these levels are underwhelming and must be improved. Feelings of invisibility and a general lack of institutional support is well-documented, and adjuncts are becoming more aware of their less-than-ideal working environment.

Engagement is an essential issue for higher education, as the current situation has created an environment that may undermine student and institutional success (Offerman, 2010). The documented connection between students’ perceptions of adjunct engagement and academic success and retention should not be overlooked.
Faculty Training and Development Programs

Research has shown that one of the chief ways to increase faculty member satisfaction and engagement is through the use of training and development programs (Beem, 2002; Christensen, 2008; Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Programs have also been proven effective in increasing instructional quality and innovation, particularly for online programs (Akroyd et al., 2013), though there is a need for more development offerings across the board (Martinak, et al., 2006).

Faculty development programs were debuted in the late 1960s and expanded in the 1970s as a response to changing enrollment patterns, increased need for accountability, declining financial resources, and increased use of part-time faculty (Grant, 2002). With increased institutional pressure, faculty were required to be more effective in the classroom; to meet this challenge, researchers and administrators focused on creating new models and plans that integrated personal, professional, and organizational development (Grant, 2002). According to Anwar and Humayun (2015), there are four types (or focuses) of teacher development: personal, instructional, organizational, and professional. Schools should attempt to provide a potent combination of all four types in order to be most effective (Anwar & Humayun, 2015). Gerhard and Burn (2014) argued that development programs should include all four components of the O’Meara et al. professional growth framework: learning, agency, professional relationships, and commitment. They also suggest that programs should be a shared responsibility, falling not only on the department but the college and state system as well, as the result of professional development may induce a widespread positive impact (Gerhard & Burn, 2014). In 1975, Jerry Gaff found approximately 200 campus programs that focused on improving teaching; today, programs can be found on nearly every campus (Rouseff-Baker, 2002).
Seminal authors in this area include Berquist and Philips (1975), who added a personal dimension to development, and Schuster (1990), who created a systematic and comprehensive program model. There was some focus on adjuncts from the beginning, with Moe (1977) as one of first to develop a proposal for developing part-time faculty members. The University Council of Educational Administration (as cited in Beems, 2002) recommends that universities provide adjuncts with opportunities to learn more about adult learning and current educational research. Today, more efforts are being made to include part-time faculty members in development efforts (Grant, 2002).

Research indicates that adjuncts are ready to be included. In a survey of over 700 adjunct faculty members teaching in Maryland, for example, the majority of participants indicated a desire to participate in professional development, though they also expressed a desire for certain conditions or incentives. Seventy-nine percent of adjuncts wanted the activity to be free, 66% said attendance should impact their pay scale, and 48% wanted it to be a factor in promotion (Martinak, et al., 2006). Seventy-one percent wanted to learn more about effective teaching methods. Most preferred weeknights, and a significant percentage wanted development to be available online, though only 3% of institutions in the study actually offered online programs. In addition, only 35% wanted a mix of full- and part-time faculty members to attend, preferring separate events (Martinak, et al., 2006).

**Participation barriers.** Despite this readiness, institutions have not made significant efforts to remove the roadblocks that bar adjuncts from participating in development activities. In 2012, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (as cited in Magda, Poulin, & Clinefelter, 2015) found that while most institutions (84%) offered a high level of technical or instructional design support for adjuncts, professional training and developed varied significantly. While a number of
institutions did invite adjuncts to programs, most were offered on campus. For online instructors, this was identified as a significant barrier (Magda, et al., 2015).

In a study of 300 two-year colleges, Grant (2002) found that less than half of schools provided part-time faculty with travel funds for development purposes. Small schools in particular provided the least amount of funding. While 58% of colleges used a formal needs assessment to determine development offerings, most surveyed full-time faculty members, the Vice President for Instruction, and the faculty development committee – groups which did not include part-timers. Magda, et al., (2015) also reported that only 20% of institutions in their study offered a professional development experience via a professional organization at no-cost to adjuncts. Other programs offer sessions in a format that is not compatible with adjunct schedules. Programs that require faculty members to attend or watch recorded training sessions before teaching begins can be challenging for those with obligations outside the institution (Hoyle, 2010; Serdenciuc, 2013). This data highlights the reality that while adjuncts may want to participate, institutional policies create barriers.

**Increased need for support.** Research indicates that adjuncts are all-too-aware of the need for orientation, training, and professional development. With current employment practices, adjuncts with at-will status (those without a guaranteed duration of employment who can be let go at any time for any reason) may be hired with little to no advance notice and have less than adequate support and/or preparatory training as they enter the classroom (Duncan, 1999; Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Adjuncts are often asked to enter unfamiliar territory without the same prep time as full-time faculty members – a fact that students often pick up on, consciously or not (Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). As noted in the previous section of this review, the negative impact of adjuncts may be related to a lack of instructional training rather than a lack of content.
knowledge (Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Clark et al. (2011) concluded that adjuncts must receive an orientation and continual training in order to prepare them for instruction and make them aware of university policies. Institutions can make better use of their adjuncts if they are adequately trained and have access to university resources (Openshaw, 2011).

With the rise in adjuncts teaching online (Magda, et al., 2015), there is also an increased need for technology training and information on online pedagogy. Akroyd et al. (2013) suggested that administrators must ensure that their part-time faculty members have the resources they need to be successful instructors, especially in the online environment. Many technological barriers exist specifically for adjuncts; in a national study of community college faculty members, for example, only 41% of part-time faculty members had access to the Internet at work (Akroyd, et al., 2013). According to the Instructional Technology Council, much of the conversation around increasing centralized support for faculty focuses too much on infrastructure, access, and cost rather than teaching (Akroyd, et al., 2013). Akroyd, et al., (2013) also found that faculty members who felt that their institution supported teaching through development and training programs were more likely to make use of instructional technologies or teach online. Given the current focus on adult education and increased access to education, this support is crucial.

Motivating faculty members is also critical to the success of training and development programs (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Institutions must realize that some adjuncts may not be willing to participate in institutional efforts. In addition, many development programs are designed to secure “lifetime employability” for a group that may not desire to become lifelong educators (Serdenciuc, 2013). If possible, institutions should offer incentives such as released time, salary advancement, and professional activity credits, but if they are unable to do so,
intrinsic motivators can also be impactful (Grant, 2002). While Gorozidis and Papaioannou (2014) found that the majority of adjuncts were more motivated by intrinsic factors, they argued that different motivations (both internal and external) need to be addressed by administrators, especially since many programs are not mandatory and schools are unable to offer monetary rewards for attendance. Further research is needed to fully identify and understand motivation in this area.

**Existing and suggested programs.** On a more promising note, recent literature reveals that institutions are beginning to provide more specific training and support for their adjunct faculty members (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006). Existing programs generally focus on teaching methodology, formation of committees, curriculum development, or inclusion in department events. More innovative programs are beginning to work on integrating adjuncts into the greater academic community and increasing the interaction between part-time and full-time faculty (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006). Due to rapidly changing technology and educational methods, Anwar and Humayun (2015) suggested that faculty development must be the foundation for adult educational practices. Programs must not appear to waste resources or time (Anwar & Humayun, 2015).

Contemporary studies have provided several examples of more effective programs. An intensive training and development program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for example, focuses on components of effective instruction, adult learning theory, policies and procedures, and anticipating classroom situations. The university offers continuing education credits in exchange for attendance (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006).

Davenport University, a school that relies on field professionals to deliver its business and health care programs, has installed a Faculty Assessment Process to help evaluate part-time
instructors. This process includes teaching simulations, one-on-one conversations with assessors, teaching demonstrations, group study, and practice critiquing student work (Greisler, 2002). This process has allowed Davenport to hire more qualified adjuncts, increase student satisfaction ratings, and achieve higher completion rates (Greisler, 2002).

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) – another university which has relied heavily on adjunct faculty members for years – launched “The Adjunct Advocate” in Spring 2009 in order to better support part-timers (Maldonado & Riman, 2009). Developed by FIT’s Center for Excellent in Teaching, this program was designed to improve student learning by connecting more part-time faculty members with teaching and learning resources. Online resources and a community of teaching practice that can be accessed 24/7 form a “one-stop shop” for faculty development, facilitated and supported by virtual tools. FIT eventually planned to move resources into their Learning Management System in order to foster broader adoption of the system (Maldonado & Riman, 2009).

Given the varied educational background of adjunct practitioners, some schools have made the decision to make training and development programs mandatory. At a particular college in the Canadian Community College system, hiring priority is given to faculty members with considerable experience in the field, rather than to those with the highest degree (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009). As a result, many faculty members do not even have a university degree. To offset this, the school requires that instructors participate in professional development. The program includes intensive three-week summer sessions, a practicum in between sessions, and three courses from the undergraduate adult education program. Some of these courses are available online, though teaching sessions are typically done in-person. Sessions are designed to be learner centered, self-directed, and discussion-based. Based on the principles of collaborative
and constructivist learning, sessions encourage participants to see themselves as adult educators and lifelong learners (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009).

Training programs in which a more experienced teacher helps prepare a new teacher for instruction also have a long history of success for part-time faculty members (Gareis & Grant, 2014). Mentoring is a crucial component, but mentors must receive adequate training in order to be effective. There also may be greater disconnects between full-time and part-time instructors that undermine the process or make it unfeasible, though these differences may not be as great as administrators perceive (Gareis & Grant, 2014). And these barriers can be overcome: in a study of mathematics faculty members at community colleges, faculty engagement increased as a result of faculty development programs that focused on professional development and relationship building between instructors (Gerhard & Burn, 2014). When done well, mentor programs can increase faculty efficacy, enthusiasm, and job satisfaction, and reduce burnout (Richter et al., 2013).

Online programs have more recently appeared as a flexible way to train adjuncts. Cook and Steinert (2013) suggest that online programs are as effective as in-person regarding content, but may not be as effective for learner engagement and participation. However, McKimm and Swanwick (2010) argued that open-access programs consisting of online modules incorporating reflective practice have proved effective in enabling teacher engagement. Adjunct practitioners, in particular, have done well with online training (McKimm & Swanick, 2010). But since in-person training has been proven to produce positive outcomes in other areas such as growth and transformation (Balmer & Richards, 2012), online programs must find a way to replicate the face-to-face experience. Cook and Steinert’s (2013) review of literature regarding online faculty development programs suggests that there is limited evidence in support of newer online
programs, and more research is needed to understand the principles governing faculty success in this area.

A focus on medical education. Medicine faculty members in particular provide an excellent example of how to train and develop adjunct practitioners. As noted by Anwar and Humayun (2015), a medical graduate is not considered to be an educator right out of school. As they explain, “it is apparent that teaching is not an innate gift, so while assessing the need for faculty development we have to consider teaching not only involving content but process and to ‘develop the art’ of teaching” (Anwar & Humayun, 2015, p. 2). In a study of medicine faculty, Anwar and Humayun (2015) found that faculty development efforts needed to be more targeted and in-depth with a greater emphasis on instructional and professional development. Workshops, seminars, and short courses were highlighted as effective examples (Anwar & Humayun, 2015). The study also revealed that faculty members and student perceptions indicated a need for faculty training development in several areas, including curriculum, teaching methodology, innovative teaching and assessment methods, and engaging and motivating students (Anwar & Humayun, 2015). Researchers suggested a need to develop faculty motivation to teach, and proposed that a system of incentives or rewards could be an effective solution. Increasing commitment to lifelong learning was also an important factor. Anwar and Humayun (2015) concluded that administrative, political, and financial support was needed from the institution in order for development efforts to be successful.

Nursing programs have also been a focus of recent studies on part-time faculty members, since they rely heavily on adjuncts with extensive field experience but little to no teaching experience, particularly in the online environment (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014; Santisteban & Egues, 2014). While numerous articles give advice on how an adjunct clinical instructor should
proceed in a new teaching position, it focuses on what the instructor should do and makes little mention of the institution (Koharchik, 2014). In a study of nursing instructors, Brannagan and Oriol (2014) argued that a comprehensive training and development model would help ensure that these adjuncts are held to the same standards as full-timers. Such a program would begin by assigning an online adjunct faculty coordinator who would direct each step of the process. The adjunct role must also be clearly defined with a clear definition of job duties and expectations. A comprehensive orientation featuring information about instruction, online best practices, faculty partnerships, and the use and implementation of online tools or technology could increase adjunct success in teaching online, which would then increase their level of efficacy as instructors (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014).

Mentoring was also identified as a key component capable of increasing community involvement and communication between instructors (Brannagan & Oriol, 2014). Since the program could be done online it would not incur expenses from meeting rooms, meals, parking, etc. (though technology costs remain). It also does not require additional full-time hires. According to Brannagan and Oriol (2014), such a program is “flexible and relatively inexpensive” (p. 130), and has the potential to be highly beneficial to adjuncts and institutions.

**Designing for size.** In considering adjunct training and development, it may be also helpful to examine examples at institutions of different sizes. Wallin (2007) identified three exemplary examples of schools offering training and development for adjunct faculty members. A small-sized example can be found at Northeast Texas Community College (NTCC) in rural Texas. Here, the Academy for Part-Time Teachers was designed to help new teachers acclimate to the environment. The Academy provides 24 hours of online and in-person training, as well as four longer training modules. These trainings are reinforced by classroom observations,
mentorships, and a final self-reflection paper. Each participant receives instruction on how to access the online materials, which serve as a kind of online course for part-timers. The program has helped NTCC increase student satisfaction ratings; on the evaluation item “instructor encourages students”, 65% of academy graduates were rated higher than those who did not attend (Wallin, 2007). Nearly half were rated as more being more prepared for teaching and having fair grading systems (Wallin, 2007).

A mid-sized example can be found at Black Hawk College, an agricultural and industrial school that provides part-time faculty member support for teaching and online learning through their Center for Teaching and Learning. They have found that offering programs designed specifically for part-time faculty members has helped stabilize the workforce (Wallin, 2007). At one of their most successful events, “Adjunct Academy Connect with the Best… You Deserve It”, adjuncts who led sessions or discussions were paid a small honorarium for their time. Event evaluations revealed that adjuncts felt “valued and appreciated by the college” (Wallin, 2007, p. 71) after attending. Here the Adjunct Academy has helped create a strong network among adjunct faculty members, and encourage collaboration and sharing of expertise and resources.

Finally, large urban school Tacoma Community College (TCC) has also had success through their Adjunct Faculty Institute (Wallin, 2007). Meeting in two-hour afternoon sessions, the program focuses on teaching and learning, student motivation, adult learning theories, and other relevant topics. The college has found that participants are more likely to be retained as employees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that faculty effectiveness has also increased as a result, though the program is limited in that attendance is competitive and limited to 20 adjuncts. Apart from this program, TCC offers orientation, financial support, access to full-time development activities, and special events. Campus culture indicates that TCC wants not only to help adjuncts
become better educators, but also values them as members of the academic community (Wallin, 2007). Engagement and satisfaction among adjuncts has increased as a result.

The benefits of training and development programs for adjunct faculty members are well documented (Lancaster, Stein, Garrelts MacLean, Van Amburgh, & Persky, 2014; Wall, 2007). Such programs help faculty members become better teachers and increase student learning (Rutz et al., 2012). Programs that focus on student learning rather than disciplinary-specific interests are also more effective and have the potential to create a greater scope of connections between faculty members and different content areas (McKimm & Swanwick, 2010). Given the variety in the current faculty member profiles, institutions would be wise to offer multiple development models and allow faculty members to choose among them (Lancaster et al., 2014). Programs must be flexible in order to be effective (Lightner & Sipple, 2013).

The literature suggests that a combination of different offerings (including frequent and varied learning opportunities, workshops, lectures, and assessment activities) is most effective for a diverse population of instructors. Interacting with other faculty members is also crucial (Rutz et al., 2012). Not only can programs increase faculty engagement, sense of community, and instructional skillsets, they can provide a value-add for the institution as a whole. Developing a culture that “values ongoing learning about teaching, coupled with the development of skills that support reflective teaching based on observations of student learning” (Rutz et al., 2012, p. 8) has proved to be the most beneficial for adjunct faculty members overall.

Conclusions

Several important conclusions about adjunct faculty members can be drawn from the literature presented above. First, it is clear that for adjuncts, institutional identity, engagement and job satisfaction, and training and development are all inter-related, as each has the power to
impact and affect the other. This overlap is evident in the literature, as most articles studying one of these topics also discuss the other two.

Second, there is a great deal of variation in the role of adjuncts and their relationship with institutions. While there are certain undeniable benefits to employing part-time faculty members, there are some significant issues around student success and retention that have yet to be fully explored or resolved.

Third, adjuncts experience a low level of engagement and job satisfaction. They report feeling invisible or ignored by their departments, and may not be given regular feedback or any sense of security. They have unique concerns, and institutions have not done all they could, or perhaps should, to remedy them.

Fourth, faculty training and development programs for adjuncts are still a work in progress. The successful models that do exist suggest simply adapting existing programs may not be effective. Not only may adjuncts suffer from a lack of motivation, they have time constraints and financial considerations that may hinder participation. Institutions therefore need to consider and design workloads carefully and ethically, and make participation attractive to adjuncts. On a more positive note, research has proven that training and development programs are almost always beneficial for faculty, and improve not only instructional ability but connections between faculty members.

And finally, research is conflicted on whether adjuncts are a welcome innovation in higher education. Depending on how they are utilized and supported, they can have a positive or negative impact on a program. When employed without adequate support, training, and inclusion within the institution, student success may suffer – or not, depending on the study. What is clear is that institutional perceptions of part-time faculty members affect how students value and
perceive them. If adjuncts are not engaged or viewed as legitimate teachers, students cannot be expected to do so. Responsibility then falls on the institution to use, train, and develop their adjuncts responsibility and intentionally. As Beem (2002) stated, “adjuncts give us a reality check” (p. 4), suggesting that adjuncts are neither inherently negative or positive, but rather reveal the weaknesses and problematic systems that exist in higher education.

When these conclusions are applied to adjunct practitioners, it is clear that more research is needed to understand how they view and define their experience as educators. Their specific needs will affect not only their role within the institution but the subsequent design of policies, programs, and support initiatives. With the massive increase in adjunct employment comes an equally large opportunity to impact programmatic success and student degree attainment. Greater knowledge about adjunct practitioners therefore has the potential to help improve instructional quality and institutional effectiveness.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Rationale for Choosing a Qualitative Approach

To reiterate, the central research question for this study is “How do adjunct practitioners experience engagement at a mid-sized private university on the West Coast?” A qualitative approach was selected for this project because the study focuses on an issue (part-time faculty employment) that needs to be explored rather than quantified or analyzed from a statistical perspective (Creswell, 2007). Establishing a primary hypothesis, as often required in quantitative research, would also be preemptive, as it could create a bias during data collection, causing the researcher to focus on one area of data over another. As established in Chapter 2, there is much that is still unknown about adjuncts, their experience, and the impact they can have on the educational experience. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research should be employed when there is “a need to study a group or population and identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices” (p. 40). In the case of adjunct faculty engagement, all three of these needs come into play. Adjuncts have individual voices and experiences that can’t be separated from their contexts (institutions where they teach). They also suffer from feeling overlooked or “silenced” by institutions. All these areas need to be investigated.

