

“Assistant Professor with an Asterisk”:
Conflicting Tensions in the Workplace
Experiences and Professional Identities of
University Faculty on Fixed-Term Contracts

KEVIN GOSINE
Brock University

ROBERT KRISTOFFERSON
Wilfrid Laurier University

GLENN SKRUBBELTRANG
Brock University

MICHELLE WEBBER
Brock University

Abstract: Drawing on identity work theory and social capital theory, this qualitative study explores how Canadian university faculty on fixed-term contracts construct their professional identities in response to the opportunities and limitations associated with their employment. Study participants generally appreciate their remuneration, relative professional autonomy, the control they have over the products of their labour, and the opportunity to teach at the postsecondary level. Positive aspects of their employment, however, were undercut by various professional limitations. These limitations include job precarity, little acknowledgement of their contributions to their fields or to their universities, limited access to research funding, and the challenge of building bonding (i.e., intra-institutional) social capital. The perceived disconnect between participants’ professional qualifications and the precarity of their employment situation further undermines their ability to cultivate positive professional identities. Participants negotiate the contradictory tensions of their employment via one or more of the following adaptive strategies: 1) pursuing research as best they can given prevailing obstacles; 2) making teaching the focal point of their

Journal of Educational Thought

Vol. 54, No 2, 2021, 123-156.

professional identities; and 3) utilizing bridging social capital to create opportunities and forge connections beyond the university. Future research directions are discussed.

Résumé : S'appuyant sur la théorie du travail identitaire et la théorie du capital social, cette étude qualitative explore la façon dont les professeurs d'université canadienne sous contrat à durée déterminée construisent leur identité professionnelle en réponse aux possibilités et aux limites associées à leur emploi. Les participants de l'étude apprécient généralement leur rémunération, leur autonomie professionnelle, le contrôle qu'ils exercent sur l'impact de leur travail et la possibilité d'enseigner au niveau postsecondaire. Toutefois, les aspects positifs de leur emploi sont compromis par diverses limitations professionnelles. Ces limites comprennent la précarité de leur emploi, la faible reconnaissance de leurs contributions à leurs domaines ou à leurs universités, l'accès limité au financement de la recherche et la difficulté d'établir des liens (c.-à-d. intra-institutionnels) en matière de capital social. La déconnexion perçue entre les qualifications professionnelles des participants et la précarité de leur situation d'emploi mine davantage leur capacité à cultiver des identités professionnelles positives. Les participants négocient les tensions contradictoires de leur emploi au moyen d'une ou de plusieurs des stratégies d'adaptation suivantes : 1) poursuivre la recherche du mieux qu'ils peuvent compte tenu des obstacles qui prévalent; 2) faire de l'enseignement le point focal de leur identité professionnelle ; et 3) utiliser le capital social de transition pour créer des possibilités et forger des liens au-delà de l'université. Les orientations futures de la recherche sont abordées.

INTRODUCTION

In light of neoliberal restructuring within Canadian universities, a trend that has resulted in an increased reliance on non-permanent faculty, this article reports findings from a study in which the investigators explored the professional identities and workplace experiences of members of a select subpopulation of these professionals, namely those hired on fixed term contracts (i.e., limited term appointments, or LTAs). While considerable research exists exploring the experiences and morale of contingent and part-time college and university faculty in the U.S., this topic has received considerably less scholarly attention in Canada. Moreover, there is a paucity of research in any context that pointedly examines professional identity construction among full-time faculty who hold

limited term appointments – members of the professoriate who find themselves situated between sessional instructors and tenure-track and tenured faculty. This study represents an exploratory investigation into the ways in which LTA faculty working at two Ontario universities experience their workplace environments and how this influences the cultivation of their professional identities. The research was guided by two broad questions. First, what factors do limited-term university faculty experience in academic settings that enable and constrain their ability to build and sustain positive professional identities? Second, in light of the limitations associated with their jobs, what strategies do limited-term faculty employ to foster positive, or adaptive, professional identities within the context of their precarious employment? For the purposes of this analysis, a positive professional identity refers to one marked by a sense of authenticity and legitimacy and where tensions, ruptures, and contradictions are minimized (see Caza et al, 2018). This study provides important insights into the implications and consequences of neoliberal restructuring within the university system that would be of value to postsecondary educators, university officials, policy makers, and young people in Canada who aspire to academic careers. More specifically, the research raises awareness of the morale of non-tenure stream faculty, the challenges they face, and the “identity work” that they undertake as a consequence. This, in turn, can inform university policies and practices that might aim to productively and equitably include, assess, oversee, acknowledge, and maximize opportunities for precariously employed postsecondary workers. More generally, the study provides insight into the ways in which highly qualified but precariously employed professionals make sense of their employment circumstances, navigate constraints, and make use of available resources and opportunities (however limited they might be) to continually build (and rebuild) adaptive professional identities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Neoliberalism and the Canadian University System

Many scholars researching the neoliberal turn in universities have explored the increase of corporate-university connections, decreased government funding for postsecondary education, and the development of a market culture within our institutions (Acker &

Webber, 2016; Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007; Moffatt et al, 2016; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000; Tuchman, 2009; Waring, 2014). In such a context we see in our universities the proliferation of “business-styled material practices such as accountability processes, standardization measures, performance indicators, and benchmarks” (Moffatt et al, 2016, p. 318). Both economic and cultural shifts in our sector have “repositioned students in the role of consumers/customers and academic faculty are increasingly being treated as contract labourers” (Yee & Wagner, 2013, p. 333). Some researchers have posited that Canadian universities have been slow to keep pace with the changes made in other jurisdictions, primarily because Canada has no federal department of education (Fisher & Rubenson, 1998; Metcalfe, 2010). However, with recent proposals by Conservative governments in both Ontario and Alberta, we are seeing efforts to ramp up a performance-based culture in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Nonetheless, the Canadian professoriate is characterized by a high degree of unionization which offers a layer of protection against government encroachments into our work (Dobbie & Robinson, 2008). Faculty unions and other employee unions on our campuses play an important role in defending the academic mission of universities and foregrounding the importance of defending quality education, academic freedom, shared academic decision-making, as well as fighting the trend toward the casualization of the professoriate (Butovsky, Savage, & Webber, 2015; Webber & Acker, 2012; Webber & Butovsky, 2019).

Job Satisfaction and Workplace Experiences of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

In terms of the overall workplace experiences of part-time and non-tenure stream postsecondary faculty, research shows that such academics typically express concerns regarding workload, lack of acknowledgement for their work, and the hierarchical split between tenured/tenure-stream and non-tenure stream faculty where workers in the latter category envision little opportunity to achieve tenure track positions (Abbas & McLean, 2001; Courtois & O’Keefe, 2015; Levin & Hernandez, 2014; Schwartz, 2014). Indeed, reflecting on the relationship between academic freedom and the proliferating reliance on contingent faculty in US colleges and universities, Smith (2015) observed that heavy teaching loads make it hard for part-time and non-tenure stream faculty to plan a long-term research agenda, make scholarly contributions to their disciplines, and

assemble the publication record required to compete for tenure-stream jobs. Kezar and Sam (2010) demonstrate that work status cleavages among academic faculty (part-time vs. full-time; contract vs. permanent faculty; tenure vs. non-tenure stream) produce an inequitable and, in many cases, uncomfortable work environment for non-tenure track faculty. That noted, Kezar and Sam point to research which highlights some aspects of non-tenure stream postsecondary teaching that workers might view as positive, namely a relatively high degree of job flexibility and having the opportunity to teach and work with students (see also Waltman et al, 2012). However, longitudinal research of the workplace experiences and professional identities of part-time and adjunct postsecondary faculty has revealed that an appreciation for teaching, and the extent to which it mitigates job-related frustrations, can recede over time (Thirolf, 2013).

