

**BEING PRECARIOUS:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF ONE PRECARIOUS FACULTY
MEMBER'S LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKING IN FOUR BRITISH COLUMBIA
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

by

Lisa Allen

B.G.S., Simon Fraser University, 2006
M.E.T., University of British Columbia, 2012
M.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2015

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Being Precarious: An autoethnographic account of one precarious faculty member's lived experience working in four British Columbia higher education institutions.

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the degree of Doctor of Education

in Educational Leadership and Policy

Examining Committee:

Amy Scott Metcalfe, Professor, Educational Studies, UBC
Supervisor

Alison Taylor, Professor, Educational Studies, UBC
Supervisory Committee Member

Fei Wang, Associate Professor, Educational Studies, UBC
Supervisory Committee Member

Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur, Professor, Human Development, Learning and Culture, UBC
University Examiner

Jude Walker, Assistant Professor, Educational Studies, UBC
University Examiner

Rebecca Cox, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, SFU
External Examiner

Abstract

Precarious faculty, once used by higher education institutions as auxiliary labour, now dominate post-secondary campuses. With as much as half of post-secondary institutions' courses now taught by contract academic faculty, post-secondary institutions have systematically come to rely on hiring precarious contract faculty for their respective departmental teaching capacity. As an emerging and significant trend in higher education, this study aims to examine the precarious faculty experience through autoethnographic methods that reflects on my personal experience as a precarious faculty member working at four different higher education institutions in British Columbia from 2016-2018: the Private Online University, City College, the Teaching University, and the Institute.

Using Tierney's (1997) Organizational Culture Theory, coupled with theories of organizational socialization and the role of models and mentorship, I compare my personal experiences of being hired and onboarded at the four different institutions in which I worked as a precarious faculty member. I focus on three themes: the faculty interview process, being evaluated as a precarious faculty member, and resources that I was given (or not). A literature review precedes each personal autoethnographic account; I then proceed to compare and contrast my personal experiences with that of the literature as a way to examine the ways in which my experiences working as a precarious faculty member are consistent with, and divergent from the literature.

To conclude, I suggest that there is a lack of standard processes and practices when it comes to hiring precarious faculty. Additionally, I suggest that one's career stage plays a significant role during hiring. I also suggest that good student evaluations of teaching lead to reappointment for precarious faculty. In terms of performance evaluations, I stress the

importance of communication and suggest that precarious faculty are evaluated (sometimes) both formally, and informally. Finally, in terms of resources, I echo the literature that office space is a place of power, and that professional development is a two-way street. I conclude that more personal stories—like mine—are required to better understand what it's like to be a precarious faculty member in higher education.

Lay Summary

Higher Education in Canada heavily relies on the labour of part-time and contract faculty (labelled “precarious faculty” throughout this dissertation) to deliver educational programs. This study aims to examine the precarious faculty experience by reflecting on my personal experience as a precarious faculty member working at four different higher education institutions in the province of British Columbia from 2016-2018: the Private Online University, City College, the Teaching University, and the Institute. Framed with organizational culture theory and theories of organizational socialization and mentorship, I examine the ways in which my experiences as a precarious faculty member at four different higher education institutions are consistent with, and diverge from, the literature. Finally, I offer an analysis that includes a set of recommendations for various groups, including higher education administrators. These recommendations aim to help improve hiring and socialization practices for precarious faculty.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Lisa Allen.

Names of people (students, peers, staff, supervisors) have been changed.

Names of the institutions discussed were given pseudonyms.

The researched methodology used did not require University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board approval.

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List of Abbreviations

CAUT	Canadian Association of University Teachers
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
FTE	Full Time Equivalency
OCUFA	Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

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Dedication

I wrote this dissertation in the one week between when one set of courses finished and a new set of courses began; between interviews for jobs I had already been hired for; and during office hours when no students came to see me. I squeezed this in to whatever little time I had—working as a precarious faculty member at four institutions—so that I could report on my experiences in this dissertation here.

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone working in precarious positions in higher education institutions. The temporary, contract, ‘limited term’, sessional faculty and staff: your participation in the institutions you serve makes the operations of the academic system possible.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“A century ago, activists sacrificed their lives for universal rights such as a minimum wage, a forty-hour work week, sick days, vacation times, and due process protections” (Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019, p. 151). Today, in our higher education institutions, administrators have been circling around many of those labour rights that were fought for by our parents, grandparents, and ancestors. By creating new contract-style positions within the higher education system, universities and colleges are circumventing many of the labour rights that are considered the norm in Canada, such as a forty-hour work week, vacation time, and due process protections. This phenomenon is the foundation on which this dissertation is built. First, this chapter will provide a background on the higher education system, both in Canada and then in British Columbia (since higher education is controlled at the provincial level within Canada). Once the stage is set, this introductory chapter will ‘define the problem.’ As one can infer from the opening quote above, the ‘problem’ that I seek to address here stems from the loss of workers’ rights over time. Since this dissertation was written as part of a Doctor of Education program, it’s important that my “practice” is explained in full detail here. Then, I’ll define what exactly I mean by “precarious” faculty. The ‘Preamble’ section will explain my position: where I am from, who I am, and how I came to research precariousness in higher education. This will lead me into the research questions that this dissertation is designed to answer. I will then explain the significance of my research, specifically outlining how it will contribute to a larger body of research and literature that explores precarity in higher education. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an outline of how this dissertation is organized.

1.1 Background: The Higher Education System in British Columbia

Because this dissertation focuses on the organizational culture within higher education institutions, it's important to first review the structure and higher education system that exists within the province of British Columbia. British Columbia's higher education system is one with a long history; it has been developed, influenced, and shaped by local, provincial, and federal policy, especially over the last few decades (Cowin, 2018). Shanahan and Jones (2007) explain that, in Canada, provincial governments are responsible for funding, coordination, and the regulation of post-secondary education: "In each province a government ministry has been assigned responsibility for post-secondary education, and decisions related to funding and coordination take place within the provincial context of the province" (Shanahan & Jones, 2007, p. 36). In the British Columbia higher education system, it is the Ministry of Advanced Education's role to "ensure that B.C.'s post-secondary system delivers value while providing educational and training opportunities for young people entering the workforce and existing workers who need to upgrade their skills" (Ministry Service Plan, 2014, p. 6). Shanahan and Jones (2007) refer to these strong ties between higher education and industry as a trend across Canada and note the growth of institutional competition and market-driven mechanisms. The problem that this dissertation seeks to explore is a result of this growth of the marketization of higher education.

1.2 Defining the Problem

Metcalf (2009) explains that, since the 1960s, educational attainment in British Columbia has been influenced by the Macdonald Report¹. The higher education system in British Columbia has evolved since the Macdonald Report and has been influenced by initiatives from the Ministry of Advanced Education over the years. The Macdonald Report and government initiatives tend to focus more on outcomes, and therefore institutions are left to their own devices to operationalize these initiatives and their educational programming. Often, these initiatives, in conjunction with social, political, economic, and organizational factors, put pressure on institutions to conform and deliver, and this has resulted in an over-reliance on temporary contract faculty to fill any gaps. Because higher education institutions depend so heavily on contract labour to operate their programs, there exists a structural problem within post-secondary education: the presence of multiple different levels of faculty in most institutions results in tensions and inequality when it comes to academic labour. This is the root of “the problem” that this dissertation explores. It’s true that academia is a relatively privileged site, but, it’s also a relatively privileged site of precarity (Ivancheva, Lynch, & Keating, 2019). Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2019) argue that “higher education continues to be defined, as it has always been, by who enrolls, who teaches, how knowledge is produced and disseminated, and by higher education’s societal role” (p. 165). Those who work in higher education—the people—are responsible for educating future generations of leaders and workers; this has a direct impact on society and the communities in which we live and work.

¹ The Macdonald Report, as it’s commonly called, is a formal policy document titled *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future*. It was written by John Macdonald, then president of the University of British Columbia, and was based on a provincial study of post-secondary education in the early 1960s (Metcalf, 2009).

However, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) reports that “about one third of all academic staff in post-secondary institutions in Canada struggle to find decent work” (CAUT, n.d.a). To draw on the definition of ‘precarious faculty’ I start with Indhu Rajagopal’s instigating 2002 book *Hidden Academics: Contract Faculty in Canadian Universities*, in which Rajagopal uses the term “part-time” faculty to refer to contract or sessional faculty in the university. However, in the current higher education system, one could be both “part-time” and regular—that is: faculty can hold a tenured position and be part-time. There are many terms out there that describe work that is not permanent and full time. Field and Jones (2016), along with many others, call it contingent work, but for the purposes of this dissertation (for reasons I will explain in the next section), I will use the term ‘precarious’ work. So, here’s the problem:

Without job security, contract workers can have difficulty obtaining a bank loan, signing a rental agreement, or getting a mortgage. Precariously employed workers are more likely to experience mental and physical health challenges, including anxiety and depression. Contract faculty are frequently excluded from professional development, collegial opportunities, and institutional support for research, which can leave them feeling isolated and unsupported. (Pasma & Shaker, 2018, p. 10)

And, Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) report that, “in no other sector has contingency among high-skill professionals come with such dramatic wage decreases” (p. 37). Because of this, many precarious instructors in higher education have fallen into the ranks of the working poor (Courtois & O’Keefe, 2015). Despite their advanced degrees and commitment to their students and institutions, precarious faculty often find themselves having to make difficult decisions just so that they can keep their jobs next term.

Additionally, not only are many precarious faculty suffering because of the nature of their employment appointments at the institutions they serve, but we actually don't have sufficient data on how many precarious faculty are suffering. Field and Jones (2016) explain:

The persistent lack of data on Canadian sessional faculty is problematic, both for understanding a large segment of the academic workforce and the impact that the increasing use of part-time university teachers is having on students and the learning environment. Part-time faculty frequently fall outside of the scope of large-scale studies on faculty life and, at least to-date, have not been included in national and international surveys. (p. 7)

A major role of public universities is to promote democracy, innovation, equity, and foster critical thinking. In order to teach and promote these democratic priorities, educators must have some degree of assurance, or backing from their institution. Without job security, academic freedom, and participation within academic governance, how can precarious faculty members meet the needs of the students, contribute to academic governance, pursue research and explore concepts without fearing that they will not be re-hired next term? This is the problem that frames this dissertation.

1.3 Defining 'Precarious' Faculty

There are many different categories of work for faculty members—sessionals, adjuncts, limited term appointments, lecturers, tenure-stream professors, and the list goes on and on. Of note, under the category of 'faculty' there are permanent regular types of faculty, and temporary and contract types of faculty.

Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) categorize contract-type faculty in universities as the "Gig Academy" defining those who fall into this category as follows: "the characteristics of

contingent, temporary, and part-time work in the Gig Academy include a reduced salary (often below a living wage) and benefits, unbundled and outsourced roles, forced entrepreneurship, deprofessionalization, minimal autonomy, and maximum external control” (p. 36). While contract-type faculty often share similar conditions and parameters on their employment, these characteristics are not consistent.

Field and Jones (2016) have written about precarious faculty in higher education in their study of “contingent” faculty in Ontario public universities. After some debate and discussion, they arrive on the term “contingent faculty” to describe all non-regular, or non-tenure or tenure-track faculty in higher education institutions:

It is worth noting that the terminology used to describe various forms of faculty appointments and career tracks is complex, and there is considerable variation by country, by province, and by institution. “Sessional” is a term used to refer primarily to those who are working on a contractual basis as instructors within the university, typically for those working on semester-by-semester contracts. “Contingent faculty” is a broader term, including sessional faculty and all non-permanent faculty members who are working on part-time or limited term contracts outside the tenure stream. (Field & Jones, 2016, p. 9)

While Field and Jones (2016) use the term “contingent” to describe non-regular faculty, I think it’s important to adopt a more universal descriptive term for this group of faculty. In 2011, Guy Standing’s book *The Precariat: The Dangerous New Class* was published. In Standing’s book, he defines the “precariat” in two ways: first as a distinct socio-economic group, and second—and most importantly—as a class *in-the-making*. It is this second part of the definition of the ‘precariat’—a *class in-the-making*—that is most relevant to the contract and sessional

faculty in higher education institutions in Canada. Because adjuncts and sessional faculty are a relatively new class of faculty in the higher education system, their role, the structures of their positions, and the ways in which they fit into the larger academic structures have evolved and continue to evolve, as evidenced by their addition to many institutional faculty association collective agreements across the country. However, an academic class consciousness is emerging. Furthermore, part-time faculty are, as Field and Jones (2016) argue, certainly “contingent”, but they are also “precarious” in the sense that their positions are constantly *in-the-making*. It’s the in-the-making part of this definition that makes the term precarious faculty more desirable. We, as precarious faculty, are collectively re-creating the academic profession through documenting and sharing our experiences, such as in this dissertation.

1.4 Preamble

Start where you are. The experiences in your life, both past and present, and who you are as a unique individual will lead you to certain questions about the world and certain problems related to why things are the way they are. It is important to honor your own personal history and the knowledge you have accumulated up to this point, as well as the intuition or instincts that draw you toward a particular direction, question, problem, or topic—understanding that you may not always know exactly why or how you are being drawn in that direction. (Madison, 2011, p. 21)

Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that, in order for qualitative research to be valid, the researcher must self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases. Therefore, it’s important that I first disclose my personal beliefs, values, and biases that might shape the inquiry of my study.

Madison (2011) verifies this: “positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own

power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (p. 8). So, it’s important to begin at the beginning and tell you my story.