Overall, quantitative research was not chosen for this study because quantitative measures and statistical analysis did not fit the problem (Creswell, 2007). While previous quantitative studies on adjuncts have been conducted (some which were discussed in Chapter 2), they tend to report on the existence of things rather than report on the cause/context of the thing, or phenomenon itself. In this study, the objective is not simply to measure faculty engagement, but to explore the experience of engagement. This study will ask participants to examine their own experiences and provide their own criteria for what constitutes an engaged faculty member.
They will have the opportunity to provide stories that illustrate their experience in a way that quantitative data cannot. Since much on the topic of adjunct faculty engagement is unknown, for the purposes of this study there is simply not enough existing information to create a survey that would yield truly insightful or encompassing data.

**Rationale for Choosing Case Study Methodology**

Case study is an appropriate approach for this study for several reasons. First, because it addresses a significant limitation found in other studies focusing on the adjunct experience. The majority of studies have examined adjuncts as a group, which makes the resulting data more general in its implications. As evidenced by Chapter 2, several sub-types exist within the adjunct faculty member population that make more general data less helpful when designing programs targeting a specific group. Instead of taking a top-down view of the adjunct situation, this study will focus on adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs where research has shown them to be most effective.

One drawback to this focus is that the resulting data will be contextual and potentially personal towards the specific study participants. However, a case study approach will help overcome these limitations in that case study data is also applicable beyond the bounds of the case. As Merriam (1998) stated, case studies are particularistic but not limited in their application. While they examine a specific instance, they can also illuminate a general problem (Merriam, 1998) and lead to generalizations that may allow for the future replication of results (Baharein Mohd Noor, 2008).

**Alignment with the boundaries of the case.** The second reason for choosing case study is this project’s focus not only on individual experience but the contextual factors influencing engagement in the workplace (perceptions of leadership, contract language, etc.). Case study
places great importance on setting, which is also essential to understanding employee engagement – engagement is not studied in a vacuum, but within a specific work environment (Kahn, 1990). The boundaries (or cause and effect) between engagement and context in this case are not clear, which aligns with the overall definition of what makes a case (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Case study does not separate or isolate individuals from their environment, which will allow for a more holistic view of the phenomenon (adjunct engagement) under study.

**Alignment with research question.** Finally, case study is the best approach to answer this study’s central research question because it allows for the utilization of other approaches. In designing this study, it became clear that other methodologies, like phenomenology, could be well-suited to exploring the issues surrounding adjunct engagement and the adjunct experience. However, each of the other approaches had some aspect that did not fit the overall scope of the study – the desire to include document review, for example, or to examine contextual information beyond that of personal experience. But according to Merriam (1998), case study takes an intensive, holistic look at a case and can be combined with other approaches (phenomenology, narrative inquiry, etc.). Under this definition, case study will allow this study to examine a variety of factors at the site contributing to the experience of engagement, and include an element of storytelling that captures the participants’ experience (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

**Alignment with researcher position.** Case study also aligns with researcher positionality. As stated in Chapter 1, this researcher has both insider and outsider status for the case and the population under study, which is not necessarily a limitation for case study research. In fact, it may actually be helpful in gaining access to study the case or getting past the “gatekeeper” (Creswell, 2007). As a constructivist approach, case study allows the researcher to
be either independent from the case or embedded as a participant (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In both situations, the researcher’s positionality (as evidenced in their past experiences, beliefs, etc.) must be “bracketed” while conducting research in order to main objectivity during data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). They should also resist telling participants their own stories or giving advice during interviews (Merriam, 1998). Thoughtful research design and interview protocols that separate the researcher’s experience or existing perceptions from that of the study participants allow the data to remain unbiased. In certain stages of the study, however, researchers may also use their existing perceptions/ideas about the case to serve as the opening and closing vignette or narrative which bookends the study (Stake, 1995). As with constructivism or interpretivism, case study acknowledges that there is no single truth or real objectivity in research; rather, there is only experience and understanding.

**Research Tradition**

Case study is one of the most popular methodologies in education research due to its ability to serve multiple functions. With the many types of case studies available, it can be used to evaluate existing programs, explore a bounded phenomenon across groups, or focus on the experience of one individual.

Despite this, some controversy remains over using case study as a qualitative research method. This may be due to the perception that case study does not have fully-defined or well-structured protocols, and or a full consensus on its design and implementation (Yazan, 2015). When researchers select case study, they may not know exactly what a case study is, or how it’s different from other qualitative approaches. Case study has also been criticized for a lack of “scientific rigor and reliability” (Baharein Mohd Noor, 2008, p. 1603). But critics have also suggested that a thoughtful and well-thought-out approach to designing a case study can
overcome these criticisms. The ability to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular issue makes case study a powerful research approach (Baharein Mohd Noor, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

**Three approaches.** Three seminal authors (and their books) are associated with case study: Merriam (1998), Stake (1995), and Yin (2014). Researchers using case study generally favor one author over another, though some have found it helpful to combine approaches. According to Yazan (2015), the challenge in comparing the three authors is that each wrote their book for a different purpose. Yin appears as the most practical of the three, focusing on a comprehensive guide to design and methods. Merriam worked to clear up confusion about case study while defining it, differentiating it from other methods, and stating when it’s appropriate to employ. Stake’s (1995) book seeks to explicate “a set of interpretive orientations” (p. xi). Yin has positivistic inclinations verging on a quantitative approach, Merriam worked from a constructivist perspective, and Stake combined constructivist and existentialism for a more interpretive method (Yazan, 2015).

Each author delineates his or her definition of case study and research design, though they all agree that the case must represent a bounded system. Yin (2014) defined case study as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (p. 2). The focus can be an event, an entity, or even an individual. For Yin (2014), case studies address “how” or “why” questions about the central phenomenon. Yin specified three types of case studies – exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory – and pushed against the idea that case studies do not have a specific design (Yazan, 2015). For Yin (2014), design directly connects data to the study’s research questions. There are four design types: single holistic, single embedded, multiple holistic, and multiple embedded. Yin (2014) also provides tests for judging the validity and
quality of the research design. Overall, Yin’s design is highly structured, and uses theoretical propositions as a backbone for the research.

In comparison, Stake’s approach is less defined. From his view, an exact definition of case study is not possible because it would change across disciplines (Yazan, 2015). However, Stake does agree with the idea that cases exist within a bounded system and should be viewed as an object for analysis. He also defines two types of case study: intrinsic (where case is dominant) and instrumental (where issue is dominant) (Stake, 1995). Like Yin, Stake (1995) also notes that case studies are more suited to studying people and programs rather than events or processes. Stake (1995) suggested that case studies should be holistic, empirical, interpretive, and emphatic. Unlike Yin, Stake (1995) advocated for a flexible research design that allows researchers to change their design even while during the analysis phase. Issues are used as a conceptual structure for data analysis and discussion.

Finally, Merriam’s less-structured but still-detailed approach is complementary to both Yin and Stake (Yazan, 2015). Like Yin, Merriam (1998) sought to distinguish case study from other research methodologies, and places great importance on the delimitation of the case. Merriam (1998) defines case “as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). Merriam (1998) defines case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii). It should be noted that her definition of case is wider than Yin or Stake, allowing for researchers to focus on any phenomenon, including an event. Under Merriam, case studies have three distinctive attributes: they are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Merriam’s (1998) book includes specific information on study design, and unlike Yin and Stake, she presents information on constructing theoretical frameworks from relevant literature. She
also presents a step-by-step process for designing the study, combining both Yin’s and Stake’s approach (Yazan, 2015). Unlike Yin, she places purposeful sampling before data collection, and unlike Stake, she defines a sampling strategy. While Merriam (1998) provides clear guidelines on constructing a case study, she also allows for adaptation and adjustment during the research process.

**This study’s approach.** This study combines elements from all three authors’ approach to case study. The wording of the central research question aligns with Merriam (1998) and Yin (2014), who state that “how” and “why” questions are best-suited for case study (Stake favors “what” questions as his format centers around the identification of issues). The design for this project is instrumental case study, as defined by Stake (1995). Instrumental cases are intended to illuminate a particular issue and provide insight or help refine existing literature/theory (Stake, 1995). Under this classification, researchers must focus on a particular issue or concern, and then select one bounded case to illustrate the issue. Unlike an intrinsic case study, for example, in which the case itself is the phenomenon under study, an instrumental case is used to accomplish something beyond understanding the particular situation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case is looked at under a microscope in order for the researcher to pursue the greater issue. For this study, the greater issue is adjunct engagement and faculty support.

The bounded case for this project is focused on individuals at the study site. The need to strictly define and limit the case is advocated by all three authors, as the case forms the backbone for the study. Here, the “case” is a group – adjunct practitioners – working in a particular type of academic program. The case is bounded by the research site, a mid-sized private university on the West Coast (referred to in this study via the pseudonym “Bay University” or “BU”). It is also bound by adjunct type, as discussed below.
As the case focuses on one group at a particular institution, a holistic single-case study approach (Yin, 2014) will also be used. As engagement is influenced by personal experience as well as contextual factors (workplace policies, leadership, etc.), a multiple case study looking at adjuncts across sites would not be well-suited – in fact, it might perpetuate the limitations found in previous adjunct studies. Yin’s (2014) four tests have also been applied to the study to ensure the quality of the research design (see section on “Trustworthiness”).

**Focus on Merriam.** Beyond defining the case and the case study type, Merriam (1998) proved more helpful than Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) in designing this study. Merriam does not use issues (Stake, 1995) or theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014) to structure the data collection and analysis process. Instead, she emphasized the importance of narrative (personal narrative, storytelling, etc.) and prose/literary techniques to describe and analyze the data.

For this study, narrative and language (as seen in the interview data as well as the documents under review) will take center stage. Since much about this adjunct population is unknown, developing issues or propositions before data collection takes place may be presumptive or unduly influence data interpretation. Merriam (1998) does note the need for a theoretical framework to shape the study, however, which will be used here.

In total, this holistic, single instrumental case study is based on a comprehensive case study approach that also draws on the principles of narrative inquiry, as defined by Merriam (1998). This is a logical choice, both for the topic and purpose of this study as well as the researcher’s background in literary analysis and criticism. While there is no one standard format for writing a case study (Creswell, 2007), Merriam (1998) allows the data to shape the conversation by not strictly defining the discussion’s structure before the collection phase has begun. This respects the individual voices and experiences that are represented in this study.
Participants and Data Sources

The central population under study for this project, and the unit of analysis, is adjunct practitioners. This population represents those who are employed as part-time instructors and bring practical, professional, or workplace knowledge into the classroom. Unlike the freeway flyers, they are likely employed full-time in another career or industry outside of academia at the time of the study (though this criterion is more flexible than others – some may be retired from their industry at this point). They teach in practice-based programs, like business, nursing, or even studio art. They hold a Master’s degree or higher, which qualifies them to teach at the college level. (Though not all two-year colleges require a Master’s degree, four-year schools rarely hire a faculty member without this qualification, except in the case of specialized programs, such as for fiction seminars taught by a well-known author). Doctoral degrees are less common, and any adjuncts holding doctorates are more likely to have DBAs, JDs, or other practice-based doctorates rather than PhDs. They may have numerous years of part-time teaching experience, or be relatively new to higher education. They are employed on a temporary at-will status, with contracts issued per course each term. These contracts may be cancelled without warning if the course does not have the sufficient enrollment to run (as determined by the department chair and administrative staff).

A distinguishing feature among these adjuncts, and one of the entry points for this study, is the lack of formal pedagogical training during an undergraduate or graduate program. While graduate students in the humanities (English, history, sociology etc.) or even other STEM

---

2 This statistic does not apply to adjuncts teaching in non-practice based programs – in fact, part-time faculty teaching in humanities or liberal arts programs are likely to hold the same educational credentials (PhDs) than full-time faculty, and often teach part-time only because they are unable to procure a full-time tenure-track position (Eagan, 2009; Leslie & Gappa, 2002).
subjects are given the opportunity to teach or be mentored by faculty while enrolled in school (serving as teaching assistants or other part-time instructors), those with MBAs or other Master of Science degrees may not. In practice-based programs, the teaching component is often replaced by an internship, community service, or practicum requirement, and this learning opportunity is lost. Upon entry to the classroom, the adjunct may bring great value in the form of subject-matter expertise, but less in the form of instructional technique or strategy. While students may be able to overlook poor teaching ability in exchange for useful knowledge or industry connections, research into learning effectiveness indicates that different student populations have unique pedagogical needs. Adult students in particular require instructors that understand adult learning, both from a theoretical and practical aspect, in order to be successful and engaged (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006). Since adult or post-traditional students are commonly found in practice-based programs, being able to serve these students from a pedagogical standpoint is crucial to the success of the adjunct and the program or institution itself.

As consistent with a case study approach, multiple sources of data are included in order to capture an in-depth picture of the case (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). While adjunct practitioners are the population under study, data was also gathered from university leadership (department chairs) and a document review. More information on the specific data collection procedures for all three sources is detailed below.

**Sampling strategy.** Sampling for this study was completed using a purposeful sampling strategy, which is commonly found in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Out of the three types or purposeful sampling defined by Creswell (2007) – typical, criterion, and combination – criterion was the strategy used to investigate the population under study. This was combined
with Merriam’s (1998) description of typical sampling – that which represents the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon under study. The sample size for this population was eight participants, as consistent with Merriam’s (1998) case study design.

**Sampling criteria.**

**Primary population.** Criteria have been developed to identify the typical adjunct practitioner employed at the case study site, Bay University (BU), which contains the potential study participant pool (approximately 50-60 adjunct faculty members). Adjuncts participating in this study met the following criteria:

- Employed as part-time faculty at BU;
- Teach courses that require a working knowledge of an industry or profession;
- Teach in-person or online undergraduate or graduate courses in one or more of the business or taxation programs at BU;
- Do not teach only in the BU Law School;
- Have completed at least two semesters of teaching prior to entering the study;
- Are employed or have been recently employed (1-2 years) full-time in an industry outside teaching;
- Consider teaching to be a part-time occupation or supplement to another career or activity (i.e. full-time work or retirement).

The purpose of these criteria was to identify part-time faculty at BU that meet the true definition of adjunct practitioner – in other words, adjuncts who have voluntarily chosen to teach part-time and are considered experts in their respective fields. Unlike nursing or medical faculty employed at a university or teaching hospital, for example, adjunct practitioners at BU are not required to teach courses as a part of their regular job. Ensuring these criteria were preserved
across the sample population was essential to investigating their engagement as academic employees.

It should also be noted that the participants for this study were not limited to a particular school or department within the university. This is due to the structure and size of the study site. At a larger school, different schools or colleges (Letter and Science, Engineering, etc.) may vary in hiring policies, faculty demographic, or organization culture. In this situation, a multiple case study focusing on cases within more than one academic unit would be more effective way to gather data. In this case, however, the size and organizational structure of the study site did not contain this variation. The university is housed in one central building (in an urban, downtown environment where space is at a premium), and adjuncts are often shared across programs, departments, and degree levels. For example, adjuncts teaching a traditional humanities course like advanced writing or critical thinking may also teach an introductory business course or success course. The only distinction in faculty characteristics here was to exclude those teaching exclusively in the Law School (as their faculty tend to have a unique characteristics not shared by other adjunct practitioners, and the school has different hiring policies) and those who were more like traditional full-time faculty (holding PhDs, teaching part-time at multiple institutions, etc.).

**Other data sources.** Sampling strategy for the remaining two data sources was less-strict and based more on convenience or availability (Creswell, 2007). To gather the perspective of BU leadership, the department chair role was chosen as the target sample due to the nature of the job, which involves both administrative and academic work. Chairs are also the leaders of their departments, and manage both part- and full-time faculty. Since BU courses are taught by a predominately-adjunct faculty population, chairs are dependent on adjuncts for course staffing.
As BU has a limited number of department chairs, some of which were excluded as they work in the Law School, all chairs were targeted as potential participants. The participant pool for this group included both men and women.

Two administrators were included as study participants (from a total pool of approximately 12 staff members). Sampling strategy for this group was typical/convenience sampling. All chairs (except for those in the law school) were targeted for participation. The first two chairs to respond were scheduled for interviews.

The third and final source of data for this study was gathered via a document review. The following documents were included:

- Full and part-time faculty policy manual
- Adjunct teaching contracts
- Any other online documents relating to adjunct employment, training, and orientation
- Adjunct job descriptions

As consistent with Merriam’s (1998) approach, purposeful sampling was completed before data collection began, with a clear plan of what information would be collected, from whom/where, and when.

**Sample limitations.** The sample for this study may have been limited in several ways. First, the timing of the data collection phase may have impacted which participants were available for interviews. The term in which interviews took place impacted who was currently teaching or in the area at that time. Current course offerings also impacted which instructors were employed during the term.

However, since the majority of adjuncts use a personal email address instead of a BU campus email, they may still have been checking emails even if they were not currently teaching
a course. In addition, since BU is a year-round business school, it does not shut down for long breaks to the extent that some traditional, public universities do. Administrative offices also stay open year-round, apart from several short closures during the holiday season.

An additional limitation with the central population is geographical location. As BU has an online option for nearly all courses, many adjuncts are not local – some live out of the state or country, and others that are local do not regularly come to campus. Since this study did offer any type of monetary compensation, participants were required to spend their own time and money (for any travel expenses) to participate. However, since the experience of both in-person and online instructors is important, virtual meeting technology was used to make participation an option for remote individuals. This study made number of free online tools available (Google Hangout, Skype, etc.) to facilitate remote face-to-face meetings and allow the recording of sessions. While in-person interviews are generally preferable, phone, virtual, or online sessions are also considered an acceptable source of qualitative data (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014).

Finally, the study site and sample size may appear as a limitation that impacts external validity, or the ability to generalize findings. Since this study focused on a single case – adjunct practitioners employed at BU – and included a relatively small number of participants, results are limited to some extent due to the nature of qualitative research (the focus on individual experience, etc.). However, the study methodology was selected in order to help overcome these limitations.

As stated above, an instrumental case study selects one bounded case in order to help illuminate a larger issue. Data is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a piece of the larger whole that can generate findings which may be applied to other sites and situations (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The use of multiple data sources was also
intended to help validate results by making sure data is not entirely focused on individual perception or experience (Yin, 2014). The perception that case study findings are limited to the case itself is not accurate for the majority of case study designs, including the design of this study. In addition, the fact that the majority of BU courses are taught by adjunct faculty suggests that a study of BU may produce more insightful data regarding the adjunct experience that a university of similar size that employs a higher percentage of full-time faculty.