On matters of departmental and faculty governance, research demonstrates that part-time and non-tenure stream faculty at postsecondary institutions are frequently excluded or, in the interest of self-preservation, exclude themselves. Faculty who are precariously employed often feel that their input is not taken seriously within their departments (Abbas & McLean, 2001; Morrison, 2008). In some cases, they are afraid to speak up and question or resist prevailing institutional practices and decision-making processes for fear of potential repercussions (such as unfavourable course assignments or not having contracts renewed) (Morrison, 2008; Smith 2015). As Smith (2015) notes, in the US, contingent faculty are often hired without a rigorous search process and earn lower salaries, are assigned ill-equipped and unsatisfactory office accommodations, experience taxing teaching loads, and have tenuous job security. Additionally, Smith observes that the exclusion of non-tenure stream faculty from processes of governance further diminishes their status and impedes institutional change, such as that which can heighten inclusion and transparency in decision making (see also Abbas & McLean, 2001; Levin & Hernandez, 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2010).

Despite being employed in positions marked by relatively low pay, a lack of job security, and, in many cases, a relative lack of benefits, a number of quantitative US studies show that many contract and non-tenure stream faculty report being satisfied with their decision to pursue a career in academia (Antony & Hayden, 2011; Eagan et al, 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2010; Kramer et al, 2014; Toutkoushian & Bellas, 2003). Many of these same studies also

show, however, that part-time and non-tenure stream faculty are dissatisfied with many aspects of their jobs (e.g., Eagan et al, 2015; Kramer et al, 2014; Waltman et al, 2012). Drawing on data from a faculty survey consisting of 4,169 faculty members at US postsecondary institutions, Eagan, Jaeger and Grantham (2015) found that part-time faculty, particularly involuntary part-timers (i.e., those dissatisfied with part-time employment), were by and large not satisfied with the relationships they share with administrators and colleagues, workplace collegiality, the degree of professional autonomy they possessed, and leadership. This research also revealed that many part-time faculty infer a lack of respect from full-time colleagues whom they feel do not appreciate their scholarly and workplace contributions (see also Waltman et al, 2012).

Professional Identities of Non-Tenure Track Faculty

There is a dearth of research that specifically explores professional and academic identity construction among contingent and non-tenure stream faculty within postsecondary institutions. In a longitudinal qualitative US study, Thirolf (2013) examined the evolution of the professional identities of part-time community college faculty members over time. Thirolf (2013) found that inequalities in remuneration, course load, and a disconnect from 'real' (full-time tenured or tenure-stream) faculty, which encompassed a perceived lack of respect, negatively impacted the professional identities of part-time faculty. The part-time faculty members who participated in Thirolf's study reported feeling systemically and professionally marginalized and treated as different from their full-time peers, making it difficult to sustain a positive sense of identity as academics and educators. As a consequence, these individuals found themselves increasingly frustrated and isolated as time unfolded (Thirolf, 2013; see also Jamieson & Terrion, 2016). These findings are largely paralleled in a British study conducted by Abbas and McLean (2001), who, specifically looking at sociology faculty, found that the marginal and precarious status of part-time workers adversely affected their ability to achieve professional goals and "develop a secure and satisfying professional identity" (Abbas & McLean, 2001, p. 349). Abbas and McLean (2001) argue that more inclusive workplaces – which would entail part-time faculty having a stronger voice, greater job protections, and more professional development

opportunities – might enable contingent faculty to cultivate stronger professional identities.

In a US study of professional identity construction among part-time faculty across three types of postsecondary institutions, Levin and Hernandez (2014) found that such faculty tended to possess a divided professional consciousness. To varying degrees, part-time faculty managed to maintain a positive sense of professional identity given their role as postsecondary educators and the contributions they perceived themselves as making to the lives of students and the broader society via their teaching. At the same time, part-time workers were found to harbour an ambivalent sense of professional identity within workplace climates that fostered a clear divide between part-time and full-time faculty. In other words, part-time faculty found themselves in an in-between location where they perceived themselves as simultaneously possessing and lacking professional legitimacy and status. The extent to which part-time faculty perceived their professional identities in largely positive or negative terms was contingent on the interplay of several factors: their social locations, personal biographies, stage of career, and professional aspirations (Levin & Hernandez, 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: IDENTITY WORK AND SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

Building a positive professional identity requires ‘work’ (Hyatt & Foster, 2015), particularly when one is employed in a context fraught with constraints and structural curtailments. In this section, we discuss theoretical perspectives that offer insight into how limited-term faculty in Canadian universities might utilize available resources and opportunities to foster positive or, at the very least, adaptive professional identities amidst job-related limitations and obstacles. The theoretical perspectives that inform this study are identity work theory and social capital theory.

Identity Work Theory

Drawing on poststructural perspectives that posit social identity construction as a multifaceted, dynamic, and continual process, identity work theory asserts that individuals perpetually ‘work’ to create positive self-meanings amidst wider contextual backdrops such as their workplaces and professional roles. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) describe identity work as “people being engaged in

forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (p. 1165), with Caza, Vough and Puranik (2018) adding that this agentic work happens “within the boundaries of their social contexts” (p. 895). Broadly summarized, this theoretical approach conceptualizes identity as a set of ever-evolving actions, behaviours, and motivations simultaneously constrained and enabled by wider social structures. Caza et al (2018) note that the “aim of identity work is often to reduce tension, to strengthen one’s identity, or to form a new identity” (p. 900).

Caza et al (2018) outline three broad, widely-recognized tenets of identity work theory. First, identity work is conceptualized as a continually evolving process that entails “continuing experiments” and “constant reconstruction” (Caza, et, 2018, p. 891). Second, identity work is intensified by such factors as changes in responsibilities, competing or contradictory identities, and/or difficulties encountered in the workplace. Put differently, identity work is invigorated “in the face of threats, tensions, or conflict relevant to the identity” (Caza et al, 2018, p. 898). Finally, identity work entails a complex interplay between individual agency and the broader, external world. That is, while individuals possess a degree of agency in curating their identities, identity work inevitably encompasses negotiation with a social context that, in varying ways and to varying degrees, constrains and empowers agentic efforts (Caza et al, 2018). The external environment provides the resources (in the case of academia, social capital, opportunities, funding, physical space and equipment, autonomy, time, recognition, etc) upon which individuals continually draw to construct, sustain, and revise their identities. As Hyatt and Foster (2015) point out, however, “identity resources often conflict, creating contradictions in the continual construction of the person’s identity and how they ultimately view themselves” (p. 445). Not only could identity resources ‘conflict’, they might be insufficient to allow one to viably or satisfactorily perform the role in which their self-concept is grounded. It is also important to point out that the provision or denial of identity resources is often determined by discriminatory processes predicated on intersecting social statuses such as race, gender, sexuality, and/or (dis)ability (Caza et al, 2018). Practicing one’s profession within a setting marked by conflicting or insufficient resources can be unsettling, thereby creating “reactions such as curiosity, anxiety and [a] search for new ways of actively dealing with identity” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1167; see

also Hyatt & Foster, 2015). In the case of precariously employed postsecondary educators, such a scenario often fuels a re-envisioning of what being an academic entails (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2015).