I haven’t always been a precarious faculty member. When I was 21 years old—having just finished my bachelor’s degree a few months prior—I was hired as a public information assistant at a local teaching university in the Vancouver area. Working as a staff member at a local teaching university, I joined the ranks of the growing sector of unionized clerical and administrative staff on campuses across the country (Vered, 2019). Quickly, my role expanded and I started putting my newly acquired writing skills to use—writing press releases, media scripts, university webpages, and advertisements, among other documentation for the university. Here, at the young age of 21, I became a regular full-time employee, complete with a regular salary, a regular workday, and (government) benefits. This concept wasn’t new to me; growing up in the 90s and early 2000s, my family was very traditional. My mom was a stay-at-home mom—she took care of my brother, sister, me, and my dad, while my dad went off to work Monday to Friday, 9–5. My dad only worked for three different companies his entire life from the time he was 15 to 67 years old; he worked at each company for over ten years. The first company he worked for, he progressed through the ranks, as men often did in the 80s and 90s, and stayed with the company for 26 years. All this to say that regular full-time work was something that I grew up around—something that I grew to think of as “normal.” Going to work every day 9–5 was the kind of work I thought one does when they “go” to work. So, fresh out of university with a bachelor’s degree at 21 years of age, that’s what I did: I went out and got a regular full-time job.

Within a couple years, I had secured an even better regular, permanent full-time job, one with more money, more responsibilities, and a longer commute. At the young age of 23, I started work as a manager of administration for a large research university in Canada. Like my dad, I went to work during the week. I was on salary, had a pension, and was entitled to sick and vacation days. I was part of an association that worked to protect my rights as an employee. I commuted to and from work, two hours each way. All this, I thought, was the norm. I had seen my dad work in this fashion his whole life, and now I was following suit.

I worked as a manager of administration for nearly 10 years. After working as a staff member in universities for over a decade, in 2016, I decided to make the leap from being a staff member to being a faculty member. Having recently finished my master's degree in education and with a doctoral degree in-progress, I applied for a sessional position at a local teaching university, and in the fall of 2016 I taught my first face-to-face class. Then, between 2016 and 2018, I was hired by three other higher education institutions in British Columbia—all in sessional or contract faculty positions. At my busiest time, I was balancing sessional work at the four different institutions simultaneously. As a staff member, I had always known that there were various classifications of faculty, some holding greater status within the university than others. However, I hadn't quite appreciated how where you sat within the hierarchy of faculty positions in a department—as a tenure-stream professor, or as a temporary sessional contract instructor—has a substantial impact on the ways in which sessional faculty conduct themselves amongst their peers, and the unique pressures that emerge from the difference in faculty status. Working as a sessional faculty member alongside tenure-stream faculty, staff, and students from 2016 to 2018 has provided me with a unique perspective into academia. This new perspective has inspired me to investigate the sessional or contract faculty experience further—to document

my experiences and to focus on how sessional faculty engage with or are engaged with the organizational cultures in which they work. In fact, this documentation of experience—as Chapters 5, 6, and 7 detail further—is one that aligns with the purpose of a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program because it’s rooted in praxis; this dissertation was written with *experience as inquiry* as the focus.

Additionally, as I’ll advocate in the conclusion, with the tremendous growth of sessional or contingent faculty on campus, precarious faculty positions² are quickly being made into a new profession—and as such, proper procedures and practices are required, as with any profession. It’s important that more precarious faculty write about their experiences; as a growing profession, we need more documentation, and more published experiential accounts about what it’s like to be precarious faculty in higher education.

Having kept detailed notes, my research presents an autoethnographic account of being a precarious faculty member at the four different institutions that I was employed with between 2016 and 2018—a private online university, a teaching university, a college, and an institute. Ultimately, the aim of my research is to offer a detailed account of my experience to contribute to the growing body of research around precarious faculty in higher education institutions in Canada. Tierney (1997) explains:

Studying the cultural dynamics of educational institutions and systems equips us to understand and, hopefully, reduce adversarial relationships. Equally important, it will

²Often, graduate students take on precarious sessional or adjunct teaching positions to gain instructional experience and help supplement the financial expenses of their graduate programs. Graduate students are, most certainly, included in the category of “precarious faculty”. However, the focus of this study is on the broader definition of precarious faculty, which happens to include graduate students who teach in addition to their studies. I recognize that there exists a larger body of research on graduate students and graduate student unionization that is in tangent to the research on precarious faculty.

enable us to recognize how those actions and shared goals are most likely to succeed and how they can best be implemented. (p. 5)

While my experiences are specific, and perhaps not generalizable to all precarious faculty in higher education, I believe that my autoethnographic account does offer a specific point-of-view that will be of interest to senior administrators and policy makers in higher education institutions. Lombardi (2013) states that faculty drive the largest part of the cost of any institution in higher education and represent the most important capital asset of the university. Since contract and sessional faculty occupy such a large space within higher education institutions, their experiences require understanding. It is important to understand how contingent faculty engage and disengage with the organizational cultures in which they work—as I argue in Chapter 2—not just for the sake of contract and sessional faculty—but for the sake of the larger university. As Lombardi (2013) states: faculty are the university's number one asset, so all classifications of faculty need to be understood.

The autoethnographic accounts detailing my experience working as a sessional faculty member at a private university, a public teaching university, a public college, and a public institute are situated within organizational culture and organizational socialization theoretical frameworks. Tierney (1988) explains the ways in which organizations are formed:

Institutions certainly are influenced by powerful, external factors such as demographic, economic, and political conditions, yet, they are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from within. This internal dynamic has its roots in the history of the organization and derives its force from the values, processes, and goals held by those most intimately involved in the organization's workings. (p. 3)

Themes for the accounts of my experience draw on the literature around precarious faculty in higher education. In many cases the autoethnographic accounts verify the literature, and in other cases the autoethnographic accounts extend the literature and therefore, offer new insights.

1.5 Research Questions

“From an interpretive position, contingent faculty represent an unexplored and unexplained social world; a territory in which qualitative scholars must boldly venture and understand from the perspective of the natives who inhabit it” (Murray, 2019, p. 243). Having been a precarious faculty member (almost exclusively) for years, this dissertation aims to “boldly venture and understand”—as Murray (2019) puts it—the precarious faculty experience through turning to my own experience working on contracts across four different higher education institutions. Having provided some context around precarious faculty in higher education in Canada, the research questions that guide my research and my autoethnographic accounts are as follows:

- (1) In what ways have I been socialized, as a precarious faculty member, into the organizational cultures of the four institutions—a private university, a teaching university, a college, and an institute—that I worked within between 2016 and 2018?
- (2) In what ways does my experience as a precarious faculty member illustrate and extend the current literature about precarious faculty in Canadian higher education institutions? And, in what ways does my experience diverge from the current literature and offer new insights?

Having my experience intertwined with theoretical concepts and ideas is a central component to the Doctorate of Education program. It’s important that my research questions are rooted in praxis. In many ways, the research questions that I’ve articulated stem from a phenomenological point of view, as van Manen (1990) describes it in their book, *Researching*

Lived Experience—that to do research is to question the way we experience the world, and to know the world in which we live. “And since to *know* the world is profoundly to *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching—questioning—theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to *become* more fully part of it, or better, to become the world” (p. 5). While the research undertaken in this dissertation is not phenomenological, it is inspired by hermeneutic phenomenological research practices in that my research questions are reflective and there is some focus on the consciousness and an awareness of details of the seemingly trivial dimensions of everyday life. However, as van Manen (1990) explains, while there are phenomenological qualities to many ethnographic and autoethnographic studies, phenomenology differs from ethnography because ethnographies focus on an existing state of affairs in a past or present culture. Ethnography, therefore, is situated within culture. In the two research questions I’ve outlined above, my research is framed within the organizational cultures of the four post-secondary institutions that I’ve worked within; it is this cultural aspect of my research questions that lends my inquiry to autoethnographic methods.

1.6 Significance of Research

While it is true that there is no prototypical contingent faculty member experience (Murray, 2019), the autoethnographic account of my experiences will add to this new(er), growing, and necessary body of research: “Without an informed understanding of the perspectives of this growing segment of academic labour, any assessment of the educational service delivery, training, and academic environment in these institutions would be incomplete” (Field & Jones, 2016, p. 7). In 2016, Field and Jones published a comprehensive report through the *Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education* titled: “A Survey of Sessional Faculty in Ontario Publicly-Funded Universities.” This report, predicated on the unprecedented

growth in non-tenure/ tenure track faculty, provides data and insight into the current pressures, challenges, and adaptations of the rapidly rising number of contingent faculty. The objective of the study was to increase understandings of the perceptions, working conditions, and work-related expectations of contingent faculty in Ontario's public universities—precisely the same group of people that I fall into—except that my experiences reported in this dissertation will focus on higher education institutions in British Columbia as opposed to Ontario. However, while Field and Jones's (2016) study, indeed, focuses on the same segment within the labour market that I focus on in this dissertation, the survey approach they used differs from the intimate, qualitative approach that I utilize. This massive study by Field and Jones surveyed nearly 7,814 instructors and achieved an overall response rate of 21.5 per cent. Field and Jones admit that their 2016 survey study on Ontario contingent faculty is just the start to understanding the precarious faculty experience in higher education in Canada. And, while they have gathered some much-needed basic data on sessional faculty, their findings are specific to the Ontario higher education landscape. Additionally, while Ontario and British Columbia have very similar higher education systems, there are slight differences. Additionally, the key findings from my autoethnographic research (presented at the end of Chapters 5, 6, and 7) will offer a very particular and individualized analysis; this analysis will lead to recommendations for (precarious faculty) best practices within higher education systems. For example, at the end of Chapter 6, I suggest that precarious faculty are subject to informal performance evaluations after reviewing my own experience being evaluated at the four different institutions.

Gill (2017) states that there is little discussion about the everyday “affective, embodied experiences of precarious faculty, and how this lack of discussion aids in keeping the precarious faculty's experiences secret and silent” (p. 194). Additionally, Vosko (2006), Lopes and Dewan

(2014), and Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) argue that the day-to-day micro experiences of precarious work requires further investigation and development; Vosko (2006) determines that more qualitative studies—particularly stories—are needed to better understand this growing number of workers in society. Many researchers are investigating the experiences of academic faculty—tenured or not—in an attempt to understand the academic experience (Chen, McAlpine, & Amundsen, 2015; Delanty, 2008; Dowd & Kaplan, 2005; Galaz-Fontes, Arimoto, & Teichlet, 2016; Gopaul et al., 2016; Henkel, 2000; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011; McAlpine, Amundsen, & Turner, 2014; McAlpine & Emmioglu, 2015; Taylor, 2008; Whitchurch, 2019). Gill (2017) argues that the emerging critique about the working conditions in neoliberal higher education is coming from the ground up—with the focus on the experiences of academics within the departments that they work.

Additionally, it’s important to note the unique position that I write from: being faculty in higher education is my second career. And, most importantly, it’s my second career *within higher education*. While my perspective throughout this dissertation is very much from a precarious faculty perspective, it’s also heavily informed by my experiences as a staff member and my interactions within the higher education system. In Perry, Dean, and Hilton’s (2019) autoethnographic analysis as higher education administrators turned new faculty at an American university, one of their findings was they were all at an advantage because they had substantial knowledge about higher education in general: “Although we are new to faculty and tenure processes, we have all worked in (and are now teaching about) the academy. Therefore, we understood basic organizational structure, general university protocol, and overall cultural nuances” (p. 62). Therefore, my first career—my background—has put me at an advantage when it comes to understanding the complex nature of higher education institutions.

Since this dissertation uses autoethnography to explore precarity in higher education, it's important to note that the results from this research are not generalizable. However, just because the results aren't generalizable doesn't mean that they are without value. Tierney (1988) explains that an organizational culture framework "is not to presume that all organizations should function similarly, but rather to provide managers and researchers with a schema to diagnose their own organizations" (p. 17). My autoethnographic accounts are meant to be added as a complement to the emerging body of research and contextualized within individual institutions. By approaching the issue of precarity in higher education from an organizational culture lens, my autoethnographic accounts presented here are meant to be part of a larger collective of narratives that can then be used by managers, administrators, and stakeholders to reform policies and procedures within their institutions.

1.7 Outline of This Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in typical dissertation fashion.

In Chapter 2, I start by reviewing the literature on being precarious in higher education institutions. In order to do this, I start with a review of changes to labour markets and work over the past few decades. Then, I focus on the rise of precarious work in Canada. I then explore the changes in the Canadian higher education landscape—and the shift towards hiring precarious faculty in Canada. Here, I also define what I mean by 'precarious' faculty and explain why I prefer to use the term 'precarious' over other terms that are used, such as contingent, contract, or sessional faculty. I also explain the significance of career stage, and how gender and race and ethnicity are represented within precarious faculty. I then discuss the personal and financial strain that is a defining feature of precarious work—including within higher education. I

conclude this chapter by discussing academic employment tensions across both Canada and specifically within the province of British Columbia.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the theoretical framework that I employ for this research: Institutional and Departmental Organizational Culture Theory. Organizations, including higher education organizations, are a unique environment and organizational culture theory provides a lens with which we can inquire how and why people communicate the way that they do within organizations. Tierney's (1997) theory of organizational culture in higher education is a working framework "to diagnose culture in colleges and universities so that distinct problems can be overcome" (p. 2). In this chapter, I also discuss organizational socialization and the ways in which new faculty are socialized into their departments when they are hired.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the research methodology employed for the research in this dissertation: Autoethnography. In particular, I'll explain why I chose autoethnography—and in particular, organizational autoethnography—as the method to explore the research questions posed earlier in this chapter. In this chapter, I also discuss the validity of autoethnography, as well as the risks associated with undertaking this method to explore precarity in higher education. Finally, this chapter concludes by outlining the four research sites that are the focus of this research: a teaching university, a college, an institute, and an online private university.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are the findings and analysis chapters. They focus on three instances of being onboarded into a department as a new precarious faculty member: being interviewed, being evaluated, and being given resources. Since one of my research questions is: *In what ways does my experience as a precarious faculty member illustrate and extend the current literature about precarious faculty in Canadian higher education institutions? And, in what ways does my*

experience diverge from the current literature and offer new insights? These three chapters are framed in the following ways: first, I describe what the literature explains about being interviewed, being evaluated, and being given resources. Then, I offer an autoethnographic account that describes my experiences at each of the four institutions for each of these three topics. Finally, I conclude these three chapters with a discussion analyzing the ways in which my autoethnographic accounts align (or not) with the research. Here, I also explore the major themes that emerge from my autoethnographic accounts.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude by summarizing my findings and making recommendations for various groups in higher education, as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Being Precarious: A Literature Review

This chapter offers a review of the literature on both the history of precarious labour in Canada as well as the recent studies published on the topic of contingent faculty. This review offers a comprehensive background for the two research questions presented in the previous chapter. The themes that have emerged here from the literature will provide structure and context for my autoethnographic account as a precarious faculty member at four different institutions in British Columbia—the basis of my research.