**Recruitment and Access**

**Access to research site.** The ability to conduct research at the chosen site was granted formally by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, who controls research activities involving the BU campus or community. As the researcher is a former administrator and current adjunct faculty member at BU, access was granted quickly because the researcher is already a member of the BU community. As a current faculty member, the researcher also had existing access to the BU website, faculty portal, and all documents available to fellow faculty members. Any resources not available online were requested through the VPAA’s office, which served as the “gatekeeper” for this study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).

**Source one: Adjunct practitioners.** Adjuncts were recruited for this study via recruitment emails outlining the purpose and basic design of the study. These emails also provided the necessary criteria for participation, as well as what was expected from participants. Incentives for this study were purely intrinsic – participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences in order to improve the adjunct situation and bring their voices to light. Options for in-person and remote participation were offered. Per BU’s VPAA office, only one recruitment email was sent to all adjunct faculty members. A sufficient number of participants were recruited from this email.
Source two: Administrators. Administrators (department chairs) were also recruited for this study via email. The recruitment email outlined the purpose and basic design of the study, and provided the necessary criteria for participation, as well as what was expected from participants. While the pool of adjuncts was rather large, the pool for this population was limited to under 10 prospective participants. Given the population size and the researcher’s relationship with the institution, personalized emails were sent to each potential participant. Options for in-person and remote participation were offered. A sufficient number of participants were recruited from a single email.

Source three: Documents. The third source of data was gathered from public and private BU documents. The following describes how this data was accessed:

- Part-time faculty policy manual: Accessed via researcher login to faculty portal on BU website.
- Adjunct teaching contracts: Accessed via researcher’s own current teaching contracts available through stipend management system on BU website (contracts are identical for all part-time faculty).
- Any other online documents relating to adjunct employment, training, and orientation: Accessed via researcher login to faculty portal on BU website.
- Adjunct job descriptions: Accessed via job listings on public BU website.

All desired documentation was identified before the data collection phase, and additional documents were gathered after interviews took place in order to gain a greater understanding of the case. This intention is consistent with Merriam’s (1998) flexible approach to data collection and analysis, which allows for adaptation during the research process as needed.
**Ethical considerations.** The most important ethical consideration for this study was the protection of participants (Creswell, 2007). BU is a relatively small school, and unlike a larger research university, for example, detailed descriptions of any individual in the study might lead to the participant being recognized. As the topic of adjunct employment and engagement is rather sensitive and may reflect positively or negatively on the administration and/or community, maintaining anonymity was absolutely essential. Without guaranteed anonymity, participants may not have provided honest or true information, as they may have feared for their jobs. Since adjuncts are at-will employees, the institution can choose not to rehire them at any time – this study therefore attempted to protect job security and academic freedom. As such, recruitment efforts made it clear that adjuncts were not required to participate in the study in any way, and that administrators’ identities would be shielded completely. Only one round of recruitment emails was sent to avoid pressuring anyone into participating.

Several techniques were used to protect subjects during the study. First, this researcher never gained access to adjunct faculty emails, as the recruitment email was send by the Vice President of Academic Affairs on behalf of the study. Second, pseudonyms were used throughout the research process and in all interview transcripts, records, analytic memos, etc. A secure, password-protected source document linked participants with their data, and only the researcher had access to the information. Any information (department, courses taught, etc.) or remarks uttered during interviews that could identify the participants was redacted or presented in a way that could not be traced back to the specific individual (Creswell, 2007). Finally, participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts in order to ensure the data was valid and accurate (Yin, 2014). They also had the opportunity to redact any information they were not comfortable sharing.
The overall presentation of the data also shields participants. Instead of telling individual stories about each participant, this study features composites and group descriptions (Creswell, 2007). This protects participant identity by intertwining personal narrative, and is also in line with the unit of analysis for this study (adjunct practitioners as a group). This is not to say that participant stories are broken up or distorted, but rather that they are not presented in the same paragraph as the background information on that person (background or demographic information being one the areas where a composite description will be used). Pseudonyms and gender neutral pronouns were used to keep readers from making connections, unconsciously or not.

Finally, it was also important to maintain researcher distance during the data collection process (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Case study requires a bracketing of researcher positionality, therefore this researcher made a conscious effort to not introduce personal information to participants. Beginning with the recruitment phase, emails were clear that the researcher is a former administrative support manager and a current adjunct faculty member at BU – in other words, a peer with no leverage over other faculty member – as well as a doctoral student. During data collection, the researcher did not share personal experience, advice, or make comments that may have led the participant to alter their thinking or state of mind. None of the participants knew the researcher personally from BU. If asked by participants, the researcher was honest about their background. This was done to preserve bracketing and minimize the issue of researcher influence (Creswell, 2007).

**IRB approval.** As this study did not pose any physical threat to participants or involve minors, IRB approval was fairly straightforward. In order to obtain approval, the following documentation was provided:
Copies of all recruitment emails, along with a detailed recruitment plan;
Copies of interview protocols for both study groups (Appendices A and B);
Statements of informed consent (Appendices C and D);
Source information (URLs, locations, etc.) for all documents used in the study;
Plan for data storage and protection, with information on how participant identity will be protected within the data and the study itself.

BU does not have a separate review board, so approval for the study was granted by the VPAA. The documents used in the study are public information or information already available to the researcher via their adjunct role. Consent to use the researcher’s login for the BU website and faculty portal as a research tool was also obtained from the VPAA.

Data Collection

As described above, data for this study was collected from three sources: adjunct practitioners, administrators, and a document review.

Qualitative interviews. Interviews form the primary source of data this study, as consistent with qualitative research methods. Interviews are powerful data collection tools, as they allow qualitative researchers to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2006). Data from the first two sources was collected via qualitative interviews using the techniques described by Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2007) (whose approach is adapted from Stake).

Semi-structured interviews were used with a mix of more and less-structured questions. This allowed participants to define their experience in their own way while also allowing the researcher to collect specific information from all respondents, like background information (Merriam, 1998). Unstructured interviews were not well-suited for this study, as they work best
in situations where the researcher does not have enough prior information to write relevant questions (Merriam, 1998). Here, existing literature and the theoretical framework provided enough background information to compose structured questions.

Interview sessions were in-depth but not as intense as in other methodologies, like phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). They took place in a quiet, private classroom or office on the BU campus, or remotely via video conferencing. Sessions were recorded via the Rev iPhone application. Paper-based notes were also taken to document the participant’s responses and non-verbal reactions, researcher perceptions or thoughts, and any other impressions which occurred during the interview.

A detailed interview protocol was used, containing the following information (see Appendices A and B for the full protocol for both groups of participants):

- Opening remarks, introductions;
- Statement explaining how interview data would be recorded, stored, processed, and verified;
- Acknowledgement of individual’s consent to participate;
- Several structure questions concerning participant’s background, career history, reasons for teaching, etc.;
- Several open-ended semi-structured questions that narrowed down the central research question;
- Probes for each semi-structured questions that allowed for flexibility or the exploration of different areas during the interview process. (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998)
Interviews with adjunct practitioners were slightly longer and more in-depth than those with administrators, as adjuncts are the central population under study. With respect to time, adjunct interviews lasted an average of 1.5 hours, and administrator interviews were under 1 hour.

**Pilot interview.** In order to ensure a smooth and successful data collection process, a pilot interview was conducted. This allowed for the testing of interview questions in order to refine the interview protocol and identify any issues with specific questions before beginning the actual process (Merriam, 1998). It also gave the researcher a better sense of how long sessions would last.

The participant for this pilot interview was selected using purposeful convenience sampling (Creswell, 2007). To this end, a member of the BU community who matched the study criteria for the main population and was available during the necessary time frame was selected. Resulting interview data was not used in the study – instead, the purpose for the pilot was to practice interviewing, test questions for clarity and effectiveness, determine gaps in the protocol, and test recording technology. Questions for interviews with administrators were not piloted given the limited pool of potential participants. However, the interview protocol was adapted or refined as necessary during the interview process, as advocated by Merriam (1998).

**Document review.** Data for the third source was collected via a document review. Documents represent a stable source of data that is not impacted by human cooperation, and therefore play an important role in establishing the context of a case study (Merriam, 1998). Here, documents were used to establish the culture of engagement created by policy and contract language. As described in the recruitment and access section above, both public and private (belonging to the institution) documents were used. No information presenting a security risk to the study site was referenced in the study. Documents were gathered from the BU faculty portal.
(using the researcher’s login information) and the public domain. All data was available in digital form (in PDFs, Word documents, etc.).

As all information was sourced from and controlled by BU, it is generally considered authentic, and also the intellectual property of BU. However, the information was still evaluated by the researcher to determine utility and application to the study. The following questions were asked to determine the usefulness of the documents:

- What is the history of the document?
- Is the document complete?
- Does it represent up-to-date information?
- Who/what department is the author?
- What was the maker’s bias?
- Do other documents exist that shed additional light on the same topic, event, program, or context? (Merriam, 1998)

**Data management.** Data for this study was managed thoughtfully and securely. Since multiple data sources were used, a data collection matrix was developed in Microsoft Excel to locate and identify information, and to keep a master list of all information gathered (Creswell, 2007). This matrix included participant information, and was password protected. The matrix also tracked progress during data collection and analysis, noting which data has been gathered, transcribed, reviewed, coded, etc.

Data files and documents were stored securely in Dropbox, which was used throughout the research process to store articles, proposal documents, and so on. Audio files were stored within the Rev app and was also exported to Dropbox. Interviews were transcribed by Rev. Using a cloud-based storage program like Dropbox ensured that information was not lost in the
case of a computer failure. Accessing the Dropbox account required the researcher’s username and password, and was therefore secure. Every effort was made to keep all information secure, private, and organized.

Data Analysis

Notes from the literature. In case study research, analysis means creating a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis in case study includes three general steps: coding, combining codes into broader categories and themes, and making and displaying comparisons in the data (Creswell, 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggested the following process:

1. Sketch ideas by writing in the margin and making reflective notes;
2. Summarize any field notes;
3. Make metaphors;
4. Identify codes by writing codes and memos;
5. Reduce codes to themes by noting patterns;
6. Count code frequency (It should be noted that in qualitative research should be counted only to reveal patterns in the data or repeated concepts, not to make concrete points (as might be done in quantitative research). In vivo coding (coding of exact words) is an acceptable qualitative analysis tool, however (Creswell, 2012; Saldana, 2013);
7. Compare and contrast data.

Merriam’s (1998) approach to analysis is specific but allows for a variety of techniques. She recommended using one of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) methods, like the one detailed above. She defined analysis as “the process of making sense out of the data… the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). She expanded on the simultaneous data collection
and analysis (preliminary analysis may lead to alterations in the collection approach), but noted that analysis becomes more intensive after collection is finished. Merriam defined analytic methods (ethnographic, narrative inquiry, phenomenological, constant comparative.) and different levels (steps) of analysis (naming the categories, determining the number of categories, and figuring out systems for placing data into categories). Finally, she provided information on data validation, which chiefly relies on providing enough detail to fully back up conclusions drawn from the data. There is an overall emphasis on using prose and literary techniques to describe and analyze the data.

**Analysis in this study.** The general process for data analysis in this study was as follows, with an emphasis on close reading:³

1. Data preparation/management (create and organize files).
2. First cycle coding.
4. Identification of categories.
5. Identification of themes using categorical aggregation.
6. Developing generalizations about the case in terms of the themes.

Specific information about the analysis process will be detailed below.

---

³Here, close reading refers to a “thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text’s form, craft, meanings, etc.” (Burke, 2013, p. 2). It also refers to the process of uncovering “layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension” (Boyles, 2012, p. 37). While close reading is traditionally considered a literary device (and is now a Common Core standard in the U.S.) it can also be applied to the process of data analysis. There is clear alignment between close reading and Merriam’s (1998) focus on narrative in case study research.
**Interview coding.** Preparing interview data for analysis began with the transcription of data via Rev (which uses humans rather than computers to transcribe audio files). Once transcription was complete, transcripts were verified by the researcher and the individual participant to ensure accuracy. During this time, the researcher composed/reviewed analytic memos and field notes taken during data collection. After obtaining approval from participants, analysis of the transcripts began.

Transcripts were analyzed in two cycles in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the data and allow for the development of themes (Creswell, 2007; Saldana, 2013). First cycle coding was done manually (making notes on paper and highlighting portions of the text) using multiple coding methods to effectively capture the researcher’s initial impressions of the data. Simultaneous coding was used for sections that appear to carry multiple significances (Saldana, 2013). The following methods were used:

- **In vivo:** to identify significant words or phrases, and honor the participant’s voice;
- **Emotion:** to highlight participants’ feelings and experiences, and explore intra and interpersonal experiences/actions;
- **Descriptive:** to code the data using metaphors or descriptive phrases not spoken in the text itself;
- **Narrative:** to highlight the stories and experiences, and to code recurring motifs, plots, settings, sensations, or other narrative elements. (Saldana, 2013).

Narrative coding was an important step here, as it is suggested by both Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). It focuses on the “story” told by the data, which was used to develop themes and findings.
After manual coding took place, codes were moved into the coding program MAXQDA. This extra step helped to create a visual representation of first cycle coding and track the appearance of codes and across the transcripts in order to reveal patterns. It also allowed the researcher to reflect on the coding that was done before moving into the second cycle.

Second cycle coding allowed the data to be reorganized and refocused in order to help develop overall themes (Saldana, 2013). It began after the researcher had time to reflect on initial codes produced in the first cycle. As in first cycle, the majority of the process were manual and paper or document-based. Visual representations of the existing codes were also viewed in MAXQDA to help identify patterns in the data. Focused coding was used to develop “the most salient categories” (Saldana, 2013, p. 213) and make decisions about which categories made the most analytical sense. In a combination of focused and theoretical coding, Kahn’s (1990) three components of engagement – meaningfulness, safety, and availability – were used as categories to help organize the data for discussion. From these categories, themes were developed.

**Document coding.** After all necessary documents had been collected, they were coded in a two-cycle process similar to that of the transcribed interviews. The ultimate goal of this analysis was to examine the cultural artifacts (documents and polices) created or influenced by the culture of engagement at BU.

Coding of documents began with a first round of in vivo and descriptive coding that led to a summary or index of the data contents (Saldana, 2013). Coding was done manually on paper, using highlighting and margin notes. After manual coding took place, codes were moved into the coding program MAXQDA. As document review is different from qualitative interviews, counting the number of certain in vivo codes helped identify which concepts or
words were emphasized by the institution, and which were missing or mentioned infrequently. Focused coding was used for the second cycle of analysis in order to narrow down categories.

**Summary.** The combination of analysis cycles one and two revealed major themes in all three sets of data and provided material for discussion. This approach was aligned with Merriam (1998), which allows the researcher to develop the major categories and themes for discussion based on what the data “says”. This study used qualitative interview data gathered from the central population to illuminate the adjunct experience, and employed the second group of interviews and the document review to provide contextual information and alternative perspectives.

**Trustworthiness**

The main step taken to validate the results of this study was to collect and analyze multiple sources of data. While qualitative interviews with one group may be sufficient in other approaches, in case study the aim is to not limit data to the context of one person’s experience. Yin (2014), Merriam (1998), and Stake (1995) all advocate for the use of multiple data sources in case study research, as it’s the only way to get a true picture of the case. This practice, referred to as triangulation (Yin, 2014), allows data to be validated from multiple sources/perspectives. As in a geometric triangle, conclusions from one source of data supports, illuminates, or provides additional perspective on conclusions gathered from another source. Triangulation also ensures the study is trustworthy, as resulting generalizations have been validated by more than once source of data.

Several “tests” summarized by Yin (2014) were also applied to the data in order to ensure the quality of the research design. To ensure construct validity, multiple sources of evidence (data) were used, data sources were tracked via a document matrix, and participants reviewed
their own interview transcripts for accuracy. To ensure internal validity, pattern matching was done across the multiple data sources (to see if what appeared in one source appeared in the other, for example). Researcher bias and familiarity with the site and the study population was minimized by the “bracketing” process described above. To ensure the external validity needed in a single-case study, a theoretical framework was included in the research design. Finally, to ensure reliability, a protocol was developed for collecting all three sources of data. Addressing all three of these tests in the different phases of the research process ensured the overall quality of the research design and the resulting data.
Chapter 4: Analysis and Presentation of Data

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a specific university. The study was framed by one central research question: How do adjunct practitioners experience engagement at a mid-sized private university on the West Coast? Findings are intended to highlight not only the experience of adjunct practitioners but the ways in which the criteria for engagement has been met or not met by the institution. The chapter that follows provides an introduction to the primary group of study participants (adjunct practitioners\(^4\)) followed by a presentation of the findings of the study in terms of analysis focused on emergent themes within the data. Major themes have been organized into the three domains of engagement, as defined by Kahn (1990). Themes that did not fit directly into the three domains but were deemed significant are also included. Data from the other two data sources (interviews with administrators, document review) are also included in order to present a comprehensive look at the case.

Data for this study was analyzed through three general steps: coding, combining codes into broader categories and themes, and making and displaying comparisons in the data (Creswell, 2007). The themes presented in this chapter emerged from the data. Each stood out both in the appearance of certain codes and in the stories given by the participants. While there is not room to include all relevant interview quotes here, representative quotes have been selected for each theme.

\(^4\)Demographic and background info is not provided for the secondary group of participants, as they are not the primary group under study, and any demographic information could be identifying.
Demographics for Primary Group of Study Participants

Eight adjunct faculty members (adjunct practitioners) were interviewed as the primary group for this study. All participants live and work at a distance from BU, though some have traveled to teach on-campus during select terms. All participants have online teaching experience and some form of in-person teaching experience (at BU and other institutions/settings). Participants have taught courses in all BU schools, apart from the School of Law, at both the graduate and undergraduate level (though most teach primarily graduate students as that is BU’s primary student population). Years of teaching experience (total, including time at BU) ranges from just over one year to 14 years of teaching, with an average of eight years’ experience. All participants hold a Master’s degree, with most having multiple graduate-level degrees. Two participants hold doctorate-level degrees. The chart below list pseudonyms and details years of experience as well as degree-level for the eight participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender (G)</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Highest degree level achieved</th>
<th>School at BU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Tax &amp; Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Business, T &amp; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Tax &amp; Accounting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2: Summary of study participant demographics (primary group).*

Primary Group’s Definition of Engagement

At the start of the interviews with the primary group, participants were asked to define engagement for a part-time faculty member. This question was interpreted in a variety of ways,
and answers reflected both the participants’ own experience of being engaged as well as the general definition of faculty engagement. Steve, for example, highlighted the need to be prepared and to engage with students:

Engaged would mean, for me, to invest more time as needed for the benefit of the students. An engaged professor would also be somebody who was fully and wholly prepared from a technical and a logistics format. Someone who truly gets excited when students grasp the lesson, the instruction, when students ask questions because they're that intrigued by the way they're being taught.