Social Capital Theory

Perhaps the most significant resource that informs identity work is social capital. In Robert Putnam’s seminal book *Bowling Alone*, the author defines social capital as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Social capital, according to Putnam, creates bonds of trust and mutual support that enable organizations to function more smoothly and efficiently and provide individuals with the needed information and resources to achieve their goals. Putnam distinguishes between two forms of social capital: bonding capital and bridging capital (see also Claridge, 2018). Bonding social capital refers to the fostering of intra-group ties. Putnam (2000) describes it as a “sociological superglue” that strengthens within-group loyalty, sometimes with the effect of creating “outgroup antagonism” (p. 23). Illustrating the idea of bonding social capital, Claridge (2018) notes that it can “exist within a company where employees have shared identity, shared understandings, and a sense of belonging” (p. 2). Bridging social capital, by contrast, refers to forging connections beyond one’s community, social group, organization, or milieu. The cultivation of bridging social capital enables people to broaden their outlooks and identities and foster inter-collectivity trust. The benefits of social capital are immeasurable. It generally makes us “smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy” (Putnam, 2000, p. 290). Moreover, Putnam (2000) notes that the workplace is an ideal context in which to build social capital, as it “encourages regular collaborative contacts among peers... Many people form rewarding friendships at work, feel a sense of community among co-workers, and enjoy norms of mutual help and reciprocity on the job” (p. 87). Putnam (2000) makes reference to numerous studies which demonstrate that social ties with work colleagues “are a strong predictor – some would say the strongest single predictor – of job satisfaction” (p. 90).

Academia would seem like the ideal workplace setting in which to create social capital, at least in the case of faculty. Indeed, the relative autonomy and freedom that academics enjoy enables them, ostensibly, to build collegial alliances and social capital on

their terms. The little research that exists on the topic, however, suggests that this assumption does not extend to non-tenure track faculty. Studies show that many part-time and contingent professors feel estranged from peers and the administration at the institutions at which they are employed (Jamieson & Terrion, 2016; Thirolf, 2013). In general, they do not feel themselves to be valued members of a mutually-supportive alliance with a shared vision (Dolan, 2011; Jamieson & Terrion, 2016).

In an exploratory qualitative study, Jamieson and Terrion (2016) studied the capacity of part-time faculty at the University of Ottawa to curate what Putnam would call bonding (i.e., intra-institutional) social capital. They found that, compared to full-time professors, part-time faculty lacked workplace connections and suffered from a resultant “social capital deficit” (Jamieson & Terrion, 2016, p. 59). The absence of meaningful connections with colleagues was attributable to a number of factors, including a lack of orientation for new part-time faculty, rarely (if ever) being invited to social events, physical obstacles (i.e., not spending much time on campus), differing values (e.g., political beliefs and/or theoretical orientations), and part-time faculty being reluctant to actively cultivate connections due to the “ambiguity of their position” (Jamieson & Terrion, 2016, p. 64). For part-time faculty, this lack of connectedness, and associated paucity of social capital, resulted in widespread feelings of uncertainty, expendability, isolation (lacking access to professional and emotional support and advice), and professional inferiority. The inability to cultivate and mobilize social capital also resulted in part-time instructors being hard pressed to move beyond their precarious position and obtain full-time employment within academia. Jamieson and Terrion argue that having a large contingent of instructors who lack social capital and feel disconnected from the culture of the institution is ultimately detrimental to the university as it adversely affects the overall quality of teaching and scholarly output (see also Dolan, 2011).

It should be noted the sample in Jamieson and Terrion’s (2016) study consisted of part-time faculty hired on a semester-by-semester basis. The present study differs in that it focuses on limited-term faculty hired for a longer period of time and who therefore enjoy a little more job security. That being the case, it is possible that faculty who took part in the present study have more

opportunity to build social connections and, hence, create stronger social capital.

Finally, there is no literature that examines the relationship between limited-term faculty and the cultivation of bridging social capital, at least within the Canadian context. As Simon Marginson (2004) notes, with an increasing emphasis on university-community linkages within postsecondary institutional strategic mandates, “[h]igher education is a preeminent site for the formation of... ‘bridging’ social capital, association between people from different localities, kin, and professional backgrounds” (p. 7). Insofar as limited-term faculty take advantage of opportunities to foster bridging forms of social capital, this could counter (to some degree) limitations and challenges faced within the academic workplace, including obstacles to building bonding forms of social capital, and positively influence job satisfaction and identity construction work.

METHODOLOGY

We utilized qualitative research strategies to investigate our research questions. Data for this project were collected by way of a focus group and individual, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 faculty members hired on limited term contracts at two mid-sized Ontario universities. Investigators interviewed six participants at each university. Five of our 12 participants took part in the focus group; all five focus group participants worked at the same institution. The focus group ran for approximately two hours and was co-facilitated by investigators Kevin Gosine and Michelle Webber. Themes explored with research participants in the focus group included: overall job satisfaction; relationships with colleagues, administrators, and students; participation in university governance; perceptions of supports available to contract faculty to support teaching and research; satisfaction with course loads, service expectations and remuneration; collective agreement provisions specific to contract faculty; relationship to their union; and participants’ perceptions of the Canadian university system in general and its future.

A number of the themes from the focus group were explored in the individual interviews as well, but the emphasis in the in-depth interviews with individual faculty were themes related to the construction and evolution of participants’ professional identities, the identity work that they undertook, and their career aspirations.

Further, using individual interviews allowed for a more in-depth exploration of people's experiences as contingent faculty. The individual one-on-one interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Literature on qualitative research methodology advocates the triangulation of data from different methods (in this case, a focus group and individual interviews) as a means of enhancing the trustworthiness of a study (Creswell, 2007).

We recruited participants who held a completed PhD (or terminal degree in their field) in addition to having completed at least one full year of university employment on a fixed-term contract. Participants were recruited by way of purposive and snowball sampling. We sought assistance for participation from Chairs of departments at both universities. An email was sent to each Chair requesting that they forward our invitation letter to any faculty who fit our eligibility criteria. As active members in our respective fields, we also relied on snowball sampling. The Chairs and colleagues who nominated people for participation in our project were not informed of who ultimately agreed to participate. Data from the focus group and individual interviews were digitally audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. When reporting findings, pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of participants.

Participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire prior to individual interviews; 10 participants agreed to fill out this questionnaire. These 10 individuals ranged in age from 29 to 62 years (with a majority cluster in their 40s); five identified as women, five as men. Nine identified as white and one participant identified as South Asian. The 10 participants who completed the demographic questionnaire spent varied amounts of time as contract faculty, ranging from one to twelve years. Most of the 10 respondents to the questionnaire clustered around the two to three year range of time spent as contract faculty.