2.1 Changes in Labour Markets and Work

Living in a capitalist society, neoliberalism affects much of what we do and how we do it (Harvey, 2005). Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as a “theory of political economic practices [that is advanced] by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). As a result of neoliberal trends, we are seeing significant deregulation, privatization, and an overall withdrawal from the state (Harvey, 2005). Precarious employment is not a new phenomenon in the labour market, especially in Canada. Flexibility in labour is a result of a post-fordist mode of capital accumulation. In fact, Vosko (2006) explains in detail that precarious employment used to be the norm. Up until the late 19th and early 20th centuries precarious employment was especially prominent amongst immigrant workers. During this time, the government compiled specific policies that were designed to build the Canadian nation, primarily by bringing British settlers to Canada; the government’s new policies were both Eurocentric and gendered right up until the start of the Second World War (Vosko, 2006). Vosko (2006) notes that, “employers’ demand for [workers], prompted various policy changes, such as

policies facilitating the recruitment through employment agents or labour brokers in Canada and abroad to fill labour needs” (p. 5).

It is during this time that both men and women were typecast into certain roles, roles that we now think of as traditional roles: men working outside the home, and women inside the home. However, prior to the Second World War, both men’s and women’s work were primary contract based, or precarious (Vosko, 2006). It was common for men and women to work short-term contract-style jobs for multiple employers. Unemployment between jobs was a common and normal occurrence.

Human societies have always been characterized by a *basic division of labour* – essentially, how tasks are organized and distributed among workers. [...] with economic development, these roles became more specialized, and the arrival of industrial capitalism further intensified this process. (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011, p. 21)

In the early 20th century, Max Weber addressed a major change accompanying capitalist industrialization: bureaucracy. With the rise in the bureaucratic organization of work, came the rise of more formal, impersonal work relations in large bureaucracies (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011). In the new bureaucratic organizational framework, rules and regulations became paramount in determining worker’s behaviours, and a hierarchy or authority existed with a precise division of labour. Weber’s idea of bureaucratic organizations is all about rationality, impersonality, and formal contractual relationships (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011).

Following the bureaucratic notion of the organization from the early 20th century, moving out of the industrial era into a postindustrial society after World War II, the service sector became much more prominent in Canadian society. With the number of factory workers

decreasing, employment in the areas of education, health, social welfare, entertainment, government, trade, finance, and a variety of other business sectors began to rise (Krahn, Lowe & Hughes, 2011). As Krahn, Lowe, and Hugues (2011) explain, in the early 1970's, postindustrial societies engaged most workers in the production and dissemination of knowledge, rather than in goods production. It was at this time that knowledge workers—technicians, professionals, and scientists—became a large, powerful and important class in the postindustrial society.

Vosko (2006) explains that it really wasn't until the end of the Second World War that the labour market in Canada started to change drastically. It was around the mid-twentieth century that Canada's economy began to expand. Canada began to see rapid accumulation, economic expansion, and productivity growth (Vosko, 2006). And, along with this economic growth, workers began securing associational rights; it's around this time that collective bargaining also started to gain legitimacy. Organized labour began to take shape, albeit mostly for male workers. A new normative model of employment began taking shape; one where the worker has a single employer and, "works on the employer's premises under his or her direct supervision, normally in a unionized sector, and has access to social benefits and entitlements that complete the social wage" (Vosko, 2006, p. 6).

This new standard employment relationship, as described by Vosko (2006), started with blue-collared (male) workers, then made its way to white-collared (male) workers. This new structure of employment was also much more structured than work pre-World War II and provided workers with regularity and stability (Vosko, 2006). Additionally, under this new structure, worker's standard of living improved and workers were now able to better support the family unit. It was out of this that a single earner in a family unit was now capable of supporting the entire family. Vosko (2006) explains, "through such assumptions, the standard employment

relationship shaped not only labour-force patterns but familial obligations” (p. 7). The “male breadwinner” and the “female caregiver” social contract started taking shape in society. The consequences of these typecast gendered work divisions are still deeply entrenched in today’s workforce. Women (and men) have been fighting these traditional divisions for decades, yet, women still face many challenges obtaining employment roles that were traditionally only limited to men and earning a salary that is comparable to men in their same fields.

Today, with the rapid reliance on new technology and the internet, we are experiencing yet another shift in the evolution of labour markets and work. “Fierce international competition, multinational free trade agreements, and the spectacular growth of other economies have had a major impact on Canada” (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011, p. 28-29). Since the 1990’s, globalization continues to bring about fundamental re-adjustments in the Canadian economy and labour market. Globalization and its effects on the labour market deserve special attention, according to Aloisi (2015), because it, “represents a piece of the global puzzle of a *“flexibilization”* trend in the field of employment relationships” (p. 4). Globalization is promoted as a means by which expanding “free markets” generate economic growth and elevate living standards (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011). And, with changes in digital technology, the growth of platform economics, and globalization and free trade agreements, the concern around the accelerated trend towards nonstandard or contingent work (part-time, temporary, and contract) arises.

2.2 The Rise of Precarious Work

As Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich (2003) state, “‘precarious employment’ is the best concept available—preferable to ‘non-standard work’—since it adds important nuances to the standard/non-standard employment distinction” (p. 6). Vosko (2006) builds on this definition of

precarious employment in their labour-focused book titled *Precarious Employment* in 2006.

Vosko (2006) argues that “precarious employment is a defining feature of the Canadian labour market, yet it is poorly understood and the consequences are far-reaching” (p. 3). In this text, Vosko offers a comprehensive definition of precarious work: “Precarious employment encompasses forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and high risks of ill-health” (p. 3). Additionally, this definition includes dimensions of employment status, form of employment, labour market insecurity, social context, social location, and political and economic conditions.

Vosko (2006) outlines four dimensions or criteria for establishing whether a job is precarious. They are:

1. The degree of certainty with which a person has continuous employment.
2. The person’s control over the labour process.
3. The degree of regulatory protection: whether the person has access to regulatory protections through union representation or the law.
4. The person’s income level; whether the person’s wage is sufficient enough to support them and their dependents.

Precarious work, in the context of this dissertation, refers to the deviation from the standard employment relationship and includes people in temporary and contract work with low earnings, along with those with uncertain work schedules, irregular earnings, and inconsistent hours of work or jobs without benefits.

According to Statistics Canada, just over 87 percent of Canadians enjoyed full-time, permanent work in April 2017, compared to the remaining 13 percent of Canadians who occupied some form of temporary work appointment (Statistics Canada, 2017). Alternatives to

the standard type of employment arrangement in Canada are increasing (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011). Nonstandard work arrangements can be initiated either by the individual workers or by the employer. For individual workers, nonstandard work arrangements may be appealing because they typically allow for greater flexibility. However, more commonly, employers, in both the public and private sectors, responding to economic difficulties, replace full-time workers with part-time workers in an effort to earn higher profit margins. Employers tend to focus more on part-time temporary staff as a strategy for responding to uneven demands for goods and services (Krahn, Lowe, & Hughes, 2011). Taylor (2016) confirms that this increase in different forms of non-standard work is a current trend in the Canadian economy. Recently, contract work has surpassed all other forms of temporary employment in the Canadian job market, and now represents just over half of all temporary jobs. Additionally, as Taylor (2016) explains, “contract workers tend to be more educated and slightly younger than permanent workers, and are paid around 14 percent less per hour than their permanent counterparts” (p. 20). So, while contract workers are just as educated as their permanent counterparts in the workplace, they are paid less, and enjoy less employment stability. Perhaps most concerning is that contract work often leaves people outside the protection of labour laws. Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich (2003) confirm that “Canada’s labour force is becoming more precarious with the growth of temporary and part-time wage work, own-account self employment and other forms of employment that are not fully covered by labour laws and policies” (p. 6). In essence, contract workers do not share the same rights as their permanent counterparts in the workplace.

While there are some benefits to being a precarious worker in the Canadian economy—namely that precarious workers enjoy flexibility in the amount of hours that they work—the rise of precarious work seems to be a concern to many economists. In a 2016 special

report issued by TD Economics, after reviewing precarious employment in Canada, the authors concluded that, “precarious employment is negative for the Canadian economy. Without the assurance of the income security that comes along with stable employment and hours, and the matching wages and benefits, consumers lack the confidence to spend” (TD Economics, 2015, p. 10). Good or bad, one thing is certain: there is an increase in precarious workers in Canada.

What’s more is that the global coronavirus pandemic that hit our world in March 2020 seems to have intensified precarious work even more. Hasija, Padmanabhan, and Prashant (2020) explain, in their *Harvard Business Review* article, that, “the Covid-19 crisis has forced businesses in industries previously impervious to remote working to reengineer their work processes and bolster their technology support systems, which have been the traditional barriers to alternate work arrangements” (para. 18). With companies changing their work structures and procedures to accommodate their workers during the pandemic so that they can work from home, it is more than likely that companies, having stretched their traditional work arrangements with their employees, have opened a window to more contract-type work. Hasija, Padmanabhan, and Prashant (2020) explain, “the Covid-19 epidemic could well prove to be a pivotal point in the gigification of knowledge work, and many firms will be attracted by the prospects of the direct and indirect cost savings that the gig economy model seems to offer” (para. 19). So, precarious work was already on the rise before the 2020 pandemic. And, with the pandemic forcing companies to be more “flexible” with their employees, it’s very likely that companies will use these new “flexible” ways of working to hire more contract workers than permanent employees in an effort to save money and limit company expenses. With record numbers of unemployment, this author wonders if, when companies are ready to hire workers back, they’ll be hired as contract workers rather than employees.

Another issue that the Covid-19 crisis has brought to the table for many contract faculty is the painstaking awareness that precarious workers are limited in terms of benefits.

“Freelancers, in particular, have been left to fend for themselves against the dangers of the pandemic” (Rose, 2020, para. 1). Without benefits like health coverage or sick leave, many contract workers are forced to absorb the risk of the pandemic themselves; this causes much financial and personal stress on the contract workers individually—they’re completely unprotected from the pandemic. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has only intensified the precarity of contract workers in higher education, as the next section will explain in more detail.

2.3 Changes in Canadian Higher Education

There is a significant body of research that outlines the evolution of higher education and its advancement towards corporatization, as it has become more and more influenced by neoliberal trends and market forces (Bauer, 2011; Brownlee, 2015; Charfauros & Tierney 1999; Dobbie & Robinson, 2008; Fisher, Metcalfe, & Field, 2016, Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019; Mapes, 2019; Newson & Polster, 2019; Pan, 2019; Rajagopal, 2002; Ross, Savage, & Watson, 2019). This research validates the corporatization of higher education—that faculty, who once held a considerable stake in how their universities were governed, are now being taken over by professional administrators in an age of new public management. In the later part of the 20th century, “the university moved from an ivory tower image to a role in the gross national product” (Sheehan, 1985, p. 34). Higher education has always served a critical role in society—but now, higher education is responsible for training future generations of doctors, teachers, lawyers, accountants and other knowledge-based professions en masse. Giroux (2014) discusses *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education* in the United States and argues that higher education has taken a turn in the last century, and is now forced to mimic corporate culture in the face of

public funding budget cuts, the downsizing of faculty, and the revamping of the curriculum to fit the interests of the market. Furthermore, Giroux (2014) argues that, “universities and colleges have adopted corporate management models as evidenced in the increase in adjunct and non-tenured faculty and in the way that university presidents are now viewed as CEOs, faculty as entrepreneurs, and students as consumers” (p. 59). While Giroux’s focus is American, the same can be applied to the Canadian higher education system since Canada and the United States both have similar economies, languages, religions, and cultures (Lipset, 1990). However, the two countries differ in that the Canadian higher education system is less differentiated and almost all Canadian universities are governed provincially and funded primarily with public money (Davies & Zarifa, 2012). Both Canadian and American higher education institutions share pressure from policy-makers to make close ties with industry in an effort to be more innovative and competitive (Davies & Zarifa, 2012). Davies and Zarifa (2012) even suggest that leadership at the top Canadian research universities openly express their desire to emulate institutions in the United States. Many universities in Canada have similar corporate management models that include departmental fee-for-service activities that generate additional departmental income to supplement the budget. “American colleges and universities seem to be in every business but education. They are in the entertainment business, the housing business, the restaurant business, the recreation business, and, on some campuses, they operate what are essentially professional sports franchises” (Selingo, 2013, p. 5). The same is true of universities in Canada; as Usher (2018) explains, higher education institutions are relying less and less on governments to supplement their budgets. Canadian universities are focused on tangent income streams such as student housing (particularly because of the high number of international students that the

universities recruit at top tuition dollar). Now, perhaps more than ever, universities operate more like a business.

Of course, this ‘corporatization of the university’ is not just a trend in the United States; we are also seeing this play out in Canada. Shanahan and Jones (2007) refer to these strong ties between higher education and industry as a trend across Canada and argue that there exists an, “increasing institutional competition and the use of market-like mechanisms” (p. 37). Working more within the larger market, Canadian universities are now experiencing the violent fluctuations that come with its volatility (Pitman, 2013). This volatility is changing the university environment and the way that it responds to market demands, offering programs that are more in-line with the economy and less in-line with traditional academic programs. Pitman (2013) also suggests that the university’s response to prospective students’ program choices is influenced by a business/management preparation rationale, and, ultimately, sways the closure and curtailment of many of the traditional areas of study in universities.