Lucas spoke to the need to “Keep my skills sharp and continuously hone my skills as I work in my day to day job… [to] I make sure that I participate and complete at least one workshop a year in order to remain relevant pedagogical style with the student.” Karen stated, “I think the first piece of engagement is the amount of time and effort I put into developing each week, and I am organic so it changes every week.” This concept of being prepared and keeping course material current was a major part of how participants defined engagement.

Participants also defined engagement in terms of interacting with other faculty (a major theme that will be further discussed later in this chapter). For Nancy, being engaged meant:

[Being] engaged as a member of the faculty. As a group of individuals who are all doing the same job and trying to do a good job, and potentially trying about ways to improve what they're doing… Engaged faculty member, to me, it sounds like being part of the faculty team.

She also added, “I definitely don't feel like I am [part of the team]. But like I said, I think that's mostly my fault. They give me opportunity which I'm unable to act on.” Joyce stated that being
an engaged adjunct “means everything. It's a sense of accomplishment, a sense of being a part of another organization.”

Jonathan also distinguished between his definition of an engaged adjunct and his own experience. He stated:

I've never been an “engaged part-time faculty member.” I teach my course and that's it. I go to meetings maybe once or twice a year. I may go to faculty recognition things, especially if I'm being recognized. But, in terms of working with other faculty, working with other faculty, I have not done it anywhere. A tiny bit more at [BU] because [the department chair] brings together the adjunct faculty once a year. We kind of get together, but we don't really engage. It's more show and tell at those meetings. What engaged part-time faculty would mean, if I did it, would be that you would actually get involved with other faculty members. You'd work on pedagogical issues. You'd figure out how to use technology. Share some secrets. Do this and that. Have a relationship more like you would have if you were sitting in an office next door to each other. Where you'd pick your head up and go over and talk to somebody about an issue. But I've never done that.

He then added:

[Adjunct faculty engagement] will never happen if you rely on the part-time faculty to do it. If you want that to happen, the institution has to establish support mechanisms, incentives, etc. to do that. I don't believe that it'll ever happen as a result of the part-time faculty wanting to get together. I think it will only happen if the institution instigates it, supports it, encourages it.
This distance between the ideal definition and the actual experience of engagement, and the impact the institution has in bridging that gap, is further discussed in this chapter.

**Primary Group’s Definition of Their Role as Adjuncts**

Interview data also revealed how participants defined their role as part-time faculty at BU. For the most part, answers highlight the at-will or temporary nature of the role. As stated by Barb:

I feel like I'm a contract employee . . . . I guess we do have a contract . . . . I signed the contract, I don't really think of it as being a defining document as much as, they hired me to do a job. I go in and I do the job, and then I'm done with the job. So, I don't really feel like an employee, I don't feel that, that extensive connection that an employee has with a permanent appointment. I don't feel that. But I feel like they expect me to do a certain level of quality work and that's what I intend to deliver.

Others also described feeling like contractors. Jonathan said, “They give me a contract. I teach . . . I've always felt like I got a contract and I was supposed to teach and it was basically up to me to decide what I would teach and how I would teach it.” This sentiment of a limited employment relationship was repeated throughout the other interviews, often with a nod to the isolation that comes with it (to be further explored below).

**Primary Group Data Sorted Into Kahn’s (1990) Three Domains**

The following sections detail the emergent themes that have been sorted into Kahn’s (1990) three domains of employee engagement: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. This section presents data from interviews with the primary group of participants (adjunct practitioners). To refresh, these domains are defined by Kahn (1990) as follows:

*Meaningfulness*: A sense of return on investments of self in role performances.
**Safety:** A sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.

**Availability:** A sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances. (p. 705)

According to Kahn (1990), these domains are essential to understanding why a person would become engaged in their work. Put another way, they determine if the conditions for engagement have been established for the employee.

**Meaningfulness.** All participants had a positive response when asked if they felt their work as an adjunct was personally meaningful. They described teaching as “rewarding” (Nancy), “meaningful” (Jonathan), “very meaningful” (Mike), and “very enriching” (Lucas). Steve referred to teaching as one of his “top five values”, and Joyce, Nancy, and Mike all stated that they wished they could teach more than they currently do. Joyce also added, “I always think this is the best opportunity. This is the opportunity of a lifetime.” Karen also depicted teaching as a kind of learning sanctuary:

[Teaching is] like a part of my being…. It's what makes my heart sing. It really is. To see people develop and see them learning and to see them challenged and grow and engage and just be grateful. You don't get that sort of recognition in consulting, not through speaking, because the world is a very harsh world. It's very critical. Students want to learn.

While participants did note certain challenges and frustrations (to be further discussed), teaching was put forth as an extremely meaningful part of their lives.
Analysis of the data has allowed meaningfulness to be broken down into the following themes: intrinsic motivation to teach, connection to student success, desire to teach full-time, lack of community and collaboration, and feelings of isolation.

**Intrinsic motivation to teach.** Intrinsic motivation to teach appeared as a major theme in the data. Lucas stated, “My core reason [for teaching] is that it definitely feeds a passion of mine. It's just intrinsic value of being able to impart information that I have learned through my own career development to others who wish to advance their careers.” Intrinsic motivation also helped Mike become more involved in BU faculty activities, as he explained:

I've also felt engaged by the university when I was invited to the faculty senate, and I went to every meeting of the faculty senate so that was great. I also felt engaged enough to go their once a month faculty retreat. It was all because I was trying to learn more and be better at teaching. The intrinsic motivation is what helped me feel more engaged.

He also noted that the university was “More passive in [regard to his participation] as most universities are with respect to the adjunct faculty,” suggesting that in this case his personal motivation to engage was the determining factor.

Other participants stated that they enjoyed sharing and making use of their knowledge and skills while teaching. Joyce said, “I'm selfish . . . . I like to share my knowledge.” Jonathan stated, “The reason I keep [teaching] is that it keeps my brain alive. I like working with working practitioners. I think I have something to offer to them from a practitioner's perspective.” Nancy said, “[Teaching is] an outlet for expressing my excitement, enthusiasm, passion for [the subject matter], because I can't have a conversation like that with my mom or most of my friends.” Mike used his public speaking skills as an example of why he enjoys teaching:
I'm an excellent public speaker so that's something that comes naturally for me. The nerves and the anxiety that happens as a result of getting up in front of a room is something I know how to channel and utilize to my advantage. That's one motivation; I like being in that position.

This data reveals teaching to be an activity that bridges the gap between multiple skillsets and interests in the participants’ lives. It also represents lifelong learning, as explained by Joyce:

I love, I absolutely love mentoring, I love teaching, and I love learning. And you can kind of see that in my education because I'm either always in school . . . I'm always in school some way or another. I'm either taking or teaching or both. I just have a passion for knowledge in general.

This sentiment was echoed by Mike, who said, “I was always fascinated by serious learning.” This theme suggests that passion for learning, both on the part of the student and the teacher, feeds directly into participants’ motivation to teach.

**Connection to student success.** Student success was also noted as a major influence on the meaning participants drew from teaching. Student success was also noted as a major influence on the meaning participants drew from teaching. This can be seen in the following quotes:

*Jonathan.* My role is not to give students factual information. My role is to encourage them and support them in learning how to get factual information that they need. More importantly, how to take that factual information and see it in context and see it in a broader scope… what I hope to accomplish in all my classes is to help students learn to see things in perspective. Learn how to get information. To basically understand that solving problems is more important than moving things along.
**Mike.** If there's any motivation that I have in terms of teaching, it's bringing students to their own ah-ha moment. What I do in class to try to emulate on why is to create an environment in which the student is actually brought on his or her own… I really love to spur people on to their own ah-ha moment.

**Lucas.** For me, [teaching is] very similar to public service in that it's a privilege and it's an opportunity for me to impart knowledge… I feel that it's my responsibility to help guide and navigate those students' both career and educational pathways and cultivate an environment for which that they excel at whatever they're starting.

This theme is also illustrated by Lucas in the following anecdote:

We had one student who was unemployed and was looking for a job, and wanted to pursue one at the county or city level. She was presenting her topic of electoral engagement at the county level and had done a tremendous job in her research and was very articulate in her full presentation. And the city mayor pulled her off to the side and offered her a job.

These stories illustrate how adjuncts use their own inspiration to create impactful classroom experiences. With all these stories, participants clearly attached great meaning to their ability to foster and facilitate student success. As Joyce stated, “I want to see them succeed in their life.”

This theme suggests that student success is closely tied to how participants view their own return on investment as educators.

**Desire to teach full-time.** The desire to become a full-time faculty member was also an emergent theme in the interview data. While all participants are actively employed in a field outside teaching, six out of eight stated that full-time teaching was an ultimate career goal. (The two that did not reasoned that their content area as too niche to support a full-time role (Barb),
and that they were not interested in the research and writing component of a full-time role (Jonathan). Thus they did not dislike the idea of teaching full-time, but did not think the full-time faculty role specifically was a good fit for them.)

The desired timing for this transition varied among participants. Some, like Joyce, described the “retirement dream of being a full-time professor” that would occur after they were done with their main career. Nancy stated that she would be interested in full-time teaching after her current career wraps up, but that its “Probably still 15 or 20 years away.” Some did not attach a specific time to the event, but indicated it would happen when “the time's right” (Lucas). Others indicated an interest to teach full time sooner rather than later, and clearly noted that it was “not a retirement plan” but rather “A midterm between way before retirement plan” (Steve). Most participants did not feel ready to teach full-time right now, as they wanted time to further develop their career and knowledge base.

Participants also expressed uncertainty about being able to achieve their goal to teach full time. Karen said, “I would love to be [a full-time faculty member] but nobody's going to hire me.” Steve described a similar experience; he said, “I knew I wanted to do this full-time. I just never saw an opportunity or never had an opportunity.” He also said the role “It would have to come with some stipulations that I'm not a one-year contract person.”

Barb noted a lack of preparation. She said “I have never had any training on how to teach. I know some things about it… But I don't really know any of the theory behind what makes people [good educators].” Finally, Joyce expressed confusion about the path to full-time work. She said, “I would love some sort of assistance or guidance or maybe even a program or something to help you go to the next step. So transitioning from adjunct to professor, I actually have no idea how to do that.” Mike also noted that while some institutions provide a pathway for
moving into a full-time role, “That's something that [BU] doesn't do. That's a very specific problem about [BU].”

While the desire to become a full-time faculty member is present in the data, the path to the realization of that goal is less present. Despite this, this theme highlights the importance teaching plays in the lives of the participants, and how it represents a culmination of their professional lives.

Lack of community and collaboration. Interviews also highlighted a lack of community and collaboration at BU between adjuncts, full-time faculty, and the administration. As described by Lucas, “If it wasn't for being persistent in emailing and staying in communication with my chair via email, I wouldn't hear from them at all unless they needed something…It doesn't feel very collaborative.” Others described feeling neglected. Mike said, “I would think that there would be a little more attention that would be paid. They don't need to stroke my ego but I think that I'm a resource to them and they don't really seem to reach out much.” Finally, others noted a lack of meetings and “check-ins”. As Steve explained:

I know I can talk to people, but I feel definitely disconnected… I feel no real community, no regular communication outreach, and I don't mean email blasts… I mean monthly outreach maybe once a month, once a quarter, say, "Let's schedule something formal."

Karen also noted that she had repeatedly asked if her department would be having staff meetings, but had yet to hear back about anything.

This lack of formal interaction was also noted in terms of faculty community. As Karen said, “I think that what we're missing is a community, and having a community at practice.” Participants noted a desire to engage with other members of the faculty, and to have something
that would create an environment “where we're engaged in the same endeavor of teaching our
field and students.”

The importance of this community can be summed up in this quote from Jonathan:

This is part of the university making heroic efforts to integrate adjuncts into the program.
If the university wants to have high quality education, and they're choosing to use an
adjunct model, then what they need to do is not just trust the adjuncts to do it. They need
to have something more than student evaluations. They need to have some kind of a
program in which faculty can get together. Which they can share ideas. In which you can
give people resources.

This theme shows that while participants are motivated by their desire to help students and
continue their own learning, they are frustrated by the lack of a forum to engage with other
instructors at BU and to develop a community of practice.

**Feelings of isolation.** While participants spoke of their connection with students,
interviews also revealed feelings of isolation. This isolation was expressed in terms of physical
location (being remote from central campus) and status (feeling like a second-class citizen
among the faculty and administration). Language here was very telling: participants noted
feeling invisible, overlooked, underutilized, siloed, ignored by the institution, and “Not part of
the core product.” Participants described themselves as being overlooked and lacking in
information, like “distant satellites.”

Location had a major impact on this experience. All participants noted the challenge of
being unable to attend on-campus events, and conflicts with meetings scheduled during the work
day. As Barb said, “Mainly, my experience as a faculty member is interacting with the students.
Because I'm geographically isolated from the main campus, I can't easily go to meetings.” Nancy
said, “I'm definitely a distant satellite, but I wish I could [attend]... It's just, the program isn't set up to accommodate people with distant job locations.” Joyce said, “I feel sometimes like an outsider... I think that is [due to] the lack of the ability to make certain meetings and certain discussions that I'd love to be a part of, but middle of the day, not possible.”

This frustration was also felt by participants who teach at one of BU’s satellite campuses. Steve noted that although he teaches in-person, instructors from this location are not recognized by BU. He said, “There's live instructors in [my location] and those instructors should be supported, and I don't think they are as much as [at the main location], and I could feel it.” Any offerings were presented in “extremely limited format and mode.” Call-in options were not described as effective. As Lucas said, “I try to at least call in [for meetings], but that voice doesn't get the same recognition as the face.”

Interviews revealed a desire to improve visibility, but also a sense of frustration. These feelings were present for participants, regardless of how long they had taught at BU. As Joyce expressed:

I wish I could be more present. I don't feel like I'm very present, and that's a lot due to location. Like if I walk down the hall, no one would recognize me. And I hate that, to be honest. I wish there was a real big easy solve for that and there's not. I feel like . . . . I can imagine many adjuncts feel the same way. . . . It's one thing to teach sporadically here and there, but when you've been technically a faculty member here for over a decade, and half the faculty has never seen you. That part is a little struggle for me. Here, the adjuncts want to be able to contribute more. Karen described wanting to be able to create new course content, but feeling like her input might not be welcome. She said, “I'm a
Language used by participants highlights the inequality. As Mike said, “adjuncts feel like the red haired step child or the forgotten husband or the funny uncle or something.” He also added, “Adjuncts are kind of looked down upon, which is sad because at [BU] nearly 80% of their courses are taught by adjuncts.” The impact of this situation can be summed up in this quote by Jonathan. He said:

Every organization, every organization, has a tendency toward silos. Universities are no different . . . . The silo problem is embedded. It's embedded in all organizations and when you have adjuncts who aren't necessarily made to feel a part of the institution, and the institution doesn't make a heroic almost effort to integrate them into the institution, there are going to be silos outside of the institution… The real problem is that the students are the ones who are going to suffer.

This theme reveals the tangible impact of adjunct isolation on the participants’ experience. While the data does not show that it has derailed participants’ overall sense of fulfillment with teaching, it does show that the problem is prevalent and concerning in how the adjuncts envision themselves within the culture and community at BU.

Safety. The themes that have been sorted into this domain are: sense of security, lack of information regarding role/expectations, and desire for greater feedback and evaluation.

Sense of security. Data suggests that participants feel generally secure in their roles as adjuncts at BU. Half of the participants were very positive in this regard. They noted feeling “Very secure” (Karen, Barb) and “100% secure” (Lucas). These feelings were attributed to doing “A reasonably good job of teaching” (B8), lack of competition for the specific course (Barb),
history with the university (Joyce), and not being worried about teaching in the future because it’s not a full-time occupation (Jonathan).

Having a good relationship with the department chair and being supported during difficult times were also noted as influences on security. This was demonstrated in anecdotes about student concerns, including issues with grading and personal problems. Joyce shared one episode where the administration helped her deal with a difficult student:

The university had my back and stepped in, and their counselor stepped in and helped out the student. That to me is especially helpful and helps me feel more secure in my role. Makes me feel like you can, one, do your role, but also that you will continue to have a role, because you are set up for success. If you're not set up for success, you're not going to feel secure at all.

This sentiment was echoed by several other participants who had also been supported while dealing with teaching issues, including grade grievances. Support did appear to increase during more challenging times, when there was a pressing issue to deal with that also impacted administration or student affairs. Support was less-present when courses ran smoothly, as the administration appeared to be more hands-off.

However, interview data on security was not wholly positive. Bond with one’s chair was noted as a major influence on security overall, with several participants noting that if they worried about having to deal with the university without their chair. Karen, for example, said that she felt secure only because of her specific department chair, and if there was a transition in leadership she feared that security would be lost. While some chairs were described as being accommodating in terms of teaching assignments, others noted that they had little
communication about what courses they might be offered in the future, which increased the sense of “Potential vulnerability.”

Jonathan also remarked that being an at-will instructor means sometimes taking course assignments that you don’t actually want, out of fear of not being asked again. He said, “Anybody who's in an adjunct position is always has some edge about whether they should take everything that's offered. If they don't take it, they may not get offered it again,” Other participants expressed fear over the connection between student grades and security, stating that a bad grade (even if earned by the student) could be a “Risk” (Mike) for the instructor.

Being remote/less visible was identified as a factor, along with fewer course assignments. As Mike said, “I probably am not feeling as secure as I was a couple of years ago and that's only because I've gone down to one semester a year for online.” Several participants noted that they had felt more secure in years past, and now felt vulnerable in terms of their future employment. Analysis here reveals an overall sense of declining security in the data. This theme suggests that although most of the participants said they felt secure, that security is threatened by a number of significant factors.

**Lack of information regarding role/expectations.** Data also revealed a focus on the amount of information adjuncts have regarding their role and what is expected from them as faculty members. Participants expressed a lack of information on university policy, programmatic outcomes, student expectations, and pedagogical standards. This was often intensified in grading situations. Barb described one situation where a student told her she needed to earn a B in the course to graduate from the program. She wasn’t sure if that was “An appropriate thing for them to say” and was unsure if the university encouraged that kind of communication or not. She said:
If there's any kind of philosophy around what they think the students should be achieving or how they should be achieving it, I am not aware of it. I feel like I would like a better understanding of what the university feels is their relationship with the students.

Karen also expressed a need for information beyond her individual course. She said, “I just want more information so I can continue to feel a stronger attachment and that I understand what's going on.” Data here reveals a tangible need for more information, or perhaps, more readily available and accessible information.

Participants also noted their lack of formal training in pedagogy. Interviews suggest that they want more information and training on educational strategies and how to best educate the BU student population. This was specified both in terms of subject-specific training (information into specific course topics) but also in general education theory.

Interviews also contain images of adjuncts being left to fend for themselves. As Jonathan described, “They throw teachers out on an island and they say I hope you know how to survive.” This theme reveals that participants are not entirely clear on what is being asked of them, or on how they exist within the university environment.