When analyzing data, we employed strategies suggested by Charmaz (2006), specifically initial and focused coding techniques. To begin, transcripts were individually studied and coded, one line at a time, by the four investigators. The four members of the research team then met and compared our initial codes; in particular, we assessed the consistency of the initial codes across the focus group and 12 individual interview transcripts. By way of these deliberations we worked to produce consensus regarding focused codes. This coding process enabled us to identify key themes. Achieving the inter-coder agreement of four people involved

in the coding process enhances the credibility and overall trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2007).

FINDINGS

Data analysis revealed that the workplace experiences and professional identities of faculty on limited-term contracts in Canadian universities are manifold, complex, and conflicted. We present our main findings below in three parts. First, we highlight the positive aspects of working in academia as reported by participants, even if employed on a fixed-term contract. Second, we outline job-related realities that limit the capacity of faculty on fixed-term contracts to achieve their professional goals, build competitive CVs, and curate a positive academic identity. Finally, we describe the ways in which faculty on fixed-term contracts adapt to their realities and the strategies they employ to foster and sustain a positive, or at least adaptive, professional identity in light of these realities.

Appreciation for the Job

While many aspects of their employment frustrated study participants, they simultaneously recognized that academic work held many privileges, even for those on limited-term contracts. The work of tenure-track/tenured professors still offers regimes that defy many traditional aspects of alienation (see Marx, 1961; Rinehart, 2005): professors retain degrees of control over their labour’s content, quality, and quantity; they still make primary decisions about their work’s conceptualization and execution; and have meaningful control over work tools and rhythms. They also still exercise workplace control through their majorities on collegial governance bodies. Obstacles inherent to limited term contracts prevented study participants from enjoying these privileges to the full extent that tenure-track and tenured colleagues do. For example, limited access to research funding (discussed below) and fixed-term employment often curtailed opportunities to take on long-term projects. That noted, those who took part in this study conceded that they still enjoyed most of the positive aspects of academia, as described above, to a considerable degree.

A recent major UK study (Hall, 2018b) presents professorial positions as traditionally relatively non-alienating jobs that neoliberal restructuring has been progressively converting “from a craft to a service” (Hall, 2018a) with an attendant encroachment of

alienation, though that is by no means a completed process. Aspiring academics still often seek such jobs as a hoped-for non-alienating “labour of love,” only to find that aspects of the tables have turned once they take them up (Hall, 2018a; Hall, 2018b). Those seeking to enter the professoriate also understand such positions to be culturally in contradistinction to the alienated jobs that otherwise litter the capitalist landscape. In this sense, those aspiring to academia are still attracted by what they understand to be its relatively dealienating work environment.

Sonny is a White, 48 year-old male with five years as limited-term faculty member. In line with dealienation Sonny, like most who took part in this study, came in valuing, continues to see value, and still aspires to a tenure-track position even though it is now clear he is unlikely to obtain one. Ideals he associates with the position are of particular value. It would foster a “sense of being able to build things over a longer period of time,” enable building enduring “relationships with the community” and generally position him to “think more long term”. For him, being a professor is more than just a job, it’s a “vocation” that facilitates the fulfillment of impulses toward self-creativity, “a serious business” in which the right person can “come alive”. He finds institutional traditions particularly enriching: “Convocation is a favourite day, it’s like Christmas for me.” The opportunities and rewards found through teaching are a particular focus, and the main reason he describes his time with the institution as a “privilege” for which he is “insanely grateful.” The university is a place where he can “keep challenging myself with new research questions, with new types of teaching, with new opportunities, because I want to make that classroom the best place possible.”

Sonny’s appreciation of the academy, specifically the sense of autonomy and relative creative control an academic career entails, is echoed by other research participants. Marcel, for example, a 38 year old White male on a two-year contract, aspires to the tenure-stream because, along with heightened job security, it would offer even more career freedom and autonomy:

I think the regular tenure stream position allows me to reduce my teaching load, increase my research load and have a little bit more of a long-term vision of a goal, somewhere where I’d be for another 30 years... the freedom to be able to develop your own knowledge and

ideas has really become important and an added component of job security helps with that, as well.

In addition to appreciating the ideals of the academy along with relative autonomy and degrees of control over the products of their labour as academic workers, most participants identified positive relationships with students and generally collegial workplace environments as worthwhile aspects of their job. And despite struggling to balance their various job responsibilities, with finding the time to produce scholarship being a particular challenge, most participants considered their teaching load fair given the terms of their contract. Tyron is a 58 year-old White male who has held limited term appointments for 11 years. “Overall, I would say I’m pretty happy. Professionally, I’m pretty happy,” explained Tyron. “I feel lucky to have this position. Lucky to be well paid, very lucky to be in a congenial department where everybody is friendly.” While Tyron’s sentiments were generally echoed by some participants, others noted that positive aspects of their employment were offset by various sources of frustration and discontent.

Factors that Challenge Efforts to Sustain a Positive Professional Identity

Limited-term faculty experience their careers and work lives as complex and conflicted. Participants’ appreciation for being academics often stood in tension with, and for most was undercut by, the many frustrating and limiting aspects of being precariously employed. Particular challenges included job precarity, a lack of recognition, supports (particularly research funding) and mentorship, and a nagging dissonance between their credentials and professional accomplishments and their precarious status. These factors challenged participants’ desires to cultivate and nurture a professional identity marked by unqualified confidence, satisfaction, legitimacy, and optimism.

Job Precarity and Lack of Recognition

One significant factor that curtailed participants’ cultivation of a positive professional identity was the sense that their accomplishments and contributions were not recognized or validated, a feeling amplified by their job precarity. Sonny found his initial optimism about academic labour helping nurture a positive professional identity diminished by his feeling of

disposability and eroded by experiences of alienation in other aspects of the job. Control of work time seemed non-existent: "I didn't have two seconds to rub together the last two years here. Just crazy, stupid busy." Contrary to his anticipated positive experience of participation in collegial structures, he notes: "I have seen very little that leads me to believe that the solicitation of input is genuine or effective for doing much of anything." After an uncomfortable hiring committee experience he concluded: "So I learned to just shut up." The creation of a new course ended in a strong experience of frustration and wasted creativity. He also found publishing amidst competing work demands an unrealistic aspiration.

Overall, Sonny found his aspirations to be thwarted by the precarity of his position and his inability to secure a full-time, tenure-stream job. "What I have seen is fantastic teachers, doing fantastic work and making huge impacts on their students that are just going to be chewed up and spit out." Behind his experiences lay bewilderment, a betrayal of his imagination of the ideals and practices he believed the institution would offer. Neither himself, an excellent teacher, or a highly research-accomplished contract faculty friend to whom he likens himself, can find a tenure-track job. While they both did everything "right" to facilitate this, he is left wondering, "[s]o who's the magic group who actually survives this thing?" Even after winning an award he comments: "You consistently worked your ass off to try and give high quality education and we'll recognize that within the institution, but we still don't think it's worth it to give you the job here to keep you." His feeling at the end of his contract: "it won't matter if you surpass all these expectations, or don't meet any, it really won't matter... I don't think any of us know any of the criteria or if there is any criteria really out there." Other participants echoed this theme of feeling disposable with an accompanying sense of betrayal in light of all of the contributions they had made to the institution. Alexa, a White, 48-year old female who has held limited-term contracts for 12 years explains:

Well, it soon became apparent that the university ... that the administration didn't care about me at all. I was a number. I was somebody that was disposable that they didn't want to invest in me long term, and yet, here I was going to [recruitment events]... and yet there was no sense of "we're going to commit to you, but you need to commit to us..." and I knew that it was just a numbers

game. It had nothing to do with my amazing teacher evaluations. All of these things that I was doing and they didn't care at all, it became very, very apparent.