In 2007, Menzies and Newson wrote about the significant changes in higher education over the past few decades up until that point—including the growing reliance of precarious faculty in the higher education system; there has been a profound shift in Canadian universities over the last five decades. Menzies and Newson (2007) provide a summary of events from the Canadian post-secondary context by tracing the history of the university budget landscape in Canada—and how it came to be that universities have evolved into public enterprises that must respond to decreasing government funding and increasing demand. Menzies and Newson (2007) explain that the shift didn’t occur instantaneously—that due to successive shifts in government funding policies over the past two decades, “Canadian universities have significantly shifted from being the public serving, collegially governed, nation-building institutions that emerged

during the post-Second World War” (p. 84). They state that the shift began in the mid-1970s, with provincial and federal governments gradually reducing their funding for education, health and social programs. At first, the decline in government revenues was met with short-term fiscal crises, a temporary layover until things returned to ‘normal,’ but, by the 1980s fiscal pressures increased and, “the role of ‘management’ began to occupy the institutional centre while the role of collegial governance through academic bodies such as faculty councils and senates became increasingly marginalized” (Menzies & Newson, 2007, p. 85). In the 1980s, universities began to reposition themselves in an attempt to survive fiscal retrenchment, and to secure new sources of funding. When the 1990s hit, and as government funding became less reliable, universities were forced to cope with fluctuating budgetary configurations (Menzies & Newson, 2007). Usher (2020) adds that, “Stagnant full-time enrollments during the 1990s were partly a product of demographics, but they were also the result of repeated provincial cuts to university grants, which led to capacity issues and a reluctance on the part of institutions to admit more students” (p. 13). Unsurprisingly, the history of the Canadian higher education landscape parallels that of the Canadian economy—mirroring the ‘do more with less’ capitalist logic that has overpowered organizations in the last twenty-five years. Since 2000, as Usher (2020) explains, post-secondary institutions experienced a period of significant growth, “by 2019-20, full-time enrollments were 78% higher than they were in 2000-01” (p. 13). This growth can be attributed to technological changes and baby-boomer children starting to enter higher education institutions along with credential inflation. Usher (2020) confirms that, “the main change in institutional income post-2008 has been the increasing reliance on tuition fees; indeed since 2007-08 tuition fee income has roughly doubled at Canadian universities and colleges from \$8 billion to \$16 billion” (p. 33). However, this increase is not due to domestic tuition fees, but rather international student tuition

fees. In fact, as of 2016, Canada's higher education system amounted to 2.4 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (Usher, 2020).

Menzies and Newson's (2007) survey of faculty found that faculty feel stressed, anxious, isolated, distracted, and as a result, intellectually inhibited. The authors also discuss how important the role of time is—that time can be optimized: “Its service to business and industry has been one of the hallmarks of capitalism, epitomized in the phrase ‘time is money’” (p. 93). While Menzies and Newson's findings are specific to faculty activity and attitudes, it's important to illuminate this shift in attitude towards the university: what its purpose is, and the people who compose its spaces. Menzies and Newson's (2007) research suggests that there has been a shift towards instrumental productivity. Their findings revealed that academics are now forced to be focused more on getting grants, patents, and accumulating publications than they are on “authentic original knowledge,” oriented to the public good. In their conclusion, Menzies and Newson (2007) argue that we need to find some way for academics to find the time and space to restore their attention to that of “authentic knowledge”—and carve out more spaces for reflective dialogue—and less of the market-driven activities that tend to occupy their time.

Menzies and Newson's (2007) research, like so much of the research done in this area on the shift away from the university as an ivory tower, and towards a profit-seeking enterprise, focuses on how the role of faculty has changed, and the effects that the pressures of having to be an entrepreneurial academic have on university academics.

2.3.1 Academic Labour Segmentation in Canada

Bauder (2005) explains that, increasingly, higher education in North America is seeing an increase in the casualization of academic labour. Due to reductions in operating budgets, a quest for efficiency, and the increasing corporatization of academic institutions, there has emerged a

strong need for ‘flexible’ and diverse labour practices. Precarious faculty positions are appealing to university departments because they, “represent a cheaper and more flexible labour pool when universities are straining to adapt to changing needs under tight budgets” (MacDonald, 2013). Richard Sigurdson, former dean of arts at the University of Calgary, has gone on record in an article published in *University Affairs* stating that, “there is no secret here that [the increase in the reliance of sessional faculty in universities] is directly related to the decline in funding as well as the rise in enrolments” (MacDonald, 2013). “While few universities support a continuing large group of non-tenured full-time faculty, most rent part-time faculty in ever-increasing numbers, creating a category of what we now call contingent faculty” (Lombardi, 2013, p. 67). Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) call this class of faculty in higher education the “Gig Academy” and stress the ways in which cheap and disposable labour is utilized in higher education. This “gig academy”, as Kezar, DePaola, and Scott write about in their book with the same name, is a result of neoliberal trends that live within the academy and is a play on the “gig economy” term that also comes with a large body of research.

Traditionally, academic roles are broken up into three main categories of responsibilities: teaching, research, and service. Newson and Polster (2019) argue that by replacing retired tenure-track positions with contract teachers, university administrators have created a new institutional administrative strategy. They are now able to look at academic labour in its individual components: teaching, research, and service. And, administrators are able to hire people to undertake each individual component of work—instead of the traditional integration of all three. This allows administrators to re-package and re-distribute teaching resources year after year with great budgetary flexibility (Newson & Polster, 2019). It is this disassembling and

redistributing of academic work that has impacted the way that universities operate, and how the people within the organizations work, as well as how the people experience their work.

Bauder (2005) argues that there is little evidence that the academic labour market is driven by a mysterious invisible hand of the market, which supposedly rewards workers based on meritocratic principles. Drawing on labour market segmentation theory, Bauder outlines that the Canadian higher education labour market is divided into two distinct segments: those who have “good jobs” with stability, high wages and benefits, and those who have “bad jobs” with little job security, low wages and few benefits. Drawing on the work of Karl Marx and the idea of a reserve army of labour, Bauder (2005) argues that, “the stability of tenured faculty positions is functionally dependent on the existence of a sufficient number of flexible sessional and adjunct faculty” (p. 231). Further, in Canada, without this flexible academic labour force, the stability of a segment of tenured professors would be threatened. That being said, with the current growth of the segment of part-time sessional or permanently temporary labour, both tenure-track and precarious sessional faculty have something to worry about. Tenure-stream faculty at North American institutions should be concerned about whether universities will abandon the tenure system, and sessional and adjunct faculty should equally be concerned about their diminishing chances of upward mobility into a tenure/tenure-track position (Bauder, 2005). Additionally, as Bauder (2005) explains, with the increasing temporary and part-time positions being created where tenure and tenure-stream positions should exist, this segmentation becomes a strategy of reducing wages and labour standards in the entire academic labour market. This, in turn, depreciates academic labour in Canada.

What’s more, Bauder (2005) claims that the rising trend of precarious faculty in Canadian higher education—the “flexible” pool of workers who can be easily hired and fired—is growing

beyond the size necessary to fill temporary and seasonal labour needs. The major issue at stake here, as identified by Bauder (2005), is that “temporary and part-time positions are being created where tenured and tenure-stream positions should exist. Segmentation no longer serves to stabilize the positions of tenured faculty; rather, the secondary segment threatens to replace the primary segment” (p. 232). Bauder (2005) argues that the trend of rising precarious faculty has become an institutional, or industry strategy of reducing both wages and labour standards in the *entire* academic labour market.

In addition to the structural consequences of the increase in precarious faculty in higher education in Canada, Bauder’s (2005) case study on the academic labour market explains the concept of competition as it relates to the academic labour market. Bauder (2005) claims that “temporary faculty compete with each other to hold on to part-time and temporary teaching positions, while tenure-stream faculty compete with each other for the next promotion or merit increase” (p. 233). So, while “faculty” all work within the same institution and are connected, the classification of their appointment matters. This concept means that members of different segments in the labour market do not compete with one another, but only with members of the same segment within that labour market (Ivancheva & O’Flynn, 2016). Jones et al. (2012), in their study to determine if there is a discrepancy in the work experience between junior and senior faculty, found that there are only modest differences in their perceptions of academic work. This is particularly interesting because it illustrates how precarious faculty are in competition with one another—not in competition with their tenure-stream colleagues. Consequently, this leads one to believe that there are nuances and experiences that are specific to precarious faculty (and in turn, nuances and experiences that are specific to tenure-stream faculty). “Faculty on the tenure-track occupy overlapping but different social worlds than those

of contingent faculty” (Murray, 2019, p. 239). Newson and Polster (2019) confirm this diversity in experience, arguing that the corporatization of higher education affects the tiered academic work force in profoundly different ways. The material conditions of sessional faculty differ from those of workers with more job security. A critical point that Bauder (2005) makes, in relation to the study undertaken in this dissertation, is that there is a *difference* between precarious and tenure-stream faculty. Not all faculty experience the same challenges and obstacles within their roles as academics. The precarious faculty experience is the primary focus of the research in this dissertation.

2.3.2 The Shift Towards Hiring Precarious Faculty

Not many decades ago, university-level teaching in North America and many other Western societies was typically done by full-time faculty members holding tenure track positions with professional levels of remuneration and benefits, continuing employment, and progressive career trajectories. In the contemporary university, it has become an accepted practice, if not a matter of policy, for the majority of undergraduate teaching to be done by academic workers holding part-time contracts. (Newson & Polster, 2019, p. 1)

While tenure-track positions were the norm for the generation of professors now approaching retirement, the share of higher education teaching done by people who are not tenured or on the tenure track has increased rapidly over the last quarter century (Dobby & Robinson, 2008; Manning, 2013; Murray, 2019).

Canadian higher education institutions are seeing a large number of courses being taught by contingent or precarious instructors on their campuses (Bauer, 2011; Charfauros & Tierney, 1999; Dobbie & Robinson, 2008; Jones, et al., 2012; Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019; Pasma & Shaker, 2018; Rajagopaul, 2002; Shahjahan, 2019; Vander Kloet et al., 2017). One of the most

dramatic changes to Canada's higher education institutions (research and teaching universities, colleges, and institutes) over the last quarter century has been the shift in the nature of academic work away from permanent full-time tenure-stream positions towards insecure, contract positions.

Brownlee (2015) argues that there's no real way for us to really pin down how many precarious faculty are out there. This lack of part-time and temporary faculty data is confirmed by researchers before Brownlee: Rajagopal (2002), Bauder (2005), Muzzin (2008), and Bauer (2011). In 2015, Brownlee attempted to account for the number of precarious academic faculty at higher education institutions in Ontario, Canada. However, due to the lack of statistical information available (both from Statistics Canada and the individual institutions (including faculty associations) themselves), Brownlee was unable to definitively determine the real number of precarious faculty working in the Ontario post-secondary system (Brownlee, 2015). In Brownlee's quest to understand specific institutional plans (in Ontario) for dealing with the increase in precarious faculty, Brownlee found that institutions didn't have plans, or at the very least, failed to share any institutional plans, around managing the increasing need to employ precarious faculty at their respective institutions (Brownlee, 2015). Brownlee suggests that the reluctance to share plans is likely motivated by political considerations in addition to the nature of university data management. Brownlee also questions the proportion of tenure-stream faculty positions to contingent faculty positions as new faculty positions are created and predicts that, "under corporatization, my research suggests that casualization will continue to dominate university hiring practices in Ontario, and elsewhere in the Canadian academy" (Brownlee, 2015, p. 802).

Brownlee's (2015) results are concerning. Canadian higher education institutions are aware of their increasing dependence on precarious faculty in their operations; yet, they are failing to account, track, and include those faculty in any serious way in their institutional plans. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) argue that, "omitting contingent workers from any official figures gives some universities a way to maintain an institutional ignorance about the size and demographics of the contingent workforce" (p. 33). If the university doesn't know about the composition of their faculty, how can they support them properly? Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) also suggest that higher education institutions don't collect data on their precarious faculty on purpose, "adjunct faculty are often misclassified in order to strategically reduce the employer's obligation to them" (p. 161).

Pasma and Shaker (2018) picked up on where Brownlee (2015) left off. To write their report on contract faculty in Canada published through the *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* titled, "ContractU: Contract faculty appointments at Canadian universities," they submitted a Freedom of Information (FoI) request to all public universities across the country. Their FoI response included information from 86 percent of all publicly funded universities in Canada. Pasma and Shaker (2018) acknowledge that there are some limitations in the data they collected but this is the first Canada-wide report of its kind. This is the first (and only report) published that presents comprehensive Canada-wide data on precarious faculty in publicly-funded universities.

Because higher education in Canada is under the jurisdiction of the provinces, it's important to note that the proportion of precarious faculty in higher education in Canada varies by province. Quebec relies on contract faculty more than any other province; Ontario and British Columbia are above the national average; Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and

Labrador stand in the middle; Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are significantly below the national average; and P.E.I. and Alberta have the lowest rates of contract faculty appointments (Pasma & Shaker, 2018).

The following graphic is taken directly from Pasma and Shaker's (2018) report on contract faculty appointments at Canadian Universities.

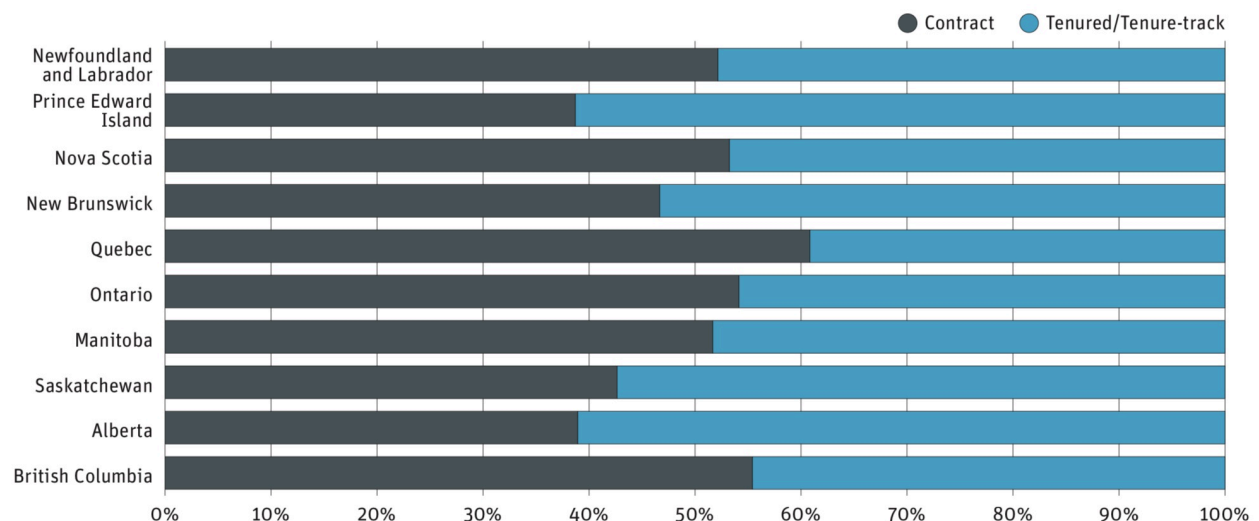


Figure 1: Proportion of Contract and Tenured Faculty by Province, 2016-19 (Pasma & Shaker, 2018, p. 22)

As Figure 1 illustrates, British Columbia has one of the highest proportions of precarious faculty in their higher education institutions. This is not surprising since British Columbia has a relatively high number of colleges compared to other provinces; with more colleges comes more employment contracts that are not of the typical tenure or tenure-track nature. Therefore, British Columbia is an ideal province for studying precarious academic positions in Canada because it has an abundance of these types of workers in the higher education system.