Desire for greater feedback and evaluation. Related to the theme above, the theme of feedback and evaluation was also prevalent in the data. Student evaluations came up numerous times in the interviews, despite not being specifically addressed in any questions. The effectiveness of the current evaluation system was critiqued by multiple participants. As Jonathan stated, “Student evaluations are a joke. If I have a student who I have had some conflict with in my class, I'm going to get a bad evaluation from that student…if my students get bad grades, my evaluations are low.” Others noted that students, especially those in the online environment, don’t often fill out the evaluations at all. While some have found that students
asking to take their courses again is a form of positive feedback, others consider negative feedback from students to be a source of “serious anxiety” (Joyce). The participants who described a more positive relationship with student evaluations also noted that they created multiple opportunities to get student feedback throughout the term, thus going beyond the institution’s basic evaluation plan.

Beyond student feedback, formal feedback and evaluation from the administration was also highlighted during interviews. The data was overall negative in this area. Many compared it to the feedback they receive in their full-time job, where evaluation occurs on a yearly cycle and is more in-depth. As Nancy said, “It doesn't feel like a real job in that sense, where I don't get feedback... I mean, I don't know if they think I'm bad, or mediocre, or what.” Jonathan referenced a formal evaluation system at his job where employees are measured in multiple areas. On the fourth measure of training effectiveness – did you make a different in the performance of your job – he said, “We don't have any information on that. We don't test that at all [at BU].” Mike also described not having opportunities to review other instructors; he said, “How many times have I ever sat in the classroom of another faculty or instructor at [BU]? Zero. How many times have I been given a best practices presentation? Zero.”

Despite this, several of the participants were cautiously satisfied with the feedback they received. Karen said, “As long as you do right by your students I think you do okay, because students promote you.” Barb also described feeling “Gratified” by student feedback after her second class (though noted that she did not receive any feedback on her first course at BU). Lucas said, “I've consistently received high marks from my students’ evaluations. Those have been recognized by my department chair and those that I teach with. I feel completely supported by my department chair and the program director.” He noted the importance of having this
“Positive affirmation” in terms of how he felt about his role at BU. Being able to communicate with his department and receive direct feedback was noted as very important.

Here, data suggests that feedback and evaluation is related to the knowledge adjuncts have about their role (expectations, performance, and so on) as well as their sense of security in terms of future course assignments and student satisfaction. Community also comes into play here, as the lack of feedback from the administration or other faculty is keenly felt. This theme shows that the current feedback system at BU can be successful, but is perhaps less-successful, even lacking, in current practice.

**Availability**. Data suggests that participants have a complicated view of availability. As part-time employees, they are limited in the time they can allot to teaching, but at the same time teaching represents a major part of their lives. While some resources are readily available, others are limited or unavailable. Data here reveals an overall desire to do more with an emphasis on the numerous roadblocks that hamper success. The themes that have been sorted into this domain are: barriers to participation, availability of resources, and quality of eLearning support.

**Barriers to participation**. All participants expressed a desire to do more as teachers and member of the faculty. Interviews also revealed a number of complicated reasons why adjuncts are unable to participate as fully as they would wish. This includes participation that goes beyond basic teaching expectations – attending faculty development or training events, award or recognition ceremonies, faculty retreats, etc.

The first major barrier from the data is time, or rather, the limited time adjuncts have to devote to teaching and other faculty activities or trainings. Participants described feeling like they were “Burning the candle at both ends” (Nancy) while teaching on “Personal time” (Lucas). Interviews suggest that participants have good intentions regarding participation, but have simply
not had the chance to do anything beyond the basic requirements of teaching. What time they are able to devote comes out of their “Personal time”. This becomes “Stressful” (Nancy, p. 9) when grading accumulates.

When participants have to deal with innovations or changes in course delivery, it also takes up valuable time. As Lucas describes:

As far as keeping up to date and on track with the new online systems for the grade books or offering recorded classes and uploading new material to make it more of a paperless class, those are the challenges that I don't have a lot of time to dedicate as much as I'd like to in the management of the course.

Participation is further limited by full-time jobs. As Joyce said, “[BU always has] so many great programs. And I always look at their calendar and usually it's just not conducive to a full-time work schedule… a full-time gig has to come before a part-time gig.” While the in-person trainings are valuable, if the activity is time-specific, it’s a challenge to attend.

Others participants described being limited by location. This became an issue when BU offers trainings or faculty events are offered on-campus only. As Nancy said, “To get from [her location] to [BU] in the evening during the commute is the most painful thing you can image. So I'm like, ‘Forget it . . . . it's not feasible for me to participate in those things.’” The mode of these offerings also factors in. As Steve said, “I would love it if [a development program was] not so limited as to mode and manner, if it wasn't just live.” Other participants noted feeling overlooked when they weren’t able to attend adjunct recognition dinner or yearly award events and there was no remote option.

Others felt that they would make the sacrifice to come to campus if the university created offerings specific to them. Steve stated that he would like to see faculty development around the
field and current pedagogies. He said, “You fly out. You make the sacrifice. They take care of everything else. If they told me something like that, for sure I would invest for the flight knowing that they are going to invest in me.”

Additional barriers to participation included money – being asked to do course development work without additional stipends – and debates over intellectual property. Several participants noted that they would like to develop new curriculum, but that they couldn’t justify doing it for free on top of the development they have to do just to keep the course current each term. As it stands, teaching is already “A lot of work for little pay” (Karen). Mike expressed a desire to develop new course content, but disagreed with BU over how the content would be used in the future. As a part-time faculty member who also teaches at other institutions, he felt unwilling to part with the work he had done. He said, “I've done a lot of research on this, and I can't give [BU] that research or else it becomes their property. I have to retain intellectual rights to the property so that I can teach the course at [another university].”

Participation is inherently limited in a part-time role, both by the conditions of employment and by the ethics of employing part-time workers. However, for a group of educators that is intrinsically motivated to do more, this theme reveals several areas where the administration might be able to improve availability through changes in their offerings and policies.

Availability of resources. In considering resources for adjuncts, the question becomes: how available and accessible are they? In this case, all participants indicated that they had the necessary resources to perform their jobs. As Barb said, “They even have a lot more resources than I take advantage of… I can't think of anything that I would want that I don't already think exists.” However, some participants noted that teaching resources are probably not used as much
as they should be. Lucas said that resources are “Constantly made available – whether the faculty, adjunct or full-time takes advantage of it is a different question”, and Joyce noted that they are “Underutilized.” Some noted a lack of knowledge about what resources were actually offered by the university.

Interviews also suggest that participants rely heavily on their industry knowledge and connections in creating new course content. While this is consistent with their role as adjunct practitioners, it does question how much the university should be assisting adjuncts in this area, and providing resources. As Jonathan described:

I think I have resources to do my job… I'm lucky because, like I said, I have a lot of associations with [my industry]. For example, when I was asked to teach this [course], which I've never taught before, I reached out to a couple of my colleagues and said, "Hey, do you teach this course?" They said, "Yeah." I said, "Could you share your syllabus? Could you send me your reading list?" They do that. I then have a sense of what the scope of the course is… The biggest resource that I have…is that I spent 34 years [working in the field].

Data also reveals a desire to share and utilize resources among other BU faculty. Karen noted this in her interview, when she said, “I can't find stuff and I know that there are professors within the university who probably are experts in certain things.” Other described the process of finding new resources for their course as “A challenge” (Lucas), suggesting that even with industry knowledge, adjuncts still struggle to create course content. This theme reveals that although participants feel they have sufficient resources, additional help from the university or a faculty community of practice would be welcomed.
Quality of eLearning support. One item that was not in question during interviews was the quality of support participants received from the eLearning team. The eLearning office was described as an incredibly available and supportive resource – in some cases, it was the only resource that the participants came in contact with. Participants described being “particularly well-supported” (Steve) by eLearning, and stated, “Their cyber campus people are just fabulous” (Jonathan). Lucas said:

I feel that the IT tech support staff are phenomenal and whenever I've called, they've picked up. I feel that they are always there to assist me and insuring that I am successful managing the class. They’re constantly trying to teach whatever the new system is, or teach the new technique to up something or create something. I feel that that is one area that they should receive the highest mark for.

Karen said, “[BU’s] eLearning staff is extremely sophisticated… I actually went on site before I taught…and spent half a day with one of the e-learning specialists. It was completely like, I don't get it. Now I get it. It's easy for me.” Nancy said, “Those guys are great, and I frequently do access their cyber campus support group, and they have always been awesome”, and Joyce added, “I cannot tell you how many times they’ve helped me.”

Jonathan also shared this anecdote, which details a powerful moment he had with one of eLearning’s instructional designers. He said:

[The instructional designer] took me under her wing and first taught me about how to use the technology. That was fabulou. Nobody had ever done that before. More important,

---

5The eLearning department (previously called “cyber campus”) at BU is responsible for the Learning Management System (platform for both online and blended courses), instructional design support, supervised exam proctoring, and course administration. They also have a 24/7 online helpdesk, and offer faculty trainings and development sessions through the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. They are not an academic unit, and operate separately from the schools at BU.
she was a person who understood pedagogy and so she taught me about learning objectives and how do you measure whether you met your learning objectives and how do you focus. Teaching is not just about providing information. It's about getting students to think and to actually integrate that information into their behavior. She really gave me a lot of help in how to do that.

He further explained that in all his years of teaching, this was the first time someone sat down with him and provided concrete lessons about teaching. Up to this point, he said, “The lessons you learned about teaching were basically from the awful professors you had. You said I'll never do that. That was the lessons you learned about teaching.” But in this case, working one-on-one with someone from eLearning truly impacted his teaching practice.

In considering the tools that these adjuncts have at their disposal, this theme highlights an area where the university excels at providing resources and support. Given the glowing praise provided in the interviews, this is an area of real, positive impact.

Secondary Group Interview Data

This section presents themes that emerged from an analysis of interviews with the secondary group of study participants (administrators). For this study, two department chairs were interviewed. Each is in charge of a specific department (or departments) at BU, with responsibility for recruitment, onboarding, and management of adjunct faculty. Both are full-time faculty, hold PhDs in their respective fields, and have professional experience outside education. They have also spent time as adjunct faculty, either at BU or other institutions. The

---

6 Study was limited to interviews with two department chairs due to recruitment guidelines set forth by the IRB office at Northeastern University. Assigned pseudonyms are Chair 1 and Chair 2.
themes that emerged from this set of interview data are: clear expectations for adjunct faculty, limits on adjunct engagement, and desire for improvement.

**Clear expectations for adjunct faculty.** Both chairs identified clear expectations for their adjuncts, and supported the guidelines set forth by the institution in the faculty manual and other faculty policies. They acknowledged that these expectations were high, consistent with how they envisioned the overall standards at BU. Chair 2 stated, “I would say that my standards [for adjuncts] are high because we rely so heavily on adjunct faculty in our programs. We can’t meet our institutional goals and provide a good experience for our students without them.” These expectations include using a variety of teaching methods and making use of materials that are “Unique and often quite creative” (Chair 1). Chair 2 also noted the importance of being well-versed in online pedagogy and online teaching techniques, as the majority of adjuncts teach online. Overall, adjuncts should “Have high standards and hold students to them” (Chair 1).

Data also highlighted the importance of using professional experience in the classroom. Chairs wanted to see adjuncts “engage students, not just around classroom materials, but... around the industry or the discipline as well” (Chair 1). They should “Keep curriculum current and relevant to what is happening in the industry” (Chair 2). While both chairs did not describe specific rules around how faculty use their industry knowledge (deferring to academic freedom), they did emphasize the importance of connecting knowledge to practice. Chair 1 illustrated this idea with a story of an adjunct that chose an industry competition for students to participate in, where one student won an honorable mention.

For Chair 1, this was a triumph not only for the student, but for the instructor and the program. They said, “Getting students knowledgeable enough to compete at that level is, I think, a kind of expectation that we have of our adjuncts. It's not always easy” (Chair 1). Chair 2
described how an adjunct used principles from their professional background to create new assignments that were relevant to course outcomes. Ideally, students were able to take the knowledge gained in courses and apply it to the outside world.

Data also revealed a focus on student success in setting expectations for adjuncts. The stated expectation is that adjuncts are motivated not by money – especially since “There's no money in it” (Chair 1) – but by the desire to share knowledge and foster student success. As Chair 1 said, “In a perfect world we have adjuncts that are committed to our student's success. Committed to [BU] as an institution that will facilitate that. They feel that they are part of a quality learning environment that they deliver on.” Chair 2 said that adjuncts should “Show students why what they are learning matters, and how they can use it in their real life.”

Chairs also detailed the consequences for not meeting expectations. Both expressed little tolerance for adjuncts who did not appear engaged with their courses or students. Though adjuncts “Are adults with real lives” (Chair 2), they still must “Be professional in their interaction with students … [and] model good behavior” (Chair 1). Chair 1 described what happens when an adjunct is not performing; they said:

There are other instances where [adjuncts] phone it in. There have been instances where they don’t show up on time, they take long breaks and do their business on their cell phones. They adjourn the class too early. That's the stuff that's happened more than once. Then you don't come back and teach for us. That's kind of ridiculous.

Since adjunct employment is dependent on the satisfaction of the chair, it appears that there is little tolerance for not meeting expectations at BU.

This theme reveals that chairs believe they define the adjunct role very clearly in terms of how the adjunct should perform in the classroom, and how they incorporate their professional or
industry experience. Curriculum must be relevant and impactful, teaching should be innovative, and student success should be the primary goal.

**Limits on adjunct engagement.** Data also reveals the limits that chairs place on their adjuncts in terms of engagement. Both chairs were careful to note that they did not expect adjuncts to engage with the institution as part of their teaching requirements. As Chair 1 said, “I think some people are very engaged, as long you mean engaged by their students and their teaching. I don't think that we have this notion that because you are an adjunct you are engaged with the institution.” Chair 2 expressed a desire to have adjuncts participate in development or training events, but noted that it was not in any way “A requirement of the role…especially since we can’t offer any type of additional compensation or payment.” Money came up multiple times in the interviews as a factor in adjunct engagement, in that chairs did not feel comfortable asking adjuncts to do more work for less pay.

Time was also identified as a limiting factor, both in terms of the adjunct and the chair. Chair 1 explained that being able to communicate one-on-one with adjuncts can be challenging. They said:

If any of my adjuncts are always willing to talk to me, I think they're always happy too but I can't say that for sure. They have lives and I have a life. I just wish there was more time available to do that. I'm willing to time shift. If I'm teaching three nights a week I can't exactly be talking to them if I'm in the classroom.

Chair 2 also referenced respect in terms of what communication is required from adjuncts. This was a factor in deciding when and when not to schedule staff meetings. As they said, “If I schedule a staff meeting during the day and ask my faculty to attend, it had better have a clear purpose, as that time is limited and valuable” (Chair 2). This theme suggests that the issue of
time is very present on chair’s minds as they manage their faculty. Even if they want to encourage greater engagement and commitment in their adjuncts, it may be less-reasonable or even unethical to enforce or require.

Desire for improvement. The desire to improve conditions for adjuncts was prevalent in the interviews. Chair 2 noted that conditions for adjuncts are not always ideal; they said, “I worry that adjuncts feel isolated or cut-off from campus and other faculty at times, and that they don’t feel like they are a part of the [BU] community.” For Chair 2, these conditions translated to a sometimes less-than ideal experience for faculty and students. Both participants indicated that they wanted to pay adjuncts more, particularly for course development.

Job security was also identified as something that could be improved. However, it was also discussed as a kind of “Fact of life” for adjuncts. Chair 1 said:

There is no such thing as employment security. Period… You don't have it in the corporate world, I don't think you can put forth in the education world… I wouldn't deliver security but I would like to deliver…a really positive experience for both students and faculty.

Here is seems clear that while participants expressed sympathy for adjuncts, they also expected them to accept certain realities about part-time employment. They described job security not in terms of being guaranteed future courses, but in terms of how secure adjuncts feel as capable educators. To that end, they wished that it would be easier “To identify…where [adjuncts] need help” (Chair 1) rather than leave adjuncts to their own devices.

Finally, participants also brought up the need to have more updated learning systems. This included more support for the LMS as well as better classroom software and computer systems. Both chairs noted that some of the classroom technology and programs were not very
current, and not always compatible with the systems adjuncts use at home. Having older versions of PowerPoint in a classroom, for instance, could be frustrating for adjuncts who may have different versions of the software on their personal computer (Chair 2). Chair 1 did note, however, that “The existence of the center for teaching and learning provides faculty access to a lot of workshops and guidance on different ways and methods to teach and how to use the tools we have”, suggesting that adjuncts need to locate certain resources on their own.

This theme suggest that chairs are aware of the frustrations that adjuncts face and have a desire to improve conditions. But the data also suggests that adjuncts are expected to accept some of these challenges as realities of their role, and to make the best of what is provided. Since the chair may not know where an adjunct needs help, it is up to the faculty member to make that initial call or find the right resource.

Data from Document Review

Having discussed the themes present in the data resulting from interviews with both groups of study participants, data from the final source will now be discussed. As stated above, institutional documents were reviewed in order to provide a full picture of the case of adjunct practitioner engagement at BU. Information was also gathered from BU’s website and online faculty portal.

Available online resources. BU provides a number of online resources for their faculty, with the majority located online in the employee intranet. This site is accessible to all BU employees, full- and part-time, and is the central hub for everything related to BU faculty employment (teaching contracts are accepted through the online stipend system on the website, for instance). Upon login, faculty are provided with links to information on academic program, student services, course schedules, and so on. The “Course Administration” page contains links
to course rosters, administrative tasks (submitting grades, textbook choices, etc.), and grading policies.

The central resource page for faculty is housed under the “Teaching and Learning” (2017) section, which is the location for the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (which is also physically housed on-campus). According to the site, “the Center is your one-stop hub for services, information, and tools that support the teaching and learning environment at [BU]” (“Teaching and Learning”, 2017). It includes a large amount of information, including the following sections/links:

- Schedule of upcoming teaching events;
- Getting started: Links to the (optional) orientation course, email and eLearning info, faculty bios, directories, employment forms, library information, resources to share with students (advising, bookstore, career services, code of conduct), information on student veterans and veteran benefits;
- Teaching and Learning: Academic integrity resources (policies, grade grievance form, plagiarism resources, Turnitin), copyright information, instructional design contact information and eLearning course best practices, on demand trainings (recordings of teaching events), faculty development presentation materials (last updated March, 2016), intellectual diversity resources (discussion guidelines, academic freedom), syllabus templates for each school/program, teaching guidelines and best practices (link to library guides, eLearning content, articles on pedagogy from Faculty Focus), academic technology resources (info for online courses, videos, LMS tools, services offered, quick start guides). (“Teaching and Learning”, 2017)
While adjuncts likely spend more time on the eLearning site (LMS), they must log into the BU intranet at least once per term to submit final grades, potentially twice if they have any administrative roster drops to enter during the first few weeks of the term, and to accept course contracts. The site contains a large amount of information, though most is presented without a full description of the content—faculty members must click through the links in order to see details. Website content is on-demand and available to instructors whenever needed.