Drawing an ironic juxtaposition between the precarity of her position and the onerous service demands placed on limited term faculty, Alexa declared: “The expectation is that you are going to do all this stuff for [the university], but you could be terminated at the end of the year.”

Similarly, Phoebe, a 49-year old White female who has held limited-term contracts for three years, sees herself as little more than “a chip in a bargaining game” in the eyes of the administration: “...the real players were the full-time people. Not so good for my status, ... I feel... expendable.” She takes research very seriously, but feels her recent scholarly accomplishments illustrate the lack of recognition she receives from colleagues:

I am the only person in my program who's gotten a Tri-Council grant in the last three years. I do have ongoing research collaborations that pre-exist my being here and are interesting and motivating... Nothing, not one word, not one invitation to present anything... I think [name of colleague] is the only person on the entire faculty who ever came up to me and said “hey, I saw you had a book out.”

Despite holding a teaching-stream limited appointment, Ronda, too, works hard to sustain research beyond departmental commitments to teaching and service. Yet, like Phoebe, she feels these are largely unrecognized contributions: “I love what I do. I have some really strong negative feelings about where I work and how the organization treats me... I think I'm cheap labour.” Ronda describes, too, how her numerous teaching contributions are not appreciated by her colleagues:

I have to invite myself to [field of study] meetings. I will teach twice as many courses. I will be in front of twice as many students. I've designed several of the courses... I've led the committee that looked at [a departmental initiative] and revamped it, but I don't get to have a say, and that just drives me insane... I don't think there is

anything at this point that I could do to persuade my colleagues that I'm more worth keeping around.

Alarmingly, our findings indicate that the precarity of limited-term faculty often deters them from taking deserved leaves for health or bereavement. Ronda notes that her insider-outside status within the academy and accompanying sense of alienation has resulted in a "sense of atrophy, emotional and mental atrophy." Yet, her feeling of being regarded as disposable "cheap labour" renders her reluctant to look into the possibility a mental health leave. According to Ronda, to maximize her chances of having her contract renewed, a union representative dissuaded her from taking a leave.

According to Phoebe, precarity results in limited term faculty feeling greater pressure to work that much harder to keep hopes of a tenure-stream position alive or, at least, enhance chances of contract renewal. "You need to hustle when you're in this role in a way that your [tenure-stream or tenured] colleagues do not," she explained. Phoebe recounted the experience of a fellow limited term colleague who did not feel free to take as much bereavement time as she wanted in the wake of her mother's death:

Her mother was dying, she felt she could have two weeks of leave, but not like she couldn't also apply for a grant this year and also do this, whereas other 50 year old colleagues were taking a semester's leave when their mother died and certainly not progressing with new work, because it was fine. They could totally use the long term of their academic contribution and just have it smooth out the year... .

In all, precarious fixed-term academic appointments limit workers' time to build competitive CVs. Limited-term faculty with tenure-stream aspirations feel they have to work extra hard, often to the detriment of their health and well-being. Working hard often entails pursuing research with few supports and little funding and, in some cases, taking on extra student supervisions, all amidst onerous teaching and service demands. This is exacerbated by uncertainty around contract renewal and the absence of reward or recognition. Additionally, some participants experienced condescension from colleagues and administrators. Cicely, for example, a 49-year old White female who has held limited term contracts for four years, described how devalued she felt when, in front of her colleagues, the

Dean questioned whether her employment status should disqualify her from sitting on a committee to which she had been a contributing member: “And I’m sitting there listening to somebody saying ‘you shouldn’t be here’ and I felt so invisible that you didn’t even recognize that you were saying something potentially so offensive.”

Ronda, too, described the sense of denigration she felt when excluded from departmental voting because of her limited-term status. This was particularly acute when the department voted on her contract renewal: “I do not want to go to another department meeting and be asked to stand outside in the hall while my colleagues vote on whether or not I should come back next year.” She likens this situation to “standing outside the Principal’s Office.” Hence, while participants often reported working in collegial departments, the work lives of many were punctuated with frequent reminders they were second-tier to their tenure-stream and tenured colleagues.

Finally, while not a prominent theme, findings suggest that limited-term faculty precarity has implications for academic freedom. A number of participants indicated that their precarious status made them wary of what they said, or what topics they broached, in the classroom or publicly. Cicely, for example, noted “I would speak 100% freely if I was tenured. One-hundred percent freely, but I don’t feel the same level of safety in my position.” Similarly, Phoebe explained she abandoned a funded research project which was well underway to avoid “potential conflict with [a] tenure stream faculty” colleague who had taken issue with the project. While within her rights to continue, Phoebe decided to cut her losses and halt the research rather than risk alienating colleagues. Hence, as a result of the precarity of their employment, it is clear that many limited-term faculty feel less protected by the core tenets of academic freedom than do their tenure-stream or tenured colleagues.

Lack of Supports and Mentorship

Another challenge participants faced pertained to workplace settings that lacked supports and mentorship that would facilitate building competitive CVs and help them achieve the sort of success that might enable them to sustain a positive professional identity. Upon entering a new setting where their time might be limited, new non tenure-stream faculty find themselves lacking orientation and guidance with respect to such matters as departmental protocol,

expectations, and applying for funding to support teaching and, in particular, research. This lack of orientation and guidance resulted in new faculty often feeling directionless in a situation where they had limited time to build a CV that would enable them to compete for full-time, tenure-track positions. While most participants reported typically collegial work environments, workplace connections tended to be superficial rather than profoundly supportive. In other words, limited-term faculty often experience difficulty building bonding social capital. Phoebe explains the importance of mentorship for new faculty attempting to establish a viable research program, which she found to be lacking at her institution:

I don't know if this is a broader failing of [the university], in which case it is a substantial one, that there's not a lot of research guidance. But I think as a new professor, even as someone who's got a research record, you need help being strategic about what you're doing. I think someone could have come along and said, "this is really interesting, and in the interest of academic freedom, you should feel free to do it, but boy, is that really what you want to do right now?" That would have been useful a year or two earlier. ... the collegial support around research, I feel, is lacking.

Sasha, a White, 41-year old female on a one-year contract, expressed a similar frustration regarding the lack of support available for new limited-term faculty:

I applied for a [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, or SSHRC] Partnership Grant just this last month and the lady from Research Services contacted me because she saw that I had started the application. I didn't even know that there was someone to help do that. I had no idea. And I don't know ... if it's because nobody is watching out for us because we're at the bottom.

Cicely echoes the frustrations of entering the job with little in the way of guidance: "I think I really would have benefited by having a mentor assigned to me... There's a lot of stuff that I just had to figure

out on the fly... When acronyms get bandied about and I think ‘I have no idea what that stands for, but I feel like I should, so I’m just going to nod my head and then I’m going to go figure it out.’”