In Ontario, the province that houses the highest number of higher education institutions in Canada, there is an emerging trend to rely on contract or part-time faculty while enrolments continue to increase (Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations [OCUFA],

2009). It is estimated that, “the number of courses taught by contract faculty at Ontario universities has nearly doubled—increasing by 97 percent—between 2000-01 and 2013-14” (OCUFA, 2015). In September 2015, the CBC’s Michael Enright even hosted an episode on *The Sunday Edition* that focused on Ira Basen’s (2015) documentary “Class Struggle.” In the episode, Enright referred to contract faculty as a “huge army of part-time teachers, who are highly qualified and poorly paid” and noted that, “today more than half of Canadian undergraduates are taught by these very precarious workers, not by the big-name—and well-paid—academics that universities like to feature in their recruiting ads” (Basen, 2015). The title of the episode for that podcast: *Academia’s dirty little secret*. Pasma and Shaker (2018) confirm this phenomenon in their report: “more than half of faculty appointments in Canada are contract appointments. In 2016-2017, 38,681 faculty appointments, or 53.60 percent, were contract appointments, compared to 33,490 tenured and tenure-track appointments” (p. 17).

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), founded in 1951, is a national voice for academic staff working in Canadian universities and colleges. Representing roughly 70,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff and other academic professionals, CAUT claims to be, “an outspoken defender of academic freedom and works actively in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada” (Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT], n.d.b). CAUT, therefore, is a national association that identifies issues within academia in the Canadian context, and aims to give a voice to those issues. One of the most pressing issues that CAUT has identified is what they label, “fairness for contract academic staff”—in fact, in addition to running a week-long campaign (‘Fair Employment Week’) in October to generate awareness of this issue, they also have an entire website devoted to this issue (CAUT, n.d.c). On this page, their statement reads:

More and more academic work is being performed by people hired on a per course or limited term basis. These positions are often poorly paid, have little or no benefits, no job security and no academic freedom. This has serious implications not only for contract academic staff, but for students, their regular academic staff colleagues, and universities and colleges as a whole. CAUT opposes the increasing casualization of academic work and campaigns for the equal treatment of all academic staff no matter what their employment status is. (CAUT, n.d.c)

This issue—as identified by CAUT, among others—is significant for both the individual contract faculty workers and for the larger university. CAUT argues that contract faculty “are denied the opportunity to participate in all aspects of academic work—teaching, research and service to the community. They can’t fully exercise their academic freedom because of the possibility of not being renewed” (CAUT, n.d.c). While it is obvious that these issues center on contract faculty members, they extend beyond ‘being an issue only for contract faculty’ and affect the larger university community, including permanent tenured/ tenure-track faculty, staff, senior administration, and students. The fact that more and more faculty are employed on a temporary or precarious basis is not insignificant. CAUT reports that “about one third of all academic staff in post-secondary institutions in Canada struggle to find decent work” (CAUT, n.d.c). This is significant not just because it affects the individual faculty member as well as the students they work with, “it is clear the insecurity and prevalence of this type of employment is having an impact on workers and on the quality of education students receive” (Pasma & Shaker, 2018, p. 9).

Universities are like ecosystems. What happens in one area of the ecosystem has an effect on all the other areas—issues ripple through the ecosystem affecting more than just their small

area. The same can be argued of the issues that contract faculty are facing in the larger university ecosystem; the issues extend to permanent tenured/ tenure-track faculty, staff, senior administration and students. Contract faculty are part of the university web. Therefore, if there are ‘issues’ surrounding contract faculty, as CAUT and others identify there to be—then this should be an issue for all of academia, not just the contract faculty who are directly experiencing the issues.

2.3.2.1 The Significance of Career Stage

Feldman and Turnley (2001) note that the effects of the rising trend in adjunct faculty members have been mixed and that, despite this trend, there has been surprisingly little empirical research on the experiences of adjunct faculty. While their study focuses on the experiences of adjunct faculty in the United States, it is one of the first studies on the *experience* of adjunct faculty in universities. In particular, their study gathers both quantitative and qualitative data to examine which aspects of their jobs adjunct faculty find most and least satisfying. Additionally, Feldman and Turnley (2001) account for the role that career stage plays in determining how adjunct faculty react to their jobs. But, the term ‘career stage’ is problematic because it contains implicit assumptions about what is a typical career, and the typical career is not as simply defined in academia today as it once was. However, the notion of ‘career stage’ is an important factor in their research, since the motivation behind taking on precarious work is likely very different depending on if you’re an early career academic looking to climb the faculty ladder to reach a coveted tenure-stream position, or if you’re a recently retired professional looking to share your experiences in the field and fill some time in your retirement. Feldman and Turnley (2001) identify that there are three different ‘career stages’—early, mid, and late-career. This distinction of career stage for precarious faculty confirms for me that it is important for me to declare my

career stage and be explicit and transparent about the “stage” I am at in my academic career for my autoethnographic study here in this dissertation. Feldman and Turnley (2001) explain that there are three career stages for individuals starting out in their careers as precarious faculty: early-career, mid-career, and late-career. Early-career individuals are more likely to take on precarious teaching contracts (because of the limited number of tenure-stream positions available), and are more likely to be unsatisfied with their job situations. On the other hand, mid-career and late-career individuals are more likely to take on precarious teaching contracts (because they are specifically drawn to the precarity of the position), and be satisfied with their job situations (Feldman & Turnley, 2001).

In their study, Feldman and Turnley (2001) surveyed 105 non-tenure-track instructors and research associates at a large state university. Their findings showed that job flexibility—the opportunity to mesh personal life and professional life demands more easily—was the major attraction of this type of precarious work. Other favourable responses from respondents also included contact with colleagues, and job autonomy and job challenge. On the flip side, findings from this study showed that precarious academic work poses daunting challenges: “The most prominent disadvantage of working as an adjunct was the lack of advancement opportunities, and particularly the lack of job security. Participants in this study were very worried about what the future held in store for their careers” (p. 7). Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) had similar findings in their study. They label this worry and phenomenon ‘the hamster wheel of precarious work.’ “There is no guarantee for precarious workers that by continuing to work in the sector, they will eventually be rewarded by a permanent contract, or even be able to remain employed in higher education” (p. 57). More recently, Whitchurch (2019) found a similar result amongst early and mid-career faculty in their study. Whitchurch concludes that academics are adapting to these

market-driven and precarious contractual agreements; they label contemporary academics, “itinerant academics,” and describe them as developing a dual identity: “one for the purposes of their institution and one for the purpose of a developing interest and/or a safety net” (p. 690). These itinerant academics continue to obtain credit to advance within their institutions while at the same time seek out other activities “to compensate for a possible loss of autonomy and perceived legitimacy” (Whitchurch, 2019, p. 690). In other words, contemporary academics are changing the ways they work in order to future-proof their academic career as much as possible. In addition to the lack of job security, respondents in Feldman and Turnley’s (2001) study also complained about the poor fringe benefits and low pay associated with adjunct work, and poor supervision and the concern about being treated as second-class citizens. This lack of job security, the reality of poor benefits, and low pay all compound and can lead to financial and personal strain on precarious faculty which will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3.2.4 of this chapter.

Most notable in Feldman and Turnley’s (2001) study is that it brings to light the impact that being an ‘early career’ academic in a non-tenured position has on the individual. While the results indicated in the above paragraph are expected, the most noteworthy finding here is that their results suggested that career stage did have a significant impact on the outcome variables: “Feelings of relative deprivation were significantly lower among adjunct faculty in the late-career stage, [... and they ...] were more likely to voluntarily engage in citizenship behaviors for the good of the university” (Feldman & Turnley, 2001, p. 9). This of course is in contrast to early-career precarious faculty who were often juggling multiple positions at multiple institutions and therefore unwilling to volunteer their time “for the good of the university”.

This finding is of particular importance for people like myself since it serves to position my experience, as an early career academic, within a wider body of research of precarious faculty in higher education. Additionally, early career academics, like myself, likely navigate the organizational cultures of their departments differently than mid- or late-career academics. Organizational culture theory, along with theories of socialization and mentorship will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Feldman and Turnley (2001), in their discussion about early-career experiences of adjunct faculty note that, on the positive side, adjunct faculty positions can serve to help young/early career academics crystallize their career goals and gain valuable experience in their field while at the same time making valuable contacts and building a network to find permanent employment outside their present institutions. However, in the case of early-career adjunct faculty, two major disadvantages were found in the study: first, those who enter adjunct positions directly out of school fear that such employment looks bad on their resume, and second, some young professionals find themselves stuck in adjunct positions which are unchallenging, and as a result lose interest in their career (Feldman & Turnley, 2001). MacDonald (2013) describes an experience of a precarious faculty member at York University in Ontario who—working on a 24-month contractually limited appointment teaching three courses a year since 1993—began teaching two years before finishing her PhD. “What once was a stepping stone for a PhD en route to a full-time, tenure-track appointment – or an interesting way to use a master’s degree – has become, for many, a way to earn a living” (Macdonald, 2013).

Feldman and Turnley (2001) admit that there are limitations to their study, which includes the fact that all 105 respondents (comprised of non-tenure-track instructors and research associates at a large research university) were adjunct faculty members from a single university,

and that the sample size of respondents may not be large enough to employ sophisticated qualitative data analytic techniques, as well as techniques to find statistically significant results related to race and gender. One limitation is that this study was done in the United States, and is therefore outside the Canadian—and specifically, British Columbian—context, of which is the focus of this dissertation. However, it's worth noting that there are many similarities between the Canadian and American higher education landscapes (Usher, 2020), and in the sense that both Canadian and American higher education institutions have experienced significant growth in precarious faculty, they are comparable. Certainly, the way in which American adjunct faculty experience their roles as precarious workers in the academy has some transferability into the Canadian context. The second limitation is that the results of this study were published in 2001—two decades ago. More studies on the experiences of adjunct faculty have been published since this one, making recent studies more relevant to today, and to the Canadian context. However, the findings for this study are important for this dissertation because they emphasize the importance of the role of career stage in studies that examine the experience of adjunct faculty in higher education. My study and the results published in this dissertation will build on Feldman and Turnley's work and will add to this body of literature; however, unlike Feldman and Turnley's work, my dissertation will be from a Canadian/British Columbian perspective (which is rare in the existing body of research that focuses more on the American higher education system). The findings from my dissertation will attempt to offer a more contemporary account of the precarious faculty experience.

Field and Jones (2016) make this same distinction in their study of sessional faculty in Ontario, drawing on Rajagopal's celebrated identification of "classic" and "contemporary" sessional faculty. In Rajagopal's (2002) work, classic sessionals are those who have other

primary work, like the mid- or late-career sessionals that Feldman and Turnley (2001) refer to in their study—lawyers, policy analysts, or leaders in the private sector who have returned to “give back” or “teach for fun” while making a bit of extra cash on the side. Whereas Rajagopal’s (2002) “contemporary” sessional faculty are more like the “early career” faculty that are referred to by Feldman and Turnley (2001)—the “precarious” faculty who rely on the income from instructional work. Like Field and Jones (2016), I make a similar distinction in my research here in this dissertation and focus on my own precarious faculty experience in academia.

2.3.2.2 Gender and Precarious Faculty

Research shows that women make up the majority of workers in precarious forms of employment (Acker, 1990; Bernhardt, 2015; Ivancheva, Lynch, & Keating, 2019; Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019; Jones et al., 2012; Morini, 2007; O’Keefe & Courtois, 2019; Pasma & Shaker, 2018; Vosko, 2006). When Rajagopaul published *Hidden Academics* in 2002, it was reported that the majority of “part-time faculty,” as Rajagopaul (2002) called them, were men: “there are more men (54 percent) than women (46 percent) part-timers, including those with full-time jobs elsewhere” (p. 46). Now, this could very well be that there were fewer women in academia at the time that Rajagopaul collected their data (in the early 1990’s). What’s interesting—although sadly, not surprising—from Rajagopaul’s findings, is that, “part-time faculty women’s personal incomes [were] far lower than those of men” (p. 46).

Acker and Wagner (2019) confirm that precarious teaching contracts are often held by women. Additionally, in their survey response, Field and Jones (2016) found that, in precarious teaching, “most institutions ranged from 30-42% male and 56-67% female [...] This many indicate a general “feminization” of contractual teaching positions in the academy” (p.13).

Ivancheva, Lynch, and Keating (2019) attribute this to the lack of accessible child care and to

women's roles as primary caregivers in their families. In their study, which focuses on Irish universities, they found that women who hold full-time tenure or tenure-track positions tended to be 'care-free individuals' without children (Bomert & Leinfellber, 2017; Ivancheva, Lynch, and Keating, 2019). Ivancheva, Lynch, and Keating (2019) confirm that "an increasingly segmented labour market exists where tenured faculty build careers at the expense of the precarious professional and affective relational lives of those who are unable to give that 24/7 commitment, the majority of whom are women" (p. 455). Of course, their study was in an Irish context; in Canada, and more specifically, in British Columbia, there exists many tiers of tenure-track faculty. Within a research university, for example, there now exists teaching and research streams of tenure-track faculty.