**Themes and definitions from document review.** The following documents were reviewed as part of this case study: part-time faculty manual, adjunct faculty stipend policy, course contract, and online job description (posted on the public job site for recruitment purposes). These can be considered informational documents that have been made available to all part-time faculty.

The largest document, BU’s *University Adjunct Faculty Policy Manual* (BU, 2009), is intended to “provide all adjunct faculty at [BU] with knowledge of the policies, regulations, practices and expectations at the university” (p. 4). It also specifies that such policies and requirements may vary by school, and states that the manual “does not address all the policies and procedures to which adjunct faculty are subject” (BU, 2009, p. 4). In addition, as noted in the Teaching Contract (2017), “The [BU] Employee Handbook and the [BU] Adjunct Faculty Handbook are not contracts of employment, and should not be deemed as such.” This language highlights the interpretational nature of such documents, which are not entirely clear in terms of legal obligation or responsibilities. The other documents are intended as their name suggests. The following themes and definitions emerged from analysis of the documents surrounding employment at BU: adjunct faculty connection to mission and institutional definition of adjunct employment.
Adjunct faculty connection to mission. As a university whose faculty workforce is predominantly adjunct, BU’s policy manual makes a clear connection between their adjuncts and the goals of the institution. Under the “Role and Responsibility” section, their mission is stated as follows:

[BU’s] mission and educational philosophy emphasizes practiced based educational programs requiring skilled teachers who are experts in their profession. Our adjunct faculty, usually engaged as successful, full-time practitioners in business, public service, teaching, or the professions, are uniquely able to support the university's mission of active and relevant learning. (BU, 2009, p. 6)

The practitioner aspect is called out specifically here, placing value on the “important academic role” (BU, 2009, p. 6) adjuncts play at BU. The manual also states that “faculty members should encourage student inquiry, learning, development, scholarship, and the expression of beliefs” (BU, 2009, p. 5).

The manual also makes it clear that adjunct faculty should create courses that help foster the mission. As stated, “the course coverage should be consistent with [BU’s] mission – an integration of theory and current real-world practice” (BU, 2009, p. 14). Curriculum should be designed for the “primary target audience, the U.S.-based working adult” (BU, 2009, p. 16). Adjuncts should maintain academic integrity, and use innovative teaching methods that do not over-rely on the standard lecture. They should also not “inflate” grades, as it “erodes the value of the grade and the [BU] degree” (BU, 2009, p. 16). The language here places a great deal of responsibility on BU adjuncts in accomplishing the mission of the institution and in creating impactful and relevant curriculum. The extent to which the adjunct is responsible for this curriculum is detailed below.
**Institutional definition of adjunct employment.** BU’s documents provide a legal, though limited, definition for their part-time faculty. As stated in the manual:

The term "adjunct faculty" applies to all part-time academic employees who regularly teach and/or perform academic work, (i.e., curriculum development and assessment, short-term academically-related administrative assignments, etc.), but are appointed contract-by-contract and/or course-by course, rather than on an annual full-time faculty contractual basis. (BU, 2009, p. 6)

The manual also states that adjuncts must hold at least a master’s degree and provide “evidence of teaching potential” (BU, 2009, p. 8), though it is not specified what that evidence might be. The online job description states that applicants must have five years of professional experience in their chosen subject matter ("Job Opportunities", 2017). Preference is also given to those with “significant professional experience (BU, 2009, p. 8). These criteria emphasize the importance of the practitioner aspect of the role, as well as the authority of the chair or program director in making hiring decisions.

**True at-will employment.** The strongest theme that emerged from analysis of these documents is the extent to which adjuncts are truly at-will employees, lacking any long-term security. The idea that adjuncts are not guaranteed future employment at any point is repeated multiple times in each document. There are also no strict guidelines for re-hire or re-appointment, as “the decision to offer subsequent employment as an adjunct faculty member is solely at the discretion of the dean and/or department chair/program director” (BU, 2009, p. 10). The manual does lay out a set of criteria for subsequent employment (fulfillment of the teaching responsibilities, evaluation results, policy compliance, and department/school needs), but they could be very broadly interpreted.
Adjunct employment contracts are also dependent on course enrollment. As stated in the Teaching Contact (2017), “[sections] may be canceled or changed to a custom or directed study due to low enrollment.” The decision to cancel a course is up to the discretion of the administrator (dean, chair, director), and the documents do not specify which enrollment numbers might qualify a course for cancellation. If work is done to prepare the course before the term begins and the course is cancelled, BU is not obligated to make any payment to the instructor. If a number of conditions (specified and unspecified) are not met, BU does not have any obligation to employ the adjunct.

While some employment details are vague, others are clearly defined. Logistics, such as stipend amount and payroll dates, are provided in each course contract. A stipend range is provided for undergraduate and graduate courses, though it is noted that the amount may change depending on enrollment after the drop deadline (Adjunct Faculty Stipends, 2014). Stipend amount is determined at the discretion of the administration. A payment range is also specified for course development, to be issued when the amount of work “merits” a stipend as negotiated by the dean (Adjunct Faculty Stipends, 2014).

The definition of this work is less clear, however. BU defines development work as “development of a new course or major course revision” (Adjunct Faculty Stipends, 2014, p. 1). This can be contrasted with the manual, which states that instructors must “update course content as necessary to reflect current events in the field” (BU, 2009, p. 19), and makes no mention of a development stipend. Therefore the documents defer to the administrators to define what type and amount of development work warrants additional compensation.

The process of evaluating a new adjunct faculty member is also clearly laid out in the manual. During an adjunct’s first term, each school is to “make its best efforts to apply the
following evaluation process” (BU, 2009, p. 10). First the dean will evaluate the syllabus. Then the program director or chair will make classroom visits or will login to the online course. Finally, student evaluations will be issued. After this first evaluation term, adjuncts will be evaluated “generally no less than once every three years for adjunct faculty who continue to be reappointed” (BU, 2009, p. 11).

Overall, the documents provide little to no definition of adjunct participation or engagement beyond basic teaching expectations. Apart from one line dictating that new faculty must complete a university orientation, there is only one note about participation in university activities in the manual: “the university recognizes the importance of adjunct faculty participating in other aspects of university life such as institutional governance, departmental and school activities, and participation in other scholarly activities” (BU, 2009, p. 7). While this statement doesn’t exclude adjuncts from any activities, it doesn’t mandate them either. It also makes no note of collaboration with other faculty. This aspect of the adjunct role is left open.

Summary and Closing

Following the analysis of the data above, the question thus becomes: does the data indicate that conditions for engagement at BU have been met for the primary group? To this end, findings regarding the primary group are summarized in Figure 3 below.

Interview data is clear on several points: First, participants feel teaching is personally meaningful. Not only are they motivated to teach for intrinsic rather than extrinsic reasons (so, lifelong learning and personal enrichment rather than money or recognition), they feel lucky that they are able to serve as educators at BU. This enthusiasm is evidenced by a majority desire to teach full-time, at some point. But participants also feel isolated and cut-off from any sense of community. They want a more collaborative environment where faculty can participate in a
community of practice. They want more of a relationship with BU, and greater visibility as employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Feel teaching is personally meaningful</th>
<th>Feel secure in role as adjunct</th>
<th>Possess the necessary resources to teach</th>
<th>Would become a full-time faculty member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Summary of answers regarding the domains of engagement. Yes indicates an affirmative response.*

Second, safety is somewhat threatened. Nearly half of participants stated they do not feel entirely secure in their role as an adjunct at BU, and others expressed a declining sense of security. Participants are not entirely clear on what they are expected to do, or what they are allowed to do in terms of interacting with students and developing curriculum. They lack information about the programs in which they teach. They want more and better feedback on their teaching from both students and the administration. The adjunct role carries with it inherent insecurity, but the extent to which adjuncts feel they can express their concerns or share their ideas is uncertain.

And third, adjuncts feel they do possess the basic resources they need to perform their role. BU provides adjuncts with numerous online resources, and the eLearning team provides excellent support. But in considering the resources needed to go beyond basic expectations and truly invest themselves in the role, this statement may be a stretch. Adjuncts face a number of significant barriers that hamper them from attending campus events or even communicating
regularly. If some of these barriers were overcome, adjuncts would participate in faculty programs and events. Their availability is very limited when viewed in terms of the numerous demands on an adjunct practitioner’s time. Desired levels of engagement and participation does not necessarily meet reality here.

Bringing in the other two data sources (administrator interviews and document review) validates the findings above. Both the administrators and BU policies cement the fact that adjuncts are truly at-will employees who have no long-term security beyond what they can demonstrate in terms of teaching performance (which may not always be measured or communicated to the adjunct). They are beholden to student enrollment and the decision of the chair or director in continuing their employment. They are not required to participate in activities beyond teaching, though they are “allowed” to participate if they desire. They are expected rely on industry experience to create impactful and relevant curriculum. They must maintain academic integrity and issue accurate grades. There is no formal provision for community or interaction with other faculty and staff. The relationship an adjunct has with their chair impacts how the adjunct feels about their overall relationship with the institution.

The additional data sources also complicate the findings. For example, there is some disagreement between the data sources in terms of how the adjunct role is defined and experienced. Chairs were very clear on their expectations for adjuncts as well, and policy documents set out specific guidelines and definitions, as well as rules regarding evaluation. This is contrasted by data gathered from the primary group, which indicates that adjuncts don’t feel they have a clearly defined role, and they don’t always receive feedback on performance. These adjuncts also lack knowledge about how their role and courses fit into the bigger picture at BU,
and are uncertain at times about overall educational philosophy and programmatic learning objectives. This indicates a gap between the adjunct experience and the administration at BU.

Looking at this data overall, the argument could be made that the conditions for engagement have been met for this group of adjunct practitioners. However, there are major caveats to a positive outcome for each of the three domains that impact this interpretation. Whether these conditions are a stable state that the institution can maintain is also under question. The following chapter will present a further discussion and interpretation of these findings in specific contexts, along with implications for practice and areas for future research.
Chapter 5: Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

As noted in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a specific university (BU). The study was shaped by a central research question: How do adjunct practitioners experience engagement at a mid-sized private university on the West Coast?

The methodology for this study was qualitative case study. The unit of analysis was adjunct practitioners, a specific type of adjunct faculty member defined by their professional experience and their full-time work outside the world of academia. The chosen methodology allowed the project to focus on context (the workplace, or in this case the university) in addition to individual experience. Case study also allowed this study to examine a variety of factors at the study site that contributed to participants’ experience of engagement, including documents. The theoretical framework for this study was Kahn’s (1990) employee engagement theory. This theory was chosen for its ability to draw connections between individual experience, engagement, and organizational structures; for its definition of the conditions of engagement; and for its focus on the employee’s satisfaction and fulfilment in their role.

This study emerged as a response to the controversy surrounding the employment of adjunct faculty across the United States. Documented issues with adjunct employment include lack of instructor engagement (Eagan, 2009; Ronco & Cahill, 2004), lack of adequate faculty support (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Ronco & Cahill, 2004; Umbach, 2007), negative impact on student success (Christensen, 2008; Forbes et al., 2010; Jacoby, 2006), and lack of comprehensive research on the adjunct experience (Maxey & Kezar, 2016; Rogers, 2015). Overall, institutions cannot continue to employ adjunct faculty if they do not take strides to improve the adjunct experience.
An investigation of the existing literature on this topic revealed the following themes. First, for adjuncts, institutional identity, engagement and job satisfaction, and training and development are all inter-related, as each has the power to impact and affect the other. Second, there is a great deal of variation in the role of adjuncts and their relationship with institutions. Third, adjuncts experience a low level of engagement and job satisfaction. Fourth, faculty training and development programs for adjuncts are still a work in progress. The successful models that do exist suggest adapting existing programs may not be effective. And fifth, research is conflicted on whether adjuncts are an entirely welcome innovation in higher education.

An analysis of the data collected for this study revealed the following themes, as organized into Kahn’s (1990) three domains of engagement:

- **Meaningfulness**: Intrinsic motivation to teach, connection to student success, desire to teach full-time, lack of community and collaboration, and feelings of isolation;
- **Safety**: Sense of security, lack of information regarding role/expectations, and desire for greater feedback and evaluation;
- **Availability**: Barriers to participation, availability of resources, and quality of eLearning support.

The following findings were drawn from an analysis of these themes.

**Findings**

The themes that emerged from the data provide insight into possible answers to the research question. This answer comes in the form of three findings. First, participants feel teaching is personally meaningful, though they lack a sense of community with other faculty and the institution as a whole. Second, participants do not feel entirely secure in their roles and are concerned about their future security with the institution. And third, participants believe they
possess the necessary basic resources to perform their role, but would appreciate more accessible development opportunities.

This chapter contextualizes these findings in scholarship by offering a discussion of the study’s findings as they relate to the theoretical framework and existing literature. The chapter will also highlight implications for practice, offer recommendations for areas of future research, and discuss the known limitations of the study before summarizing the work and offering final thoughts.

**Findings in Context of the Theoretical Framework**

As consistent with this study’s design, findings are aligned with Kahn’s (1990) theory of employee engagement. Kahn’s (1990) study reminds readers of the importance of engagement in terms of employee happiness and job satisfaction; he writes, “people who are personally engaged keep their selves within a role, without sacrificing one for the other” (p. 700). People engaged in this way are able to continue performing their roles and investing their selves in the performance of that role in a way that is positive rather than destructive. This study aims to understand what this engagement might look like for adjunct practitioners. To facilitate this, the following section examines the three study findings through the lens of employee engagement theory in order to understand if the minimum levels of engagement in each domain have been met for the participants.

**Finding 1: Meaningfulness and community.** The first findings speaks to the participants’ experience of meaningfulness. According to Kahn (1990), the components that make up meaningfulness are feeling worthwhile, valued, and valuable; and feeling able to give and receive from work and others while engaged in work. Influences include jobs that are challenging and require creativity, with clear guidelines and expectations; formal positions with
clear identities or status, and interpersonal interactions with others that promote dignity and self-appreciation. In this study, participants categorized their teaching as incredibly worthwhile and valuable, both to themselves as lifelong learners and to their students, who value their professional expertise and field experience. Participants possess intrinsic motivation to teach, which is demonstrated in their decision to teach despite busy schedules and low pay. The fact that most participants desire to become full-time faculty in the future also reinforces the strength of participants’ motivation.

However, the other components of meaningfulness are less present in the data. The adjunct role at BU carries little prestige and recognition, as evidenced by the feelings of isolation and invisibility that participants described during their interviews. Opportunities for recognition have been sparse or inconsistent, and do not appear to have increased participants’ sense that they are valued by the institution. A close relationship with a department chair was found to improve this situation somewhat, but it was not a universal experience for all participants.

All participants experienced a lack of community with other faculty and with the university as a whole. Participants identified this as the lack of a community of practice and the lack of a personal identity connected with the institution. In acknowledging their part-time status, participants did not expect that they would have the same level of connection as full-time faculty, but they did desire a greater connection with other faculty, with whom they could share ideas and best practices.

This echoes Kahn’s (1990) finding that a “personal connection to others” (p. 700) is one of the most important components of work that is personally valued or deemed important by the employee. For participants, this connection was mostly confined to the classroom, and was particularly weak when the class was taught online. This lack of connection was clearly a
negative influence on the experience of meaningfulness as identified in the framework (Kahn, 1990). But at the end of the day, personal motivation to teach and learn seems to have led to an overall positive experience of meaningfulness for participants.

**Finding 2: Safety and security.** The second finding is similarly conflicted when viewed in the context of the framework. According to Kahn (1990), safety means investing one’s self into a role without fear of negative consequences. Employees must feel that their situation is secure and predictable, and be able to predict any possible consequences to specific behaviors, good or bad. Social systems should be non-threatening and relationships should build trust and offer support. Safety can be experienced within interpersonal relationships, groups, management styles or processes, and organizational systems (Kahn, 1990). Comparing these aspects of safety to the data helps clarify why participants expressed uncertainly about their future with the institution.

Some participants had a positive response in terms of their security. More than half felt they were secure in their role as an adjunct. Their reasons for this security are consistent with the framework; participants who felt secure noted a predictability in future course assignments, close connection with their supervisor (chair or dean), and felt that they had been recognized for their work in the past. This connection with a supervisor is an important one, as Kahn (1990) also noted that a “supportive, resilient, and clarifying management heightened psychological safety” (p. 711). Other participants were comforted by the fact that teaching is only a part-time occupation, and not their only source of income.

However, a sense of declining security was also prevalent in the data. It can be seen in participants’ confusion over job expectations and duties, in the lack of feedback and evaluation, and in the uncertainty over future teaching assignments. If a course was taught well and students
seemed happy, participants were not sure if this alone would ensure future employment. Though the university does define the adjunct role in their contracts and policies, participants were still confused about how they should interact with students during difficult situations (requests to earn a passing grade, for instance) and what type of academic work they were expected or permitted to do beyond the basic teaching expectations, like curriculum development. In this sense, the data suggests that the institution is not fostering an atmosphere of safety for its adjuncts. While part-time or at-will employment carries with it a certain unavoidable degree of insecurity, institutions could be doing more to increase participants’ sense of safety and security in their role.

**Finding 3: Resources and development.** The third finding represents a more positive experience for participants regarding availability and support. In the framework, availability is fostered when people possess the necessary resources to complete their job. People are considered available when they are capable of investing their energies (physical, intellectual, emotional) into role performance (Kahn, 1990). There are numerous influences on availability, including issues in people’s outside lives, levels of confidence, and physical resources provided by the intuition (support staff, technology, and so on). There is a more personal aspect here, as the influences are likely to be felt on an individual rather than organizational level. Each employee, or each group of employees, may have a different idea of what they need in terms of resources (Kahn, 1990). Therefore adjuncts practitioners will likely have a unique set of requirements from other groups of faculty, which again highlights the need for more focused data.

All study participants stated that they possessed the resources needed to perform their job. They did highlight a number of the framework’s influences on availability throughout the
interviews, (lack of feedback on performance, uncertainty in how they fit into the university’s social system), emotional energies (being unsure of how much intellectual energy to invest in creating curriculum), and outside life (limited time, challenges in coordinating with a full-time job). They noted areas where BU provided excellent support, highlighting the quality of eLearning support in particular. While certain components of availability were less fulfilled (clear stresses from insecurity and outside life are visible in the data), participants still felt they had the resources needed to perform their job. This suggests that excellent support in one area may overrule poor support in another in terms of the overall experience.

That being said, this finding also reveals areas for improvement. Participants indicated that they would appreciate more development opportunities and increased accessibility in the offerings. The fact that the majority of participants desire to become full-time faculty indicates that they are prepared to fully invest their self in role performance. However, they also possess uncertainty about their teaching abilities and knowledge of education theory and practice. They also feel somewhat neglected or overlooked by the university when the only option for participation is in-person. While the traditional definition of availability focuses on the person, viewing availability through Kahn’s (1990) theory allows for a more nuanced definition that includes both personal and institutional factors.