Limited-Term Contracts and Access to Research Funding

A frustration articulated by all study participants with tenure-stream aspirations pertained to a lack of access to research funding that would enable them to launch and sustain long-term research agendas. This limited the extent to which they could contribute to their disciplines and challenged their efforts to build competitive CVs. Because of the precarity of their employment, participants either found themselves ineligible for long-term external grants, or were reluctant to apply due to the term of contracts. As Ronda notes, “[a]s a contract person, I am not eligible to apply for the major external grant, because you have to be able to show that you have an ongoing relationship with the university.” She had it suggested to her by someone at the research services office that she “could get a SSHRC by finding somebody else to be the Principal Investigator”. Sidney corroborates Ronda’s point about limited-term faculty often having little choice but to take on co-investigator roles on research projects, which limits opportunities to stake out one’s own research agenda. “I think there is a distinction to be made between your research agenda and people inviting you onto projects,” explains Sidney, “because you’re not carving out that space that you need if you’re going to get a full-time job or you’re going to get on the tenure track.” Where applying for research funding is concerned, Sidney, a 29-year old White male on a two-year contract, describes the “awkward position” in which limited-term faculty find themselves: “It would take more than half of my contract to find out if I got a grant and then it’s no good anyway, because it would just have to sit in the university because I don’t have the job at the end of it.”

Phoebe explains that a “big hole” in research funding for limited term faculty is that they “can only apply for Tri-Council grants that fit within the limitation of the term of your appointment. So you can’t apply for big ones.” This, as Marcel explains, means that “you’re not allowed to apply for a multi-year grants. Any grants that you do apply for need to be held within the

time frame of your LTA, which severely limits establishing a long-term research program.” Jaromir, a 42-year old South Asian male on a three-year contract, looked into applying for research funding and was advised that he should propose a one-year project, to which he responded in frustration, “one year, what are you going to do in a year?” And while faculty on limited-term contracts lack access to long-term research funding, as Phoebe puts it, “there’s still an expectation of doing some research.”

Disconnect between Professional Accomplishments and Employment Status

Study participants held impressive educational credentials and professional accomplishments. All held PhDs and boasted impressive teaching accolades. All had a record of securing research grants and peer-reviewed publishing. But, for most, the dissonance between their accomplishments and the precarity of their employment situation diminished their ability to build and uphold a positive professional identity. Academic careers are associated with secure employment that enables practitioners to undertake long-term research programs that expand the body of knowledge within their fields. Careers in academia are also equated with comfortable lifestyles that encompass the typical material trappings, freedoms, and luxuries that signal a middle-class existence. The differing reality for people on limited-term contracts results in participants holding a conflicted ‘insider-outsider’ status within the academy. Cicely, for example, spoke of feeling like an “imposter.” “The truth of the matter is I’m an LTA,” she explains. “Technically, my title is Assistant Professor, but I always feel like I should explain it as ‘assistant professor with an asterisk’... a ‘temporarily’ assistant professor.” While Cicely currently cannot fully embrace an academic identity, she notes that she is working hard to attain a position where she can practice her chosen profession without “an asterisk or an apostrophe or a comma.” Ronda articulates a deep frustration regarding the pronounced disconnect between her impressive academic accomplishments and her status as limited-term faculty:

I’m [a] ... leader [within her academic discipline]... I get invited to other institutions as a “Distinguished Visiting Scholar.” And my identity is around being pretty high up in my specific discipline, nationally and internationally,

and when I come back to my home institution, every year when the contract comes up, I feel that somebody slammed me sideways with a truck... each year I'm very aware of being more and more demoralized by the constraints on my position.

As much as Ronda enjoys academia and takes pride in her accomplishments within this realm, her frustration had reached the point where she contemplated leaving. “It’s a test of my resilience and it’s really hard,” Ronda confided, “and I never thought I would feel this way, but by April of last year, I thought ‘I’m ready to leave,’ I’m actually ready to leave teaching, and I’m so burned out, I won’t miss it!”

Phoebe transitioned to academia from a career as a lawyer and she frustratingly notes that, between returning to university to complete a doctorate and finding herself stuck on the non-tenure track, she is “coming up on 15 years of varying forms of status deprivation relative to where I was 15 years ago.” Phoebe highlights the obvious fact that the “lack of status of being sessional or being an LTA relative to full time faculty ... [has] an economic and material piece to it too.” Indeed, the “economic and material piece,” which encompasses employment insecurity, deepens the divide between participants’ credentials and accomplishments and their career status. Sidney illuminated this disconnect when he described the living situation he endured for a period of time: “I lived in my parents’ basement for the first six months. I was living in my parents’ basement when I had this job. It’s not because I want to, but I’ve only got a year-long job, why would I pay more if I’ve only got a year a long job?” Sidney goes on to note that, when employed by way of a limited-term contract, “you never do things... never thinking about buying a house, that’s never on the docket or even personal relationships. You don’t want to commit because you might be gone in six months.”

Strategies for Fostering Positive Professional Identities

All participants took pride in being university academics and most realized that they enjoyed a significant degree of privilege. At the same time, the insecurity and limitations associated with their employment situation often frustrate efforts to sustain a positive professional identity. For most participants, the disconnect between their credentials and professional accomplishments and the

realities of their precarious employment, discussed above, diminished their sense of professional pride. The professional identities of most with whom we spoke are complicated and ruptured insofar as participants enjoy some of the prestige and privileges of being university educators while enduring the stigma and limitations of practicing their profession via limited-term contracts. Moreover, identity construction takes work on the part of subjects, and the main goal of this work is to reduce identity-related contradictions and fissures as much as possible. This goal is often accomplished by grounding one's identity in facets, or a facet, of the job where available resources best permit that individual to excel and achieve desired objectives (which can shift as one's identity shifts). Identity work can also entail a determination to achieve within a particular area despite resource deficiencies. Participants' narratives revealed the strategic work they undertook to construct positive identities in light of their present realities. Where professional identity construction is concerned, three broad strategies emerged: 1) continuing to work hard to sustain an active research program; 2) making teaching the focal point of their professional identity; and 3) grounding their professional identities in projects and commitments outside of the university. Of course, these strategies are by no means mutually exclusive. These three strategies could be seen as ways in which precariously employed faculty adapt to their prevailing career circumstances.

Working Hard to Sustain an Active Research Program

Despite the challenges of obtaining research funding and the demands of teaching and service, most study participants worked to maintain an active research agenda. In addition to wanting to build competitive CVs for tenure-track opportunities, many participants were determined to demonstrate their prowess with respect to what is widely regarded as the primary pillar of academic identity: research and scholarship. Sasha explained that she's "still trying to do everything, the research and the publishing and everything else, with twice the teaching load... I'm trying to stay engaged and I'm applying for the grants and to engage in research that's outside of what I've been doing." Similarly, Sidney described his determination to continuously publish along with strategizing to ensure that his CV reflects consistent publishing each year:

I try to keep things going and moving... I'm at a point now where I'm cranking out a lot of stuff all at once and debating on whether I should hold on some of it so I don't have a huge part of the CV and then a year of nothing.

In reference to the importance of research and scholarship to her professional identity, Phoebe declared: “That’s a real value add that comes from who I am. So yeah, I think research is my first [priority]. I don’t think that’s true for all professors and I don’t think it should be true for all professors.”