Cardozo (2017) also writes about the predominance of women in casualized academic labour, and particularly the de-valuation of "care work." Here, Cardozo claims that academic labour issues are also diversity issues, and that we must re-value those who perform the care work, and the members of society who benefit from caring labour. This indicates a gender wage gap and the predominance of women in part time and temporary non-standard work.

Ivancheva, Lynch, and Keating (2019) found that women make up the majority of precarious positions in universities (in Ireland) and make up the minority of full-time tenured positions. Additionally, the authors found that there has not been enough research on the gendered aspects of precarity on women in academia. Analyzing the gendered aspect of precarity is important because it allows us to better understand why women are over-represented in precarious appointments in fields like higher education (Ivancheva, Kynch, & Keating, 2019). Not only are women over-represented in higher education, but they are also more susceptible to being caught in the 'hamster wheel' of precarious work for longer periods of time (O'Keefe &

Courtois, 2019). What's more, the research on the representation of other genders—non-binary genders—is not prevalent in the literature. While women and women's lived experiences are generally absent from the literature, trans and non-binary experiences are virtually non-existent. Murray (2019) adds to this, noting that he doesn't see himself represented in this kind of research as queer. It's important that all voices and perspectives are heard and understood; therefore, research conducted and published by people from marginalized groups needs to be encouraged and prioritized.

Lastly, the fact that women dominate precarious positions in higher education in Canada is significant, also, because of the legal constraints that come with these precarious employment structures. O'Keefe and Courtois (2019) describe the effects of precarious work in academia in Ireland and the issues that arise when women comprise these precarious work roles. One of the major findings from their study is that precarious faculty, who are not entitled to maternity leave³, are "excluded from unfair dismissal protection" (p. 26). So, not only do women have the disadvantage of not being able to take a full maternity leave—but if they do take a self-funded maternity leave, they cannot be assured that they'll have a job when they are ready to come back. These women are not protected in any way and this can have a major effect on their decisions to start (or not start) families. In this sense, women are, in many ways, held captive by their employers; they are too scared to turn down contracts and start a family out of worry that they

³ Because precarious faculty are often working on a contract-basis (complete with start and end dates), maternity leave will often fall after the end dates of the employment contract. While it's true that most precarious faculty contracts end and there's an *informal* agreement that the contract will be renewed (again and again), most women won't qualify for maternity leave pay on contract employment. O'Keefe and Courtois (2019) explain the legality behind this: "academic non-citizens are in a situation of legal non-status as their status under labor law is at best tenuous. Hourly paid workers, in particular, are not entitled to sick leave or maternity leave and are excluded from unfair dismissal protection" (p. 22).

will be cut out of the departments in which they work. The following quote is taken from one of the respondents in O’Keefe and Courtois’ (2019) study:

I have never had a sabbatical, and only took [maternity] leave on my third baby. Baby 1 – no leave, afraid I would lose my job, baby 2 worked all my teaching hours in one term before birth, as I was afraid I would lose my position, only on the third baby was I in a permanent part-time contract and able to take official [maternity] leave... as I am the sole breadwinner, I am afraid to put my head above the parapet (Female, 44, permanent part-time). (p. 22)

For women working in precarious positions in higher education, having a family often comes at the expense of their careers—which is precisely what the law in Canada aims to intervene and prevent. No one—women included—should have to choose between their career and their family.

2.3.2.3 Race/Ethnicity and Precarious Faculty

“One of the manifestations of the racialization of poverty is the overrepresentation of racialized Canadians in precarious employment circumstances” (Bernhardt, 2015, p. 5). With racialized Canadians overrepresented in precarious employment across Canada, it should come as no surprise that racialized academics are also overrepresented in precarious academic work (Henry et al., 2017), as well.

In addition to women being underrepresented in faculty roles in higher education, an abundance of research shows that racialized minorities, First Nation’s people, and people with disabilities also face systematic barriers and implicit biases in higher education (Dua, 2009; Henry et al., 2017; Henry & Tator, 2009; Smith, 2010). Henry et al. (2017) explains that the racism that lives within higher education is a far more sophisticated and complicated type of

racism (as opposed to the overt forms of racism that is associated with poor and working-class sections of society). This is, perhaps, why people are often surprised to learn that racism exists within the ‘white culture’ of higher education; higher education is still very much associated with middle and upper-class sections of society.

According to Dua (2009), even though the Employment Equity Act was established in most universities in the 1990s in an attempt at, “removing structural barriers and biases that hindered the recruitment, hiring, tenure, and promotion of racialized faculty” (p.171), the program has limited regulatory functions. The Employment Equity Act is also no match for higher education’s history of racism and white supremacy (Patton, 2016) and the adoption of managerialism and new public management.

There are studies of racialized contract faculty. In Perry, Dean, and Hilton’s (2019) autoethnographic account of their experiences as new faculty in a university in the United States, Adriel Hilton, who identifies as African American writes:

Microaggressions are common every day, slights and/or insults, in which my colleagues and/ or students say to me on a daily basis. For example, as a Black male that goes to the gym regularly, I am asked often, “Are you a student Athlete?” Why must I be a student athlete? This notes that Black males at each PWI are only present to play sports, which is not the case. In addition, I am often asked in the community surrounding the University, “what do you coach?” by community members. This means that all Black males in university settings are coaches, and they cannot be academics. (p. 57)

As Hilton’s powerful autoethnographic account illustrates, racialized academics are working in higher education as academics; however, they are often not *seen* as academics. Rather, they are stereotyped into positions that are historically held by people of colour. In this

sense, racialized academics often aren't *seen* as academics. And, if one is not *seen* as an academic on campus, are they an academic?

Additionally, in Henry et al.'s (2017) analysis, they explain that, "racialized and Indigenous professors are not only under-represented in universities (a situation which worsened over time); they also earn lower wages than their white counterparts, even after controlling for variables such as years of service and academic level" (p. 7). This being said, Henry et al. (2017) also found that racialized faculty understand the academic systems that they work within and even 'play the game' even though their perceptions of navigating the higher education system are much different from their non-racialized colleagues. Interviewees from Henry et al.'s (2017) study reveal that Indigenous and racialized faculty felt that 'white' forms of knowledge and knowing is prioritized within the system—the cultural reproduction of university sameness. This reproduction of 'whiteness' and 'sameness' "rob[s] the academy and the broader society of a wealth of talent and the invaluable heterogeneity of people, their knowledge, and the perspectives that could make universities more equitable, diverse and excellent" (p. 12). Real diversity in any institution makes for a richer environment. And, of all the industries to achieve diversity, higher education offers the most hope: higher education, by its very principle, is supposed to be the place for higher thinking, intellectualism, and democracy. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) claim that: "higher education espouses values such as academic primacy, equity, collegiality, shared decision-making, and egalitarianism. Yet higher education practices favor exploitation, competition, top-down authority, and efficiency" (p. 8). If there is any place where we can achieve real diversity, higher education, in theory, should be that place.

2.3.2.4 The Strain of Being Precarious

While no job is secure or guaranteed, precarious faculty seem to feel the personal and financial strain in particular ways. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) call this “concealed anguish” and explain that, “with little or no job security [precarious faculty] are typically hired semester-to-semester or year-to-year, often within weeks or days of the semester’s beginning, so they have very little ability to predict their work scheduled, obligations, and even income” (p. 43). Field and Jones (2016) found that the majority of precarious faculty respondents (66 percent) from their study reported that they experienced considerable personal strain due to short-term contractual employment. This is not to say that tenure-stream faculty, or any other labour category in higher education don’t experience personal strain, but rather, that precarious faculty overwhelmingly report that they do experience personal strain. From the comments collected by Field and Jones, most of the personal strain experienced seems to be related to job security, financial security and wage levels, working conditions, and opportunities for advancement within the institution.

Pay is one of the prominent issues when it comes to personal strain. In “Sessionals, up close” published in *University Affairs*, MacDonald (2013) explains that there is a diverse scale when it comes to sessional pay. The author states that pay is always a central issue for sessional faculty at Canadian post-secondary institutions. Precarious faculty are usually compensated a flat rate per course they are contracted to teach. In a CBC Radio segment, Sean Parkinson, Secretary for the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators, explained that there is a huge discrepancy in the pay that contingent faculty receive (Quinn, 2019). Parkinson notes that many of the post-secondary institutions in British Columbia pay approximately \$6,000 to \$6,500 per course to their precarious faculty—but this is not uniform across the province. Some institutions pay as

low as \$3,000 per course, and others—Vancouver Community College and Langara College—pay faculty on the same scale as faculty who hold regular positions at the institution (Quinn, 2019). This issue of pay presents precarious faculty with added emotional labour. Having to constantly calculate one's finances every term is an additional cognitive load that precarious faculty must add to their (already busy) workdays. At the start of every academic term, precarious faculty find themselves crunching the numbers to ensure that they'll be able to cover their bills over the next few months. This emotional labour that comes with the territory of precarious work can act as a barrier to successful working conditions in higher education.

In addition to issues surrounding pay and benefits, financial strain for precarious faculty also exists in the form of disconnection, or lack of a sense of belonging to the departments in which they work. Being paid to teach, and only teach, precarious faculty often feel isolated in their work. Shahjahan (2019) refers to this isolation and feeling 'out of place' as *shame*. And, as Shahjahan explains, shame comes with feelings of self-hatred, negative self-evaluations, defensiveness, denial, deflections, dehumanization, doubt, and difference. Shahjahan (2019) attributes this 'shame' to the heteronormativity of academic culture that manifests and triggers the performativity of social exclusion. As previously discussed in this chapter, there exists a certain heteronormativity in higher education—the legacy of 'masculinity' and 'whiteness' is still prevalent in post-secondary culture. What's more, as Ahmed (2004) and Probyn (2004) explain, this 'shame' that is felt by precarious faculty is detrimental to their bodies (building on section 2.3.2.2 earlier in this chapter on Gender and Precarious Faculty). Feelings of shame "can make us physically and emotionally sick where our mind and body can shut down" (Shahjahan, 2019, p. 4). Feelings of shame, therefore, take both a physical and mental toll on precarious faculty. It is unfortunate that individual faculty internalize the effects of a neoliberal higher

education system that make it structurally unfair to precarious faculty (Gill, 2017). This shame, which precarious faculty often embody, leads to physical, psychosomatic, and psychological consequences for these faculty, and can lead to burnout (Gill, 2017). Therefore, this is a concern not only for the precarious faculty themselves, but also to the departments and institutions in which these faculty work. Universities, after all, are people organizations; people—faculty, staff, and students—make the university run. In fact, Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) argue that, “the higher education enterprise, at its core, is a relational and people-driven enterprise” (p. 3). Because the majority of the faculty on any post-secondary campus are precarious, and, because this disconnection from their departments can cause physical and emotional harm to these faculty, then this is clearly a serious issue that needs to be addressed by the institutions.

Again, since Field and Jones’ (2016) study consisted of a large-scale survey, they were unable to examine this trend of personal strain within precarious faculty at a micro- or in-depth level. By taking an autoethnographic approach in this dissertation, I am able to specifically illustrate the personal and financial strain that I’ve endured while working as a precarious faculty member.

2.3.3 The Role of the Union: Faculty Associations

Metcalfe et al. (2011) offers a comprehensive history of the drivers that have affected higher education governance in Canada over the past 50 years. They explain that in the 1970s, “concerns over job security, administrative discretion in tenure and promotion processes, and salaries led a number of university faculty associations to seek clarification as labor unions under provincial labor law” (Metcalfe et al., 2011, p. 154). Since the 1970s, the number of unionized faculty associations has gradually increased (Metcalfe et al., 2011). Guttman (1988) called post-secondary faculty associations “political academic organizations” when referring to their

relations with university administrators. These faculty associations often take on an advocacy roll—advocating for the rights and working conditions of faculty on the campuses that they serve. Metcalfe et al. (2011) explain the power that faculty associations have when it comes to the institution’s faculty appointment and promotion processes, “even at institutions where faculty have not unionized, there is frequently a negotiated contractual agreement in place between the faculty association and the university that governs tenure, promotion and appointment procedures, and some other conditions of employment” (p. 154). In other words, faculty associations have a history of setting best practices when it comes to hiring and promoting faculty within post-secondary institutions in Canada—even if they have focused more on tenure and tenure-track faculty than precarious faculty.

In publicly funded post-secondary institutions in Canada, all institutions house a faculty association that is meant to function as the, “*faculty voice*, their purpose is to improve the welfare and economic conditions of their membership, as well as to provide academic leadership” (Anderson & Jones, 1998, p. 439). However, it’s important to note that not all faculty are eligible for membership in their institution’s faculty association. When Anderson and Jones reported on the organizational capacity and political activities of Canadian university faculty associations in 1998, they reported that only half of part-time faculty members employed were eligible for membership in the faculty association. In 2002, Jones reported that, “The way in which membership in the association is defined varies by association, though most include all full-time faculty and many include part-time faculty. Membership may also be extended to other groups such as laboratory instructors or librarians” (Jones, 2002, p. 22). Because faculty associations differ from association to association in how they define who is eligible within their institution for membership, some precarious faculty are eligible for membership, and others are not

(Anderson & Jones, 1998). Different factors that influence precarious faculty membership include factors like the number of courses taught in a term and whether or not the faculty member has a permanent contract.

In the province of British Columbia, the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE) is a federation of 19 faculty and staff associations across the province. According to their website, FPSE was established in 1970, and today they provide resources and support, as well as advocate for workers' rights and benefits. Today, the "FPSE stands with 3.3 million union members in Canada who work for quality public services, good jobs, positive working conditions, and strong benefits" (FPSE, 2016). The FPSE works alongside institutional faculty associations to help them, "influence university policy through the certified or special plan bargaining process, through monitoring and participating in the formal governance structures of the university, and through regular interaction with the central administration of the university" (Jones, 2002, p. 23). As political academic organizations, faculty associations aim to advocate for the rights of faculty within their respective institutions. While traditionally, in the late twentieth century, they focused more on tenure and tenure-track faculty, today, faculty associations are advocating for the rights of precarious faculty at their respective institutions. The next couple sections in this chapter will explore this advocacy in more detail through academic employment tensions in Canada, and more specifically, within British Columbia higher education institutions.