Final thoughts on Kahn. When the three findings are viewed together, the question then becomes: what is the participants’ experience of engagement in terms of Kahn’s (1990) theory of employee engagement? In other words, are participants investing their selves in the performance of their faculty roles? Here, findings do suggest that yes, they are investing their selves in the role, and aim to continue and increase this investment in the future. Participants are highly motivated, and that motivation to teach and learn appears to have overpowered a more negative
experience of safety. The university has also provided the basic resources that are needed to complete job tasks, meeting the basic level of expectations in that area.

However, it should be noted that Kahn’s (1990) study did not address the ways in which the variables grouped within each condition combine to create moments of engagement and disengagement – in fact, he identified it as an opportunity for future research. He did note that when the three conditions are viewed together, the strength of one may compensate for the weakness of the others.

Given the mixed nature of the findings, Kahn’s (1990) theory offers up what might be categorized as a word of warning. At the close of his study, Kahn (1990) specified that a strong experience in one of the categories may have the power to overcome a low score in another (which seems to have occurred in this study). Therefore an employee with a strong personal commitment to the mission of their organization may continue to be engaged due to the strong sense of meaning they feel in the role. However, Kahn (1990) also notes that employees may have minimum thresholds for each category. If these minimum levels are not met or begin to decline, a high score in one category will no longer lead to personal engagement or investment of self.

The consequences of this should not be overlooked. When employees become disengaged, they act as “custodians rather than innovators” (700), which is not ideal in an academic environment. According to Kahn (1990), disengaged employees become “physically uninvolved in tasks, cognitively unvigilant, and emotionally disconnected from others in ways that hide what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connection to others” (p. 702). In the context of this study, a disengaged adjunct may still continue to “show up” and teach to the basic letter of their contract, but they are not likely to
provide a strong student experience or create innovative learning opportunities in the classroom. This same consequence is also echoed in the literature, which will be discussed in the next section.

**Findings in the Context of the Literature**

**Finding 1: Meaningfulness and community.** The first finding in this study presents some interesting confirmations and departures from the current literature on adjunct faculty. One of the main findings from the literature review in Chapter 2 was that adjuncts experience a low level of engagement and job satisfaction. But Finding 1 suggests that participants experienced a high level of meaningfulness, which is directly related to a positive experience of engagement and job satisfaction. This may be because the literature that supports the finding did not focus on adjunct practitioners specifically, but on adjunct faculty as a whole. However, the literature in this area is conflicted; some studies found that adjuncts did possess a certain level of satisfaction, otherwise they would not continue to teach (Anthony & Hayden, 2011). But this study supports the idea that adjunct practitioners may experience a higher level of engagement and satisfaction than involuntary adjunct faculty (those adjuncts who would rather be full-time professors and teach part-time because it is their only option).

This study also gave rise to another distinction from the literature: that adjunct practitioners may consider full-time teaching to be a future career goal. The literature that provides a definition for voluntary part-time faculty does not include this idea – Liftig (2014), for example, defined practitioners as not wanting current full-time teaching employment at all. While this is partially accurate for this study’s participants (none specified that they would trade their current full-time job for teaching at the time of the interviews), it does not capture the fact that most participants desire to become full-time faculty members sometime down the road.
Here, teaching represents the culmination of their professional careers. In terms of creating faculty development programs, this is a crucial distinction. Instead of viewing adjuncts as temporary contract employees, they should be viewed as long-term investments by the institution. Building a community with these faculty members then becomes that much more important.

Finding 1 also confirms the idea that adjunct faculty are not so different from full-time faculty in their motivation and reasons for teaching (Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Participants in this study noted a high level of intrinsic motivation to educate and share knowledge with students, and to continue their own learning in the field. This emphasis on intrinsic motivation echoes what has been documented in the literature. Gorozidis and Papaioannou (2014), for example, also documented these factors, though their study did not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary adjunct faculty members (as with the majority of studies in the current literature). This study therefore helps validate this finding for adjunct practitioners, specifically.

Participants also noted the lack of community and feelings of isolation/invisibility that have been documented in numerous other studies. In truth, this may be one of the most concerning issues observed in the literature. This study found that participants experienced a lack of community with other faculty and the institution, and possessed strong feelings of isolation and invisibility. This is consistent with some of the earliest works on the topic; as introduced in Gappa and Leslie’s (1993) seminar work, The Invisible Faculty, “part-timers have strong feelings about whether they are or are not ‘connected’ to or ‘integrated’ into campus life. For the most part, they feel powerless, alienated, invisible, and second class” (p. 180). This experience has been continually noted in research throughout the years, and there has been little to suggest that conditions have improved. The literature continues to highlight the significant distance adjuncts
perceive between themselves and the institutions they serve (Jolley, et al., 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Rogers, 2015), as does this study.

Therefore this finding regarding lack of community is consistent with what has been observed in the literature. Participants’ emphasis on feeling overlooked or ignored is thus not surprising. However, this study does capture a strong desire for inclusion in a community of practice with other faculty and the administration that is not always noted in the literature. What is more commonly noted is the numerous barriers adjuncts face when trying to integrate with the institution. Data in this study suggests that adjuncts are willing to overcome these barriers if the promise of community exists on the other side. This is an important thread to follow, as other studies found that schools could increase engagement by making a bigger effort to increase adjunct integration into the academic community (Akroyd et al., 2013).

**Finding 2: Safety and security.** The literature suggests that there is a great deal of variation in the role of adjuncts and their relationship with institutions. This is due to the nature of part-time faculty employment, which has little consistency across the board in terms of how the adjunct role is defined. The literature also notes the limitations that come with at-will or contract employment, including a lack of long-term security or expectations for future employment. Participants in this study also noted these limitations, and lamented the lack of future security and clear guidelines for performance. They also highlighted a lack of feedback and evaluation from the institution, which translated to feelings of insecurity about their teaching ability and future employability.

Interestingly enough, the administrators interviewed for this study described something different; according to them, expectations for adjunct performance are clearly established in policy documents. They pointed to the faculty manual and course contracts for guidance on what
adjuncts should expect and how they should perform. These documents were also reviewed in this study, and they revealed some contradictory elements. They make it clear that adjuncts are at-will employees without guarantee of future employment.

This is consistent with other studies, which have found that part-time faculty appointments are made and terminated with limited faculty input (Park, Sine, & Tolbert, 2011), and that institutions often make little or no long-term commitment to adjuncts or their work (Kezar & Sam, 2013). The documents also set forth evaluation processes that should provide the adjunct with feedback on their teaching. However, they don’t make it clear how the adjunct might be offered future course assignments, and instead leave it to the chair or supervisor to make those determinations. Even though administrators pointed to policy documents for clarity, the documents themselves don’t provide much in the way of specific guidance. And indeed, the participants who felt more secure in their roles linked this to a productive relationship with their supervisor or department chair. No participant mentioned the faculty manual, course contracts, or any other policy document during their interview. This suggests that documents alone are not sufficient in setting clear performance and role expectations.

Another adjunct pain point noted in the literature is the lack of additional compensation for activities that go beyond basic teaching duties, like curriculum or course development. This was also described by participants, several of whom wanted to develop or update course curriculum but were unwilling to do so without an additional stipend.

This ties into a significant issue surrounding adjunct employment: unfair compensation. Numerous articles and studies have found that adjuncts feel they are being taken advantage of by administrations in completing more work for less pay, or being expected to do unpaid academic work in order to keep receiving contracts. BU policy documents state that adjuncts are required
to update curriculum in order to keep it current, and note that a development stipend may be issued – however, they do not describe the amount of work required to warrant a stipend. Again, this is left up to the administration.

While the adjuncts investigated in this study can be considered voluntary part-time faculty, their experience in this area is not so different from involuntary part-time faulty. Looking at the literature, it is clear that adjuncts across the board suffer from feeling invisible, insecure in their roles, and concerned about their future with their institution. In some cases, these feelings are mediated by a strong relationship with management, but the literature suggests that this is not the norm. The norm, it seems, is a lack of long-term security and effective evaluation or feedback on teaching ability. Participants in this study did seem to experience security fears to a lesser degree because they were all employed full-time in industries outside teaching. However, the fact that these concerns are still strongly documented in this study suggests that safety and security are significant issues for voluntary and involuntary adjunct faculty alike. After all, it is not just financial security that’s at stake, but confidence and identity as well.

**Finding 3: Resources and development.** The third finding for this study is consistent with the literature concerning adjunct training and development. It also suggests that faculty training and development programs for adjuncts are still a work in progress. All study participants indicated a desire to participate in faculty events and programs to a greater degree than they currently do. Several participants stated that they did not consider themselves to be an “engaged faculty member” because they were unable to participate in meetings or activities outside teaching.
This is consistent with other studies which also found that adjuncts wanted to participate more, but were limited by barriers (Beem, 2002; Grant, 2002; Martinak et al., 2006). These barriers include time (Magda, et al., 2015) and the need to balance a full-time workload (Hoyle, 2010; Serdenciuc, 2013). In this study, the most commonly-noted barrier was time and location – participants felt they had little time to spend on meetings or activities that were not directly related to teaching. They also felt that not being able to get to campus for events was a significant factor, especially since remote attendance options were not often offered (for faculty retreats, dinners, and so on). This study found that participants did want to join in these activities, but were either physically unable to do so (due to physical location), or did not have the available mental energy to do so (considering all their other personal and professional obligations). This is consistent with several studies, which suggested that if adjuncts choose to teach for personal or professional enrichment, not being available outside of class may be due to personal or professional barriers rather than personal desire (Beem, 2002; Martinak, Karlsson, Faricloth, & Witcher, 2006).

In terms of faculty training programs and resources, participants described a positive experience that is not consistent with the literature. Most studies have noted a need for greater support for teaching, both in the classroom and with learning technologies. In this study, participants did not note a lack of knowledge concerning basic teaching duties, as other studies have found (Christensen, 2008; Forbes et al., 2010; Jacoby, 2006). Adjuncts lacking instructional knowledge or skills is an area of great concern in the literature, and is often one of the main reasons cited for a decline in overall student outcomes, retention, and academic integrity that has been associated with the increase in adjunct faculty employment (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008;

One of the main reasons that participants seemed to have a more positive experience in this area was the support provided by BU’s eLearning team. Not only was this team described as providing a high level of tech support for the learning platform, they also helped participants provide a better learning experience for students. Instructional designers had helped several participants design new curriculum or implement innovative learning tools in their classes. Beyond that, the eLearning staff made participants feel that they were completely supported in their teaching, even if they didn’t have a close relationship with their department chairs or other faculty. This finding suggests that a strong support staff can have a major impact on the way adjuncts view the quality and availability of resources. It also highlights an area where BU excels in their support of faculty, particularly those who teach online.

The literature on faculty training and development has shown that institutions can make better use of their adjunct faculty members if they are adequately trained and have access to university resources (Openshaw, 2011). Research has also shown that one of the chief ways to increase faculty member satisfaction and engagement is through the use of training and development programs (Beem, 2002; Christensen, 2008; Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Akroyd, et al. (2013), for example, found that faculty members who felt that their institution supported teaching through development and training programs were more likely to make use of new and existing instructional technologies. This finding validates the literature, and suggests that strong instructional support allowed participants expand their teaching skills and increase confidence in the classroom.
While this finding suggests that BU provides strong support in certain areas, it also highlights the need for more development opportunities for adjunct faculty. The literature suggests that, for adjuncts, development is tied to community. Adjuncts do not always want more training (as found in this study), but they do want more development in terms of their career and their interactions with other faculty. When participants in this study described their ideal development program offerings, they spoke to the need for a community of practice. This included interaction with other part-time and full-time faculty. They also wanted more information on how they might become a full-time faculty member in the future, so more information in terms of long-term career growth. They also wanted to know more about current educational theories and research (less focus on how to use certain tools, for example, but more emphasis on adult learning theory or other areas of education research). The faculty retreats offered at BU are designed to hit on these areas, but again the on-campus location meant most participants could not attend.

The literature also reminds institutions of the importance of these offerings. Research has shown that one of the chief ways to increase faculty member satisfaction and engagement is through the use of training and development programs (Beem, 2002; Christensen, 2008; Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). If they want to improve the adjunct experience, then an investment in such programs is a logical step in the right direction. How an institution might accomplish this is discussed in the next section.

**Implications for Practice**

As stated in the purpose statement, the ultimate goal of this study is to improve the adjunct experience, with a focus on the needs of adjunct practitioners. This study has also chosen to narrow in on the institution as the source of change, since adequate institutional support for
adjuncts is an area of historically poor performance. To do this, the findings necessitate three implications. First, institutions must provide adjuncts with more opportunities for integration and participation within the university community. Second, institutions must increase clarity around work expectations and degree programs. And third, institutions must provide greater security in terms of course contracts and scheduling. These implications apply to this specific case study, but are also relevant to any institution that chooses to employ adjunct practitioners within their faculty.

It should be noted here that these implications are designed with the assumption that the administration (including the administrative support staff as well as the faculty in leadership positions) is responsible for the support and development of all their faculty, including part-timers. While each group may have different needs or objectives, the level of support should not decrease simply because one group is full-time and other is part-time. To assign a lesser level or quality of support to a group because of their employment status is not only bad business, it is unethical, and, as some have argued, potentially discriminatory. Considering that adjuncts form the majority of instructors at a growing number of institutions, like BU, they can and should no longer be swept under the rug. With the rise in part-time faculty unions and bargaining units, these issues will be addressed in the coming years whether administrations are prepared to deal with them or not. This study urges administrations to consider being in the former group, rather than the latter.

That being said, great strides can be made to improve the adjunct experience at BU – as well as at other sites with similar conditions – without a massive increase in cost or administrative burden. Even small efforts, like opening the channels of communication or scheduling short check-in phone calls, can have a significant impact in terms of adjunct
engagement. As Kahn (1990) noted at the end of his article, “focusing on specific moments of work role performance is like using the zoom lens of a camera: a distant stationary image if brought close and revealed as a series of innumerable leaps of engagement and falls of disengagement” (p. 719). Camera in hand, the following implications for practice are designed to take a closer look at specific opportunities for change and improvement in the adjunct experience.

More opportunities for integration and participation within the university community. It is clear from this study that community is an important aspect of the adjunct experience. Participants described feeling disconnected and isolated from the university, and noted a lack of interaction with the administration and other faculty. Jonathan, for example, stated that “heroic efforts” were needed in order to integrate adjuncts into the university. This lack of integration is also clearly observed in the literature. Therefore it is essential that more opportunities for community are provided, with the goal of lessening the perceived distance between adjunct faculty members and the academic/institutional community.

First, the institution must make electronic participation a standard practice. Without options for remote attendance, there will be no improvement for the adjuncts who are not able to come to campus due to the requirements of their full-time job, their physical location, or their outside lives – and in this study, data has shown that this is the majority of participants. Making sure web conferencing is available and effectively managed for campus meetings is a straightforward first step. However, remote attendance should also be offered for events, including appreciation dinners or award ceremonies. If an adjunct is nominated for an award, they should be able to receive it even if they are not able to attend in-person. In-person training or development sessions (retreats, etc.) should be recorded and made available for adjuncts to
view on-demand. BU might also consider holding simultaneous faculty events at multiple sites, with video conferencing to draw connections between locations. This may require an investment from the university in terms of technology and support, but it will demonstrate the university’s commitment to remote faculty.

Second, the administration needs to make a greater effort to reach out and engage with adjuncts. This can be as small as asking all department chairs to schedule regular check-ins with their faculty, either in a group meeting or one-on-one. Such meetings can be quick, conducted via a web conferencing tool or a simple phone call. (Though chairs would be encouraged to use tools that allow attendees to see each other over webcam to make the process feel more personal). Data suggests that adjuncts would welcome these meetings or conversations at the beginning of the term, when they may have questions about students, grading policies, etc. At the very least, chairs should be reaching out to all adjuncts regarding their course evaluations, even if everything is going well and scores were positive. If chairs are considering changing a textbook or making other curricular changes, they should gather feedback from the adjuncts who teach those courses. This will provide adjuncts with the sense that someone thinking of them, even if there is limited time to connect in-person.

Third, the university should help facilitate a community of practice amongst their faculty. Participants noted a very low level of interaction between faculty members at BU (if any at all), and noted a desire to interact with both part- and full-time faculty. They asked for a space where faculty can share ideas, experiences, and best practices. A combination of an online community (a la LinkedIn, Facebook, or other social networking sites) and varied development activities (learning opportunities, workshops, or lectures) have been shown to be effective in engaging a diverse population of instructors. This need is in-line with current theories regarding faculty
development, where such programs have been found to increase faculty engagement, sense of community, and instructional skillsets, and to provide a value-add for the institution as a whole (Rutz et al., 2012). Again, these interactions should be accessible to remote and in-person faculty, and they should be both formal and informal, allowing for multiple types of communication, depending on the situation. BU will need to gather data on the current tools they possess that would help facilitate these interactions, and consider the technology needs that they will have in the future. Allocations for these tools should be incorporated into the institution’s strategic planning and budgeting process.

Given the focus that BU places on practice-based curriculum, the institution would also benefit from more widespread information on instructors and their professional backgrounds. Several participants noted that they currently rely on their own professional networks in creating curriculum, and often struggle in coming up with ideas for guest lecturers and field-based assignment ideas. But given how many adjunct practitioners BU employs, a deep bench of knowledge amongst the faculty is not being utilized. Creating an online directory of current faculty and their areas of experience/expertise may also be helpful to administrators, as they think about future course topics or teaching assignments. This may also help increase adjunct visibility, especially if adjuncts can easily update their profile/listing with current information, projects, and accomplishments. A more user-friendly platform could then ease the administrative burden associated with increased community and development opportunities.

**Increase clarity around work expectations and degree programs.** A lack of clarity and consistency regarding the adjunct role and performance expectations is not unique to BU. However, this lack becomes particularly problematic when the faculty population in question does not consist of full-time educators. As revealed by the data, some participants felt they
lacked experience dealing with student concerns, or were unsure of how their particular course fit into the various programs. This contributed to an overall poor sense of role clarity. Since adjunct practitioners have limited time to devote to teaching, they require easily digestive, clear, and accessible information. Despite the existence of faculty policies at BU, data suggests there is room for improvement.

There are two major areas for improvement in this category. The first involves curriculum development. Participants highlighted curriculum work as a particular pain point, as several were unsure of how much work was expected as part of the basic teaching contract. While the policy documents at BU specify that curriculum should be updated every term, it does not quantify the amount of work required, and what quantity would automatically warrant an additional development stipend. This leaves it open to each department or school to define the scope of work. As a result, some adjuncts may be performing more development work than others, especially if they are enthusiastic about teaching.