Teaching as the Focal Point of Professional Identity

Given the constraints on participants’ ability to create active research agendas, many found that investing time in teaching aided in developing a professional identity. A number of individuals with whom we spoke made teaching the focal point of their professional identities as this was the one facet of their job where they were able to excel largely unfettered by constraints or limitations. Participants appreciated the opportunity to use the classroom as a consciousness-raising space and took pride in mentoring students. Also, from students, many participants received the validation that they experienced as lacking within the wider university community. Marcel explained what teaching means to his professional identity:

In terms of my professional identity, I think it’s seeing that the students that you are there to teach and to mentor students going on to do wonderful, wonderful things. You’re guiding someone... along that path into long term career goals and I think encapsulating that idea that you’re continually learning.

Many participants reiterated the pride described by Marcel. Jaromir states in no uncertain terms that his professional identity strongly correlates with his role as an instructor and mentor to students: “It’s amazing to see students go on, we’ve had students who’ve gone on to [a prestigious European university]. There’s a huge sense of accomplishment that comes with that.” Two participants, Tyron and Hannah, reported having abandoned the pursuit of a tenure-stream position, an aspiration they had long held, and resigned themselves to their prevailing professional reality. Having given up on the prospect of securing a tenure-track

job, these particular individuals no longer pursued research and made teaching their top priority.

Professional Identities Forged via Bridging Social Capital

Given the constraints associated with being precariously employed within the university, a number of participants grounded their professional identities in opportunities beyond their institution of employment. These efforts to cultivate bridging social capital often took the form of outside activism, external consulting, and collaborations with community organizations and outside academic communities. Ronda described how involvement with outside entities, and the respect she experienced within those realms, compensated for the indignities she endured as a limited-term faculty member at her university.

My identity is mostly forged and sustained external to the institution, I would say, apart from the teaching aspects... If I get invited, as I did in May, to be a distinguished visiting scholar for three days somewhere, I can go 'okay, I'm not the low life useless that I often feel around here'.

Like Ronda, Alexa forges a positive professional identity by way of outside commitments to the broader community:

I first arrived it was these short contracts, but over the years I had also become more entrenched in the community,... I personally value my work quite a lot, just in my own personal space, regardless of what other people think or how the university values me.

Through her increasing involvement in the wider community and her deprioritization of validation within the academy, Alexa illustrates the process of adapting to one's prevailing reality by building an academic career and professional identity on one's own terms. Sidney conducts community-based participatory action research, an approach to research in which the people studied play an active role in designing and implementing the research. As he explained, "being able to start carving out that space and undertaking that more public type research, engaging with people" has enabled him forge connections within the broader community

and establish a professional niche. As Sidney elaborated, “that fits well with my view of the role of professor and of the university more broadly, that is, advancing knowledge in different kinds of ways and engaging with people and making a difference in communities.” Within these external contexts, the recognition and validation participants received countered the dearth of professional respect within their workplaces.

DISCUSSION

Our study provides insight into the identity work undertaken by Canadian university faculty on fixed-term contracts when negotiating the contradictory tensions commonly associated with their employment. Participants reported an appreciation for various aspects of their jobs, including their remuneration, the relative autonomy they enjoy as academics, the control they have over the products of their labour, and the opportunity to teach and mentor students at the postsecondary level. Where teaching-related activities are concerned, most participants enjoyed serving as a source of social capital to students as this infused their careers with meaning and purpose. And for many, relationships with students represented their main source of bonding social capital within the university amidst typically collegial but often superficial ties with colleagues and administrators. Such positive features of academic work attracted participants to the profession.

At the same time, participants echoed the common frustrations of non-tenure stream postsecondary faculty that is well documented in the literature (e.g., Abbas & McLean, 2001; Kezar & Sam, 2010; Levin & Hernandez, 2014; Schwartz, 2014; Thirolf, 2013). These frustrations include a perennial fear of not having contracts renewed, little acknowledgement of their contributions to their fields or to the university, limited access to research funding that would enable them to build long-term research programs and competitive CVs, and, consistent with the findings of Jamieson and Terrion (2016), a lack of bonding social capital that can encompass mentorship and other forms of support to help limited-term faculty launch their careers and orient them to the institutional norms and expectations of their workplace as well as the profession. For most participants, the perceived disconnect between their professional qualifications and the precarity of their employment situation further undermined their ability to cultivate positive professional identities. These contradictory workplace experiences reflect the somewhat nebulous space limited-term faculty occupy between

sessional faculty (those hired on a course-by-course basis) and tenured/tenure-stream professors. For academics on fixed-term contracts, being professionally positioned in this way has resulted in a bifurcated and tension-laden professional identity of the sort described by Levin and Hernandez (2014): They enjoy some of the rewards, prestige, and privileges of being university educators while withstanding the stigma, (relative) marginalization, and limitations that come with plying their profession off the tenure track. The 'insider-outsider' status limited-term academics hold within the academy forces them to 'work' (Caza et al, 2018; Hyatt & Foster, 2015; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) to resolve identity-related tensions and curate positive, or at least adaptive, professional identities.

Given that their employment situation denies them many of the resources one would require to build an authentic academic identity, we found that Canadian academics on fixed-term contracts employ at least one of three strategies when undertaking identity work: 1) doing their best to build and sustain active and productive research programs despite obstacles; 2) abandoning the desire to be prolific research academics and making teaching the focal point of their professional identities; and 3) employing bridging social capital to expand their professional horizons beyond the university that employs them (among other initiatives, this can entail outside consulting and collaborations with community organizations). For some limited-term university faculty, building bridging social capital can compensate, at least to some degree, for a paucity of bonding social capital. Moreover, with the latter two adaptive strategies, we often see academics who are denied the full range of professional identity resources, such as those on fixed term contracts, actively "renegotiat[ing] the meaning of being an academic"; that is, some are forced to explore "how to be an academic without being research-active" (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2015. p. 193). The relative autonomy that academics enjoy, which is greater than that of most professions, allows a degree of flexibility in terms of how they adapt to their employment situation. While academics with tenure-track aspirations will always find it difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate truly authentic professional identities while on fixed-term contracts, for many of our study participants, employing strategies of the sort outlined above helped to mitigate identity-related ruptures and tensions.

CONCLUSION

Our data demonstrate that contract faculty actively negotiate the tensions of their precarious employment status. Those who still wish to remain competitive for trying to secure a tenure-track position pursue research as best they can despite the many structural obstacles they face. Many of our participants make teaching and student mentoring the primary focus of their professional identities. Finally, a number of participants utilize bridging social capital to actively create professional opportunities and forge connections beyond their departments and universities.

We are cognizant that we did not comment on participants' experiences as gendered, raced, classed, and so forth. It could be the case that our sample was not large enough to be able to concretely draw out such variances. It is also possible that our questions did not adequately allow for such variances to emerge. We plan to build on this study by expanding the scale of our research and will consciously reflect on our research design to ensure that the design itself is not shutting down the possibility of exploring further layering of the lived experiences of contract faculty. Nonetheless, this exploratory study provides a basis for future research that employs larger samples to examine the degree and ways in which institutional type and bargaining structure matter for the work lives and professional identities of contract faculty. Further, it would be worthwhile for researchers to pick up on themes in work conducted by Ross, Savage, and Watson (2019), who identify the tensions within faculty associations between contract and full-time faculty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Research Assistants Janet Moore and Zoe Walters who assisted with the literature review. We are also grateful to the study participants who gave their time to take part in this study. This research was supported by a Brock SSHRC Institutional Grant.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, A. & McLean, M. (2001). Becoming sociologists: Professional identity for part-time teachers of university sociology. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 22(3), 339-352.