2.3.4 Academic Employment Tensions Across Canada

As discussed in the previous section, it's common for precarious faculty to not be fully compensated (if at all) for the preparation they put into developing and preparing for the courses they teach before the term begins (MacDonald, 2013). However, some argue that it's fair for

precarious faculty to make far less than their tenure and tenure-track colleagues since a sessional worker typically does not have the research and service expectations that come with the tenure and tenure-track (MacDonald, 2013). This very argument was posed by CBC radio host Stephen Quinn to Sean Parkinson of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators in a radio segment that discussed pay equity amongst post-secondary faculty in British Columbia during “Fair Employment Week.” Parkinson’s response to this argument was that most of the work that’s being done by faculty—tenured or not—is teaching (Quinn, 2019). Parkinson explained that, the notion that precarious faculty are only teaching and not doing any kind of service or research work is a misnomer. Precarious faculty are still performing some service work and are still performing research even though they are not being paid to do these elements (Quinn, 2019). Additionally, some argue that, sessional work was never intended to be a full-time living (MacDonald, 2013). But, whether or not that was the intention, today’s reality illustrates that Canadian post-secondary institutions cannot run without precarious faculty. Canadian universities are now dependent on sessional instructors’ services (MacDonald, 2013).

Rhoades (2020) argues that collective bargaining agreements “define formal terms of employment that express larger systems of power and embedded conceptions of educational quality” (p. 332). Therefore, reviewing tension-filled collective bargaining from post-secondary faculty associations is an effective way to investigate the power structures and struggles within higher education. Recently, job action has been a hot topic in the media for contract faculty employed at higher education institutions in the province of Ontario. In both 2015 and 2018, contract faculty at York University went on strike. In 2018, the strike—by roughly 3,000 contract faculty and teaching assistants—cited “issues such as job security, the ability for contract faculty to achieve tenured positions and protecting funding for teaching assistants as

some of their concerns” (Jones, 2018). “The striking workers coordinated their job actions so that the impact of their strikes would coalesce across these two university campuses [York University and the University of Toronto]—among the largest in the country” (Newson & Polster, 2019, p. 1). The heated job action at York University sparked both provincial and national dialogue around contract faculty in higher education institutions in mainstream media. Popular publications and news outlets like *Maclean’s Magazine*, *CBC*, and *The Globe and Mail* all reported (sometimes multiple) stories on the labour dispute in 2018. The issue has even become a somewhat central issue in the political discourse in Ontario: “according to a new poll commissioned by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), 68 per cent of Ontarians oppose universities hiring more contract faculty on short-term contracts instead of full-time professors with better pay and access to benefits” (OCUFA, 2018). Additionally, with an election just around the corner, “potential voters for all political parties disagree with the current hiring approach, including 74 per cent of Liberal supporters, 73 per cent of NDP supporters, and 58 per cent of PC supporters” (OCUFA, 2018). With the job action at York University in Ontario having just settled recently (for now), one can only speculate if the public conversation around contract faculty in higher education institutions in Ontario, and Canada will remain a ‘hot topic’ in the media.

In 2020, the arrival of Covid-19 and the global pandemic intensified the academic employment tensions in Canada. Post-secondary institutions are feeling the economic impact of the pandemic; the global travel restrictions that manifested in the spring of 2020 inhibited the arrival of new international students on campus and forced many of the traditional face-to-face courses to move to online delivery. The global pandemic has had an impact on the higher education system in Canada, just as it has had a significant impact on many (if not all) industries.

In April 2020, a series of ‘prominent scholars’ (such as Judith Butler, Zadie Smith, Donna Haraway, and Naomi Klein; all of whom, by the way, have produced and published important research that has led to the development of this very dissertation) threatened to boycott colleges that don’t support precarious faculty at their institutions during the pandemic (Zahneis, 2020).

According to Zahneis’ article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:

more than 70 scholars are among the initial signatories to an academic-solidarity statement that promises not to accept invitations—for speaking engagements, conferences, and workshops—at institutions that do not include non-tenure-track faculty and graduate workers in extensions of fixed-term contracts. (Zahneis, 2020)

This action by these prominent scholars brings awareness to academic precarity in higher education. What’s more, this threat shines a light on the ethical allocation of academic work in times where academic work is evolving and changing once again. To put this into a more British Columbian perspective, Godbout (2020) reported in the *Prince George Citizen* that the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is facing a “rocky road” as the university prepared for the start of the fall 2020 term. Leading up to 2020, UNBC was already embroiled in a faculty strike around pay and benefits, and now, thanks to a region with a declining population, UNBC is facing some serious budget cuts, which will most certainly affect precarious academic faculty: “UNBC has cut \$3.4 million in expenses and 21 jobs in its 2020-21 budget while also passing on another two per cent increase in student tuition” (Godbout, 2020). Post-secondary institutions, as they prepare for the fall semester will continue to slash departmental budgets across Canada; this will, in turn, put the careers of precarious faculty (and non-precarious faculty, alike) in jeopardy.

2.3.5 Academic Employment Tensions in British Columbia

The tensions and issues that surround contract faculty seem to have become more prominent within the last few years in some British Columbia universities. In 2015, academic staff at Capilano University went on strike after contract negotiations failed to address academic freedom and democratic workplaces for part-time and non-regular faculty members. In fact, as part of the Capilano University faculty strike, “the faculty association [tried] to strengthen the rights of its ‘non-regular’ employees – part-time or contract professors who may only teach one or two courses and must work elsewhere to make ends meet” (Richter, 2015). At Capilano, about 40 percent of the faculty fall into this adjunct/ contract faculty status (Richter, 2015). Having approximately 40 percent of the faculty working on a contract basis, the University is losing a significant amount of academic capital.

Contract faculty members are not paid—and because of higher teaching loads, may not have the time—to attend department meetings, be involved with steering committees and other critical governance practices that permanent faculty are expected to perform. So, how does this affect the wider academic community? According to a recent OCUFA report, the rise of precarious academic work threatens the quality of education because faculty are constrained by their working conditions and lack the institutional support to achieve their full potential and deliver the highest possible quality learning experience for students (OCUFA, 2015). From an academic governance standpoint, Casper and Henry (2001) note that decisions and resource allocation “choices are best made if all members of the academic community have an understanding of the budgetary trade-offs and an opportunity to participate in the discussion of choices to be made” (p. 375). With almost half of the University’s faculty on contract, Capilano University is losing almost half of their faculty’s input. This means that the ‘participatory’

governance that is happening at Capilano—if you can even call it ‘participatory’—only represents 60 percent of the faculty. In addition to affecting students and academic governance, this issue also affects the research capacity, which in turn affects the wider public since the public depends on the higher education sector to yield innovation in many ways. This decline in research capacity affects public universities because it affects their ability to serve the public interest and advance the knowledge economy.

At Emily Carr University in British Columbia, where precarious faculty make up more than two-thirds of faculty appointments (as of 2016-17) (Pasma & Shaker, 2018), some faculty are pushing back with artistic resistance. Terra Poirier’s 2018 book, *Non-Regular: Precarious Academic Labour at Emily Carr University of Art + Design*, “features interviews with testimonials by 26 current and former Emily Carr non-regular faculty, as well as samples of their artwork symbolizing the impact of precarious work on themselves, their students, and the education institution overall” (Hyslop, 2018). Figure 2, pictured below, is a sample of the creative work featured in Poirier’s book (as reported by Hyslop):

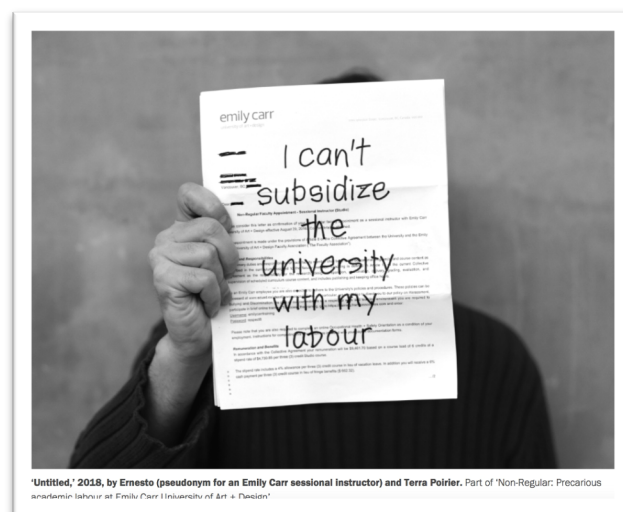


Figure 2: Artwork from Poirier's Book "Non Regular" (Hyslop, 2018)

Poirier's well-received book seemed to start a larger conversation about precarious faculty at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, as well as within the higher education institutions in the Vancouver area and British Columbia. More recently, in January and February of 2020, the Faculty at Emily Carr hosted an art exhibition called, "The Work of the Work", which focused on the untenable working conditions at Emily Carr (Hyslop, 2020). Hyslop reported that the art exhibition was a unique way for faculty to highlight key pieces of their creative work during a bargaining year through various mixed media in the exhibition. The media included called out the institution for "an overreliance on non-regular faculty"—who teach over half of the classes offered by the institution—as well as, "lower pay and higher workload than other Canadian art and design post-secondary; and no studio space or time for their own art practice – the reason, [...] they were hired to teach in the first place" (Hyslop, 2020). This art exhibition is beautiful illustration of the tensions that are being felt by the mass of precarious faculty in higher education institutions at Emily Carr University, as well as at many institutions across British Columbia.

2.4 Summary

This literature review chapter began by reviewing the general changes in labour markets and work—noting the rise in precarious work across many different sectors and industries in Canada. Then, this chapter focused on the changing landscape of higher education in Canada, looking specifically at the rise of precarious faculty and noting the significance of precarious faculty in the higher education system in Canada. The major theme that has emerged from reviewing this literature is that there exists a lack of data on the *experiences* of precarious faculty—which is needed to better understand a large population within the system and how these faculty fit within

the larger higher education system. In Chapter 3, I detail the theoretical framework used in this study: Organizational Culture Theory and, within it, theories of socialization and mentorship.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews organizational culture theory and organizational socialization as the theoretical framework that this study uses to understand and frame the two research questions presented in Chapter 1. Starting with Tierney's (1988) theory of organizational culture, this chapter will define "culture" in the organizational sense and will then outline the ways in which organizational socialization and mentorship frames this study. Finally, this chapter will address the limitations of using this framework.

3.1 Institutional and Departmental Organizational Culture

The importance of understanding the specificity of contingent faculties' experience and social worlds cannot be understated. Contingent faculty represent a large and growing population, and the communicative aspects of their employment highlight the need to understand the pedagogical, political-economic, and organizational dimensions of their role in the education of contemporary students. (Murray, 2019, p. 239)

Understanding the experience of precarious faculty—since they now make up a significant portion of the academic body—is important at an organizational operational level, but, it's also important to understand because the precarious faculty experience affects student learning and the student experience. The theoretical framework that frames this study focuses on organizational culture, communication, and socialization, specifically, Tierney's (1998) Cultural Framework and the concept of organizational socialization (Tierney, 1997).

In Perry, Dean, and Hilton's (2019) auto-ethnographic analysis as new faculty at an American university, the commonality they found across all their autoethnographic accounts was the importance of organizational culture: "we noticed that in addition to the intersection of our identities, the institutional culture and our socializations played a large role in the ways we

individually experienced our transitions [from administrators to faculty]” (p. 60). West and Turner (2013) describe organizational culture as a way of living within an organization. The authors also explain that organizational culture theory is based on three assumptions:

- (1) That organizational members create and maintain a shared sense of organizational reality, resulting in a better understanding of the values of an organization.
- (2) The use and interpretation of symbols are critical to an organization’s culture.
- (3) Cultures vary across organizations, and the interpretations of actions within these cultures are diverse (West & Turner, 2013).

Tierney, in their 1988 article in the *Journal of Higher Education*, wrote about organizational culture in higher education, and, specifically provided a working framework of this theory for higher education institutions. I begin by reviewing Tierney’s (1988) framework to position my research; this is expanded upon in the following sections.

3.1.1 Culture From Within: Defining Culture

As the name suggests, *culture* is a critical component of Tierney’s (1988) organizational culture framework. One major assumption that Tierney (1988) makes when ‘defining the essentials’ of the theory is that, for administrators, when making decisions within any higher education institution, “more often than not, more than one choice exists for the decision-maker; one simple answer most often does not occur. No matter how much information we gather, we can often choose from several viable alternatives. Culture influences the decision” (p. 5). By understanding and being conscious of the organization’s culture, Tierney argues that post-secondary administrators and decision-makers will be able to evaluate and assess the consequences of their options before they act, rather than after they act, thereby helping them make more informed decisions as leaders. Even though Tierney wrote about organizational culture nearly three

decades ago, the appeal for using this framework to illuminate how precarious faculty fit within the culture of a post-secondary institution holds as well today as it did in the 1980s: “the most persuasive case for studying organizational culture is quite simply that we no longer need to tolerate the consequences of our ignorance, nor, for that matter, will a rapidly changing environment permit us to do so” (Tierney, 1988, p. 6). In this day and age, as the #metoo and #blacklivesmatter movements progress through society and our lives and as we attempt to recover from a world-wide pandemic, societal change seems to be the only constant thing in society. Knowing the culture of the organization is integral to a decision maker’s ability to instill change in the post-secondary organizations that they lead in these times that are demanding social justice and change. Post-secondary institutions, like all institutions, need to change and adapt with the times. How can organizations change with the current movements towards a more fair and equitable society if we’re not looking at the organizations in which we work and make the necessary changes at the organizational level? Therefore, it’s imperative that decision-makers in post-secondary institutions understand the culture of their institutions as it allows them to consider different options to address issues within the complex organizational web of their institution. This leads to a stronger awareness and overall understanding of how their organizations work, and therefore enables them to make better informed decisions within a broader context.