This enters difficult territory that may take advantage of adjunct’s motivation to teach. Adjuncts may also feel afraid to ask for development money, perceiving a risk to their future employment. On the other side, some adjuncts may not be updating curriculum as needed because of time constraints, as they often have little advanced notice or prep time before beginning a course (Duncan, 1999; Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Outdated curriculum ultimately has a negative impact on the student experience, therefore clear language defining what constitutes development work and what warrants a development stipend should be provided. It should be vetted by the faculty senate (by both the full- and part-time faculty members) and be presented by leadership to faculty as part of their onboarding process. While some development
work is unavoidable (updating basic course info, etc.), every effort should be made to respect adjuncts’ time outside the classroom.

The second area for improvement here involves programmatic information. In order to give adjuncts a better sense of how their course fits into the overall degree program(s), the institution must provide more information about each program and its requirements. For example, one participant in this study was unsure of where her class fell into the program sequence, and was not sure what skills her students were expected to have at that point. Another participant was told that the student needed a certain grade in the course in order to move on, and wasn’t sure if it was true or not.

This is essential information for an instructor. A simple outline of learning outcomes for the course does not necessarily tell the instructor the skill level of their students, or how their course builds on student competencies. Unless the instructor is teaching an intro-level or capstone course, this information may not be readily available. It is also not reasonable to expect an adjunct to try and navigate the university website to gather information from multiple pages. Therefore the institution should offer a faculty-facing document that specifies 1) their course’s learning outcomes, 2) how their course fits into the overall degree/program sequence and/or sample degree timeline, and 3) the scaffolding of student competencies throughout the program (where skills are introduced, practiced, mastered). This will allow instructors to create more targeted curriculum and may help with grading consistency.

Provide greater security in terms of course contracts and scheduling. Adjunct security is one of the hottest topics in the academic world. Though data has suggested that adjunct practitioners experience more security than those instructors who survive on part-time roles, they still experience many of the same fears and anxieties. Despite having taught for the
institution for an extended time, participants in this study were not overly confident regarding future security – they weren’t sure if they were performing well, or if they would continue to be offered courses. The literature suggests that this type of insecurity leads to disengagement. For an institution that relies on adjunct practitioners for the majority of course assignments, this is a troubling phenomenon.

One way that the institution may ease this insecurity is by offering long-term teaching contracts. This is not an entirely foreign practice, as other large university systems have begun offering multiple-term and year contracts, often as a result of union negotiations. In some cases, veteran part-time faculty were given multiple-year courses that guarantee pay for several courses a year (Williams June, 2017). Multi-year contracts may not be feasible for a smaller institution like BU, but considering the majority of participants taught the same courses year after year, it does not seem extraordinary to provide more year-long security. These contracts would still be dependent on enrollment and other factors (as they are now) but would allow adjuncts to have more long-term planning in terms of actual scheduling as well as career-planning.

This will, of course, require more planning and foresight on the university’s part, but it may also help stabilize the process of assigning instructors. If an instructor teaches the same course every term, it is logical to provide them with a bit more predictability up-front. At the end of the day, adjunct contracts are at-will (dependent on enrollment and such) but this extra clarity demonstrates the institution’s commitment to their adjunct faculty. It may also encourage more participation from adjuncts who are not teaching at that moment but are scheduled to teach in a future term. They may be more invested in maintaining a connection with the university over time.
Areas for Future Research

This study’s findings and implications for practice give rise to a number of areas for future research. The first area regards Kahn’s (1990) engagement theory. As noted above, Kahn (1990) did not address how the combination of the three domains might impact engagement. In this study, a strong experience of meaningfulness seems to have tipped the scales in favor of engagement, but it would be interesting to explore this phenomenon over time. If adjuncts are likely to lose meaning over time, for example, institutions need to consider how to increase or build on intrinsic motivation. While numerous studies have expanded on Kahn’s (1990) original theory, none have examined adjunct faculty engagement in this way. Given the unique nature of part-time academic employment, how scores in each domain affect the experience of engagement seems particularly important, especially when thinking about how to maintain engagement over time.

The second area regards adjunct practitioners as a group that spans multiple institutions and institution types. This study intended to provide insight into their experience, but it is only a drop in the bucket. Though it is not often distinguished in every study, there are, in truth, two main groups of part-time faculty: voluntary and involuntary (or, adjunct practitioners and freeway flyers). When considering the use of adjuncts and the associated employment practices, it can be hard to rationalize the use of involuntary part-time faculty as a replacement for full-timers – the life of a freeway flyer is not enviable. However, voluntary adjuncts can have a legitimate advantage over full-time faculty in certain cases. Employing adjunct practitioners, who bring extensive professional experience and field knowledge into the classroom, is a more justifiable venture for institutions – in their case, teaching part-time is a benefit rather than a
They may not have the negative impact on student outcomes and academic integrity that has been documented in other studies that focus more on the freeway flyer demographic.

However, in order to state this with any certainty, more research is needed into the institutional impact of adjunct practitioners. Studies that examine this phenomenon will likely be incredibly important as the question of adjunct faculty employment continues to be brought under scrutiny by researchers, institutions, and faculty unions.

Building on this, further research into the adjunct practitioner experience at different institution types is also needed. As stated early in Chapter 1, most of the existing research on adjunct faculty focuses on instructors at community colleges or large private state universities serving traditional student populations. However, adjunct practitioners are more commonly employed at adult-serving institutions with practice-based programs (like BU). They do not usually teach general education or lower-division courses (Strope, 2015). Large private universities like Southern New Hampshire and Western Governors University employ hundreds, even thousands of part-time faculty, yet their adjuncts have been largely unstudied in the literature. In order to validate the findings in this study and evaluate their applicability, research must be conducted at other types of institutions employing adjunct practitioners.

Since a qualitative study may not be suited to gathering data at these larger institutions, a large-scale quantitative study may be a strong next step. Research conducted within a larger group of adjunct practitioners will provide greater insight into their experience, and continue to deepen the knowledge in this field.

The third area for future research concerns contracts and unionization. As stated above, a large percentage of part-time faculty across the U.S. are beginning the process of becoming unionized, if they are not unionized already. As is did with other industries like manufacturing,
unions will have a massive impact on faculty employment practices in the future (particularly with the issue of a living wage for adjuncts, and how that impact the cost savings that adjuncts currently offer).

While some research has been done into the impact of full-time faculty unions and collective bargaining, little has been done concerning part-time faculty and unions. Considering this study’s focus specifically, the question becomes: how does unionization impact the adjunct experience? How does it impact adjunct practitioners, since they do not share all the same concerns as involuntary part-time faculty? Can it decrease insecurity and help foster a sense of community? Does the unionization process impact or improve engagement over time? These are questions that have yet to be answered.

Along these lines, part-time faculty contracts are another area for investigation. Though one suggestion for long-term contracts was presented above, other institutions may already be offering unique contact options to their faculty, particularly those that are already unionized. Information into what types of contracts are currently or have been offered, and how the institution or administration has been impacted would be valuable to the adjunct employment conversation.

The final area for future research concerns tools and technology, specifically as they relate to faculty development. This study recommended that institutions create opportunities for community-building and interaction amongst faculty using online social networking or collaboration tools. In researching existing faculty development programs however, this was a gap in the literature. While some schools are using online platforms for training and development (usually through the Learning Management System or the employee intranet), the platforms themselves were not the focus of the research. Therefore it would be interesting to gather data on
what tools are currently being used by institutions, and what features would be necessary or useful in thinking about the design of future tools. Given the industry’s focus on online education and accessibility, a study that focuses on online tools and technology for faculty training and development would be both timely and valuable.

**Limitations**

Despite attempts to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of this study, limitations remain. Though every attempt was made to secure variety within the participant pool, this does not mean that the resultant data reflects the experience of every adjunct practitioner employed at the study site. Since participation in the study was completely voluntary, the adjuncts that did choose to participate may possess a higher level of engagement than those who did not respond to the recruitment email. (As with other employee engagement studies, it is difficult to gather voluntary data from disengaged employees, who are, by way of being disengaged, less likely to participate in the process.) The timing of the study also impacted which adjuncts were currently teaching, and thereby checking their BU email regularly. For this reason, the study likely did not reach every possible participant that met the selection criteria. The same can be said for the secondary group of participants (administrators), which was also limited by time and recruitment processes.

This study is also limited by the theoretical framework. A framework by definition narrows the scope of investigation, and in this study, Kahn’s (1990) theory provided a definition of personal engagement that does not encompass every individual experience of engagement in the workplace. The three domains were used to guide data collection as well as data analysis and presentation. This study therefore cannot speak to other aspects of engagement that are not addressed or contained by the three domains. As consistent with employee engagement as a field
of research, data may be subjective and related to the institutional context of the study (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

While a case study approach was chosen to help overcome the subjectivity and contextual limitations mentioned above (Merriam, 1998), methodology remains a limiting factor. Though case studies may help illuminate a general problem and lead to generalizations that may allow for the future replication of results (Baharein Mohd Noor, 2008; Merriam, 1998), data is not necessarily applicable to all cases. This study cannot speak to the experience of all adjunct practitioners, particularly those who work under different conditions. The boundaries of the case (study population, site, and institutional context) will ultimately impact how applicable findings will be to other institutions or studies.

The final limitation in this study relates to the overall research tradition. As a qualitative project, this study emphasized individual experience (Creswell, 2007). While these experiences may be diverse, the analysis of this study was more focused on commonalities rather than differences, and used these commonalities to draw larger conclusions. It also considered institutional context. While divergent experiences may also reveal conclusions about the experience of adjunct practitioners, they were not fully examined here. This type of intensive evaluation of individual experience would be more suited to a different approach, such as phenomenology or interpretive phenomenological analysis (Creswell, 2007).

**Final Conclusions**

“Our students are worth investing in the people who teach them”

- Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress at CUNY (June, 2017, p. 1)
The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a specific university. The study was framed by Kahn’s (1990) theory of employee engagement, which provided a definition of engagement as well as three specific domains for investigation. Due to the study’s focus on employee engagement, which encompasses experience and institutional context, case study was the chosen methodology. Case study allowed this project to focus on a specific group of adjunct faculty, to focus on individual as well as contextual factors, and to help overcome the limitations of focusing on a small group of participants. This framework and methodology led also to the collection of data from three sources (interviews with two groups of participants and a document review), which helped ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

Analysis revealed a number of themes, which represented data regarding the adjunct experience as viewed through Kahn’s (1990) domains of engagement. These themes support three major findings, which provide insight into the central research question. First, participants feel teaching is personally meaningful, though they lack a sense of community with other faculty and the institution as a whole. Second, participants do not feel entirely secure in their roles and are concerned about their future security with the institution. And third, participants believe they possess the necessary basic resources to perform their role, but would appreciate more accessible development opportunities. These findings align with the literature on the adjunct experience in terms of motivation, engagement and participation, as well as the need for greater support and security. They also represent the ways in which the experience of adjunct practitioners may be different from that of other groups of adjunct faculty (including involuntary adjuncts).

Additionally, these findings build on current scholarship in this field, and provide recommendations for improving the experience for adjunct practitioners with an eye to
increasing their engagement. First, institutions must provide adjuncts with more opportunities for integration and participation within the university community. Second, institutions must increase clarity around work expectations and student outcomes. And third, institutions must provide greater security in terms of course contracts and scheduling.

This study emerged as a result of the changing faculty demographic in the United States. There is little chance that things will ever return to the way they once were – the culture of education has shifted away from a model that supports only full-time faculty employment. This has led to a great deal of controversy, as many question whether or not adjunct faculty have had a positive impact on education. The ethical issues surrounding part-time academic employment, particularly economic ones, have not been sufficiently addressed by institutions. Unionization and protests will likely increase as a result.

This study does not suggest that institutions should employ part-time faculty as a replacement for full-time faculty. However, it also does not suggest that all faculty roles should be full time, as adjunct practitioners play an important role in education. In practice-based programs, instructors actively employed in the field can create powerful learning experiences for students.

But it is time for change. If schools decide to employ adjunct practitioners, they must provide adequate support and help foster the conditions for engagement. Institutions must accept that if they are going to employ adjuncts for specific educational reasons, they need to make investments into their wellbeing and development. If not, institutional effectiveness and student satisfaction will remain under threat.

Colleges and universities play an incredibly important role in the education of the U.S. population. They not only teach subject-matter, they help students of many ages gain valuable
skills like critical thinking, communication, and ethical judgement. When higher education is at its very best, it helps transform students into compassionate learners who strive to understand and improve the world around them. What then does it say when schools employ instructors without applying the same principles they desire to instill in their students? To put it another way, if these institutions do not practice what they preach, how can we claim that education is the greatest humanizing force in the world? How can we say that education fights discrimination? In considering adjunct faculty, institutions must take care of their own if they want to truly make an impact on society, and ensure that higher education has a place in the days to come.


Teaching contract. (August 27, 2017). [Bay University].


Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Adjunct Practitioners

Time of interview:
Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee: [Adjunct Practitioner]

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a mid-sized, private university on the West Coast. Data collection will include individual interviews with two groups of participants: adjunct faculty members (primary group) and academic administrators (secondary group). Interviews with adjuncts will last approximately 1.5 hours, and interviews with administrators will last approximately 45 minutes.

**Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-10 minutes).** Build rapport, describe the study, and answer any questions (informed consent form will be reviewed and signed here).

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. You have been asked to do this interview because you have been identified as an adjunct practitioner, the primary group under investigation in this study. My research project focuses on instructors, like you, who are experts in their field and teach part-time. For this study, I am focusing on adjuncts teaching in practice-based programs such as business, accounting, taxation, marketing, etc. – any program at this university excepting law. Through this study, I hope to gain insight into your experience as a part-time academic worker.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? *(If yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment.)* I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that your responses and any associated data will be kept confidential, and a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. In addition, every effort will be made to redact any personal information that could be identifying, such as exact courses taught, etc. The audio files will be transcribed using a professional transcription service using a pseudonym. The audio recordings will also be destroyed after they are transcribed. Finally, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript in order to ensure your responses have been accurately captured.

To meet our ethics requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (see Appendix C). Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process, this form, or how your data will be used?
I have planned this interview to last approximately one and a half hours. During this time, I have several questions I would like to cover. I would like to be respectful of your time, but if you feel you have more to say on this topic, your responses are welcome. Do you have any questions at this time? *(If no, proceed.)*

**Part II:** Objectives (30 - 40 minutes): Obtain the participant’s insights, in his/her own words, into their experience as an adjunct faculty member working at the study site.

*Prefatory Statement:* I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words. After gathering some brief background information, I am going to ask you some questions about your role as an adjunct faculty member at this university.

**Background Information**

What is your professional background?

What led you to work in higher education, and why did you decide to become a part-time faculty member?

How many years have you been teaching? How many years at this institution?

Have you considered becoming a full-time faculty member?

What faculty training or development efforts have you participated in?

   *Probe:* Were any of them at this university?

**Motivation and Engagement**

1. What are your reasons for teaching?

2. How do you view your role as an educator at the university?

3. What does employee engagement for a faculty member mean to you?

   *Probe:* When have you been most engaged, when not?

4. How do you feel you have been engaged or are currently engaged by this institution?

   *Probe:* What has the institution, dept, other faculty done to make you feel engaged?

5. How secure do you feel in your role as an adjunct?
6. How personally meaningful is your work as an adjunct?
   Probe: Tell me about a time when you felt like your work as an instructor really made an impact.
   Probe: What do you find rewarding, what not?

7. Do you feel like you have the necessary mental and physical resources to do your job?

   **Training, Development, and Support**

8. What training programs would you like to see offered by university and why?
   Probe: Is there a particular area of your employment where you feel you lack expertise?

9. What development programs would you like to see offered by the university, and why?
   Probe: What skills would you like to develop further as an educator?
   Probe: Is there an area where you feel particularly supported as an adjunct?
   Probe: Is there an area where you feel particularly unsupported as an adjunct?

10. Finally, how would you define your relationship as an adjunct faculty member with this institution?

   *Wrap up – That concludes the questions for today’s interviews. Before we wrap up, do you have any questions or additional comments?*

   *Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research study.*
Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Academic Administrators

Time of interview:
Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee: [Academic Administrator]

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experience of adjunct practitioners working in practice-based programs at a mid-sized, private university on the West Coast. Data collection will include individual interviews with two groups of participants: adjunct faculty members (primary group) and academic administrators (secondary group). Interviews with adjuncts will last approximately 1.5 hours, and interviews with administrators will last approximately 45 minutes.

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-10 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, and answer any questions (informed consent form will be reviewed and signed here).

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. You have been asked to do this interview because you have been identified as someone who has insight into the employment, engagement, and job performance of adjunct faculty members at this university. My research project focuses on the experience of a particular group of faculty called adjunct practitioners – instructors who are experts in their field and choose to teach part-time. These instructors are often employed in practice-based programs, such as business, nursing, etc. Through this study, I hope to gain insight into their experience, particularly how they experience engagement as part-time academic workers.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? (If yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment.) I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that your responses and any associated data will be kept confidential, and a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The audio files will be transcribed using a professional transcription service using a pseudonym. The audio recordings will also be destroyed after they are transcribed. Finally, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript in order to ensure your responses have been accurately captured.

To meet our ethics requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (see Appendix D). Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process, this form, or how your data will be used?
I have planned this interview to last approximately forty-five minutes. During this time, I have several questions I would like to cover. I would like to be respectful of your time, but if you feel you have more to say on this topic, your responses are welcome. Do you have any questions at this time? (If no, proceed.)

**Part II:** Objectives (30 - 40 minutes): Obtain the participant’s insights, in his/her own words, into their experience working with adjunct faculty members and their expectations and perceptions regarding adjunct faculty engagement and job performance.

Prefatory Statement: I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words. After gathering some brief background information, I am going to ask you some questions about your expectations and perceptions regarding adjunct faculty members.

**Background Information**

Briefly, what is your background and what led you to working in higher education?

What is your current role at the university?

What are your responsibilities, both from an administrative and leadership perspective, concerning adjunct and full-time faculty?

How do you interact with adjunct faculty members in your current role?

**Central Questions**

1. What are the basic expectations of performance you have for adjunct faculty?
   Probe: Does this align with university policy regarding the part-time faculty role?

2. Tell me about a time when an adjunct faculty member went beyond your expectations – what occurred?
   Probe: What was your reaction?

3. On the other side, tell me about a time when an adjunct faculty member did not you’re your expectations – what was the situation there?
   Probe: What was your reaction?

4. In general, how would you rate the engagement of adjunct faculty members?
   Probe: How does this compare to your estimation of full-time faculty?
5. Please describe the performance of your ideal adjunct faculty member.  
   Probe: Can you tell me about a time when you thought an adjunct was particularly engaged in their work?  
   Probe: What do you think contributed to this?

6. What is the administration of the university doing to create or advance adjunct faculty engagement?  
   Probe: What more could be done?

7. How would you define an adjunct faculty member’s relationship with this institution?

Wrap up – That concludes the questions for today’s interviews. Before we wrap up, do you have any questions or additional comments?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research study.