- Acker, S. & Webber, M. (2016). Discipline and Publish: the Tenure Review Process in Ontario Universities. In L. Shultz & M. Viczko (eds.). *Assembling and Governing the Higher Education Institution: Democracy, Social Justice and Leadership in Global Higher Education* (pp. 233-255). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Antony, J.S. & Hayden, R.A. (2011). Job satisfaction of American part-time college faculty: Results from a national study a decade later. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35(9), 689-709.
- Butovsky, J., Savage, L., & Webber, M. (2015). Assessing Faculty Attitudes Toward Faculty Unions: A Survey of Four Primarily Undergraduate Universities, *Working USA: The Journal of Labor and Society*, 18(2), 247-265.
- Caza, B.B., Vough, H., & Puranik, H. (2018). Identity work in organizations and occupations: Definitions, theories, and pathways forward. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(7), 889-910.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Claridge, T. (2018). Functions of social capital – bonding, bridging, linking. *Social Capital Research & Training*, Dunedin, New Zealand [on-line] <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/approaches-conceptualise-bonding-bridging-socialcapital/>.(20.02. 2019).
- Courtois, A. & O’Keefe, T. (2015). Precarity in the ivory cage: Neoliberalism and casualisation of work in the Irish higher education sector. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 13(1), 43-66.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Deem, R., Hillyard S., & Reed, M. (2007). *Knowledge, Higher Education and the New Managerialism: the Changing Management of UK Universities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dobbie, D. & Robinson, I. (2008). Reorganizing higher education in the United States and Canada: The erosion of tenure and the unionization of contingent faculty. *Labour Studies Journal*, 33(2), pp.117-140.

- Dolan, V. (2011). The isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on their performance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 12(2), 62-77.
- Eagan, M.K.J., Jaeger, A.J. & Grantham, A. (2015). Supporting the academic majority: Policies and practices related to part-time faculty's job satisfaction. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 86(3), 448-480.
- Fisher, D. & Rubenson, K. (1998). The changing political economy: The private and public lives of Canadian universities. In J. Currie & J. Newson (Eds.), *Universities and globalization: Critical perspectives* (pp. 77-98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hall, R. (2018a). "Working in HE – an alienating labour of love." *WONKHE*. 18 September. Retrieved from: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/working-in-he-an-alienating-labour-of-love/>.
- Hall, R. (2018b). *The alienated academic: The struggle for autonomy inside the university*. London: Palgrave.
- Hyatt, C. G., & Foster, W. M. (2015). Using identity work theory to understand the de-escalation of fandom: A study of former fans of National Hockey League teams. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(4), 443-460.
- Jamieson S. & Terrion, J.L. (2016). Building and mobilizing social capital: A phenomenological study of part-time professors. *Stream*, 8(2), 57-70.
- Kezar, A. & Sam, C. (2010). Special Issue: Understanding the New Majority of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty in Higher Education-Demographics, Experiences, and Plans of Action. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 36(4), 1-133.
- Kramer, A.L., Gloeckner, G.W., & Jacoby, D. (2014). Roads scholars: Part-time faculty job satisfaction in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 38(4), 287-299.
- Levin, J. S. & Hernandez, V. M. (2014). Divided identity: Part-time faculty in public colleges and universities. *The Review of Higher Education*, 37(4), 531-557.
- Marginson, S. (2004). Going global: Governance implications of cross-border traffic in higher education. In W.G. Tierney (Ed), *Competing Conceptions of Academic Governance: Negotiating the Perfect Storm* (pp. 1-32). Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

- Marx, K.(1961). *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing.
- Metcalf, A. (2010). Revisiting academic capitalism in Canada: No longer the exception. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81(4), 489-514.
- Moffatt, K., Panitch, M., Parada, H., Todd, S., Barnoff, L., & Aslett, J. (2016). "Essential cogs in the innovation machine": The discourse of innovation in Ontario educational reform. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 38(4), 317-340.
- Morrison, J.D. (2008). Faculty governance and nontenure-track appointments. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 143, 21-27.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon & Shuster.
- Rinehart, J. (2005). *The tyranny of work: Alienation and the labour process*. Toronto: Nelson.
- Ross, S., Savage, L., & Watson, J. (2019). University teachers and resistance in the neoliberal university, *Labor Studies Journal*, November 1 online, pp.1-23.
- Schwartz, J. M. (2014). Resisting the exploitation of contingent faculty labor in the neoliberal university: The challenge of building solidarity between tenured and non-tenured faculty. *New Political Science*, 36(4), 504-522.
- Slaughter, S. & Gary R. 2000. *The Neo-Liberal University*, *New Labor Forum*, 6, pp.73-79.
- Smith, S.A. (2015). Contingent faculty and academic freedom in the twenty-first century. *First Amendment Studies*, 49(1), 27-30.
- Sveningsson, S., & Alvesson, M. (2003). Managing managerial identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle. *Human relations*, 56(10), 1163-1193.
- Thirolf, K.Q. (2013). How faculty identity discourses of community college part-time faculty change over time. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(3), 177–184.
- Toutkoushian, R. K. & Bellas, M.L. (2003). The effects of part-time employment and gender on faculty earnings and satisfaction. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 74(2), 172-195.

- Tuchman, Gaye. 2009. *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Waltman, J., Bergom, I., Hollenshead, C., Miller, J., & August, L. (2012). Factors contributing to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among non-tenure-track faculty. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 83(3), 411-434.
- Waring, M. (2014). Human Resources Policies and the Individualization of Academic Labour. In L. Gornall, C. Cook, L. Daunton, J. Salisbury & B. Thomas (eds), *Academic Working Lives: Experience, Practice and Change* (pp.102-109). London: Bloomsbury.
- Webber, M. & Acker, S. (2012). *Academic Frogs in the Water? How Canadian Academics Understand Accountability and Their Work in the Contemporary University*. Paper presented at the Academic Identities Conference, University of Auckland, New Zealand, June.
- Webber, M. & Butovsky, J. (2019) *Faculty Associations Confront Accountability Governance in Ontario Universities*. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 48(3), 165-181.
- Yee, J. Y., & Wagner, A. E. (2013). Is anti-oppression teaching in Canadian social work classrooms a form of neo-liberalism?. *Social Work Education*, 32(3), 331-348.
- Ylijoki, O & Ursin, J. (2015). “High-flyers and underdogs: The polarisation of Finnish academic identities.” In L. Evans & J. Nixon (Eds), *Academic Identities in Higher Education: The Changing European Landscape* (pp. 187-202). London: Bloomsbury.

Author and Affiliation

Dr. Kevin Gosine, Associate Professor
 Department of Sociology
 Brock University
 Email: kgosine@brocku.ca (Corresponding author)

Dr. Robert Kristofferson, Professor
 Faculty of Liberal Arts
 Wilfrid Laurier University
 Email: rkristofferson@wlu.ca

Professor Glenn Skrubbeltrang, Lecturer
Goodman School of Business
Brock University
Email: gskrubbeltrang@brocku.ca

Dr. Michelle Webber, Professor
Department of Sociology
Brock University
Email: mwebber@brocku.ca