Culture, “is an important construct in governing people’s behaviours, attitudes, and actions in a given society. Therefore, culture has been used in a wide variety of organisations, including higher education institutions (HEIs), as a means to foster the change processes necessary to adapting to rapid environmental changes” (Gaus, Tang, & Akil, 2019, p. 1). Tierney (1988) suggests that higher education institutions are shaped by “strong forces that emanate from

within” (p. 3). More specifically, Tierney explains that it is the internal dynamics fueled by the values, processes, and goals held by those most intimately involved in the organization’s workings that give an organization its structure: “An organization’s culture is reflected in what’s done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and a symbolic level” (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). Influenced by the work of anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, Tierney (1998) defines organizational culture as existing, “in part through the actor’s interpretation of historical and symbolic forms. The culture of an organization is grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization” (p. 4). Further, these shared assumptions are often unconscious to the individuals that share them—but they can be identified through stories, language, norms, institutional ideology, and attitudes. Gaus, Tang, and Akil (2019) build on Tierney’s framework and suggest that culture is created and reinforced from generation to generation and that culture is revealed by the way people act and behave; the authors argue that researchers must immerse themselves into a particular culture in order to gain insight into that culture.

Organizational culture, then, in this sense, is an interconnected web that can only be understood if we look at both the structure and natural laws of that web (Tierney, 1988). However, as Välimaa (1998) explains, university culture is very difficult to define because of its complexity. Post-secondary institutions are composed of a series of departments that often function in their independent silos. It’s common for these departments to function as subsystems which together make up a whole. These departmental subsystems are what Becher (1994) refers to as ‘disciplinary culture.’ Becher (1994) also categorized disciplinary culture into different categories: macro, meso, and micro levels. This is a significant definitional distinction for this dissertation: “culture” as it is referred to in this dissertation is disciplinary, as defined by

Becher—the scope that is being analyzed in this dissertation focuses on the departments of the post-secondary institutions in which I worked, and therefore, are being reviewed at the meso level of culture (as described by Becher). This is similar to the way that Toma (1997) defined culture in their study of scholars in the faculty of law at within the university: disciplinary culture within the university. Dawson et al. (2019) explain that “there are micro-cultures within and between departments and faculties” (p. 124). Dawson et al. (2019) also explain that it is the discussions that take place within the micro-cultures at the department level that are critical to the professional practice of teaching. Additionally, Dawson et al. found that, whether they want to or not, sessional faculty have little impact on the development of the culture of the academic departments in which they work: “tenured faculty have a large influence on the overall institutional culture and therefore, despite their large number, sessional faculty are in the wake of their tenured colleagues” (p. 124). Organizational cultures depend on the people—the faculty, in the case of higher education—to have a shared set of values (Cox et al., 2011). Because sessional faculty have a somewhat different set of values from the tenured and tenure-track faculty in their departments (Dawson et al., 2019), their lack of alignment with their tenured and tenure-track colleagues puts them on the margins of the department. Drake, Struve, Meghani, and Buroski (2019) argue that administration, tenured faculty, and the institutional policies all contribute to precarious faculty’s constrained agency within their institutions. Culture, then, is grounded in shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization and can be identified through stories—making autoethnography and narrative forms a compatible methodology for this kind of work.

Tierney (1988) also suggests that it is our lack of understanding about the role of organizational culture that inhibits our ability to address the key challenges that face higher

education. It's important to acknowledge that Tierney wrote about organizational culture three decades ago. The majority of the issues that plagued higher education institutions in Canada, and in British Columbia, in the 1980s are different from the issues that higher education institutions are faced with today. That being said, higher education institutions are still not without issues, as I reviewed earlier in Chapter 2. Tierney's argument that understanding the organizational culture in order to address issues that higher education institutions face is still valid—in fact, Tierney's (1988) organizational culture 'defining the essentials' journal article has been cited over 1,500 times since it was published⁴. Much of the current literature cited earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2 have used Tierney's (1988) work as the foundation for their research.

Tierney's (1988) Framework for Organizational Culture attempts to offer cultural concepts that are appropriate in a higher education setting. There are six facets to the framework Tierney offers. Each of the facets are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Framework for Organizational Culture (Tierney, 1988)

Environmental	The higher education institution's relationship with its environment has an impact on the organizational culture.
Mission	The mission statement and the guiding strategic plans of the institution have an impact on the organizational culture.
Socialization	"The successful understanding and incorporation of [symbolic and instrumental] activities by the new member of the organization" (Tierney, 1997, p. 3).
Information	Written information and oral discourse, both in formal and informal channels have an impact on organizational culture.
Strategy	The ways in which organizational representatives convey meaning that are intended to motivate stakeholders has an impact on organizational culture.
Leadership	The president and senior leadership's patterns and styles of communication reinforce institutional culture.

⁴ According to a search in *Google Scholar*.

The framework outlined above provides six different facets to consider when conducting a cultural analysis of a higher education institution.

Tierney's model is currently being used to better understand many facets of higher education environments, including academic advising, academic leadership, and academic identities all over the world. By examining the organizational culture of an institutional department, I am better able to understand the ways in which precarious faculty connect or disconnect, and navigate their ways through the departmental cultures. Understanding the culture, will therefore, aid in the understanding of precarious faculty and their experiences within the system.

Feldman and Paulsen (1999) argue that valuing quality teaching and fostering a teaching culture within universities improves and maintains faculty's motivation to strive for teaching excellence and therefore, creates an environment that yields student success. Dawson, Meadows, Kustra, and Hansen (2019) build on the research from Feldman and Paulsen in the 1990's focusing on the importance of the teaching culture in post-secondary institutions. Dawson et al. (2019) note the shift in organizational culture in universities in North America since the 1960's from an institutional focus on teaching to an institutional focus on research. They also discuss the negative effect this shift has had on the institutional teaching culture since teaching now takes a back seat to research at most research-based universities. By not prioritizing teaching above all else at the institution, faculty motivation declines and therefore the student experience declines. Dawson et al. (2019) focus on teaching culture and precarious academic faculty and argue that "it is likely that sessional faculty who feel less valued within the institution may have a different view of the teaching culture within their workplaces than their tenured or tenure-track colleagues" (p. 10). Additionally, Kezar and Sam (2013) find that in most higher education

institutions, the organizational culture has not been very supportive of contingent faculty. In their research, they argue that there is a definitive hierarchy of faculty (tenured/ tenure-track/ contingent) on many campuses—and that evidence of these delineations can be both overt and subtle. Significantly, many precarious faculty members are socialized to accept the status quo of an organizational culture that does not support their work (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Kezar & Sam, 2013). Kezar and Sam (2013) argue that there is a desperate need to examine the institutional processes that enforce and re-enforce the unsupportive organizational culture as normative for academia. Because of the very nature of the sessional faculty contract, precarious faculty are usually paid only to teach the courses they are assigned to—there is rarely any expectation around service (and research) involved in the appointment. This, in turn, creates a culture where precarious faculty simply come to campus to teach their respective courses, then return home. As most precarious faculty are not paid to attend departmental meetings or sit on committees, it's difficult for these faculty to engage with the wider department (Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019).

Kezar (2013) published a study that investigated the perceptions of non-tenure track faculty of their job performance, particularly how they improve students' achievement. She concludes that the non-tenure-track faculty were impacted by destructive or neutral departmental cultures. Interestingly, Kezar (2013) also concluded that department chairs play a critical role in shaping departmental cultures. And, LaRocco and Bruns (2006) found similar results:

Interestingly, while three participants had experienced department chairs or program coordinators that provided them with support, four interviewees indicated that their department chairs or program coordinators were not helpful. For example, they expressed concerns about the potential for or existing conflicts with these individuals. (p. 636)

It's important to note that the research conducted by LaRocco and Bruns (2006) focused on tenure-track faculty, and, as described earlier, tenure-track faculty face a different set of challenges than precarious faculty; however, both tenure-track and precarious faculty are tasked with navigating the organizational cultures of the departments in which they work.

3.1.2 Organizational Socialization

Because one of the two research questions for this study is: *In what ways have I been socialized, as a precarious faculty member, into the organizational cultures of the four institutions—a private university, a teaching university, a college, and an institute—that I worked within between 2016-2018*, it's important that my research is framed within the conceptual framework of organizational socialization. While socialization was part of Tierney's (1988) framework, it was not necessarily the focus of the framework. But, nearly ten years after Tierney published their framework for organizational culture, Tierney (1997) wrote about organizational socialization, specifically, within higher education. As discussed in the previous section, analyzing socialization at the departmental level is a critical component to understanding the microculture of the department within the larger institution.

Informed by the foundational work of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) and, with underpinning roots in Bandura's (2001) social cognition theory, Tierney (1997) noted that, "the socialization process is the learning process through which the individual acquires the knowledge and skills, the values and attitudes, and the habits and modes of thought of the society to which [s]he belongs" (p. 3). More specifically, in higher education, and as a place of work, "organizational socialization is the process by which a new employee adapts to and becomes integrated into an organizational context, typically, through the acquisition of attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge necessary to participate as an internal organizational members"

(Fleming, Goldman, Correll, & Taylor, 2016, p. 545, as cited in Feldman, 1976 and Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Socialization is the ways in which we learn how to be—it forms our identity within the department of the organization and, therefore, impacts our behaviour and performance within the places that we live and work. Fleming, Goldman, Correll, and Taylor (2016) explain that organizational socialization is a “set of processes that lead to newcomer integration” (p. 547). These processes vary depending on the organization: they could be formal (e.g. orientations and formal mentoring programs) or informal (e.g. coffee and lunches with colleagues who are established and successful in their work).

In Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf’s (2013) study of new adjunct faculty at a university and community college in the United States, they found that: “activities that positioned incoming adjunct faculty as professionals and colleagues fostered professionalization more than mandatory trainings and required mentoring, which gave adjunct faculty little autonomy or failed to honor the expertise they already possessed” (p. 110). Isn’t this just the epitome of organizational culture? It is the organizational culture of the institutional department that determines whether or not one is positioned as a ‘professional’ or ‘colleague.’ Furthermore, Tierney (1997) suggests that being socialized within an organization comes, “from the less dramatic, ordinary daily occurrences that take place as we go about the normal business of being a professor, student, administrator, or staff member” (p. 3). In other words, socialization can involve large-scale institutional orientations and programs to help onboard faculty, but socialization also lives within the mundane, day-to-day activities.

Gardner (2008) applied Tierney’s organizational socialization framework to their study of the socialization in doctoral education and the graduate student experience. Gardener draws on the work of Ward and Bensimon (2002), who argued that post-secondary institutions continue to

be dominated by older white males since they still overwhelmingly occupy the roles of full professors and administrators. In Gardner's study, where she interviewed graduate students, she found that "the experiences of the students who do not fit the traditional mold of graduate education (i.e., anyone other than young, White males) are explainable in that these students' socialization experience is not entirely normative due to differences in their underrepresented status" (p. 128). While Gardner's focus was on the graduate student experience being socialized into academia, the findings from Gardner's research are significant and have an impact on this research study of precarious faculty. Like graduate students, not all precarious faculty are older white men; in fact, as described earlier in Chapter 2, precarious faculty in Canada are disproportionately women and people of colour. Therefore, it's likely that Gardner's findings about graduate students in higher education have a similar socialization experience to precarious faculty being onboarded into a department at an institution.

3.1.2.1 Role Models and Mentorship

Building on Tierney's theory of organizational socialization, Filstad (2004) expanded the theory to focus on and include the importance of role models to newcomers at an organization. Filstad (2004) adds that, "newcomers use established colleagues as "multiple contingent role models" in organizational socialization" (p. 10). Additionally, according to Filstad, in order to create their professional style (and consequently, behaviour) within the institution, newcomers, "depend and rely on role models in observations and interactions and learn different qualifications from several role models in the process of learning both tacit and explicit knowledge" (p. 10).

Filstad (2004) also argues that the newcomer's early experience (during the first 4-6 weeks of their new job) has an impact on their experience. Ultimately, Filstad found that, "organizational socialization included all learning from when a new member enters the

organization and until he or she becomes an established member of the same organization” (p. 7). Newcomers to an organization need to be connected with colleagues so that they can learn and model their behaviours after those with experience and those who are working successfully within the existing organizational culture. But, it’s not just one colleague that’s sufficient as a role model; the newcomer needs to socialize with and observe multiple colleagues to obtain tacit knowledge and acquire the attitude needed to fit in to the work environment (Filstad, 2004). This is important because it may very well signal that higher education institutions are focused on the wrong thing: onboarding workshops. Many institutions, including the ones that I’ve worked, hold mandatory training sessions for new faculty. Usually, these training sessions take place during the last week of August over an afternoon, a few days, or a week. These institutional-wide orientations and training sessions focus on institutional-wide structures and services.

Additionally, this formal training is expensive. Filstad (2004) found that:

The importance of social-cultural conditions is recognized, as is the importance of interaction with co-workers in order to obtain tacit knowledge [...] When facing new situations, several available role models help their learning process and their need for creating own role behaviour. (p. 8)

This is not to say that the institutional-wide training sessions that higher education institutions funnel all their faculty into at the start of the school year is not appropriate or effective; they are certainly important in conveying key institutional-type information to newcomers. However, equally as important is the management and facilitation of role models for new faculty when they are onboarded into the department—for both tenure-track and precarious faculty. Filstad (2004) recommends that, “management can be strategic by providing a newcomer with available role models who at the same time have some personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviour that

they want the newcomer to learn and emulate” (p. 8). Especially if managers and administrators want the faculty they’ve just hired to learn specific skills and behaviours, connecting them, intentionally, with role models can help the new faculty learn ‘how to be’ within the department. While Filstad’s (2004) research findings are focused outside of higher education and based on a group of real estate agents entering the profession, LaRocco and Bruns (2006) study on ‘second career faculty’ entering higher education institutions as professors found similar results. After interviewing faculty that were new to the profession and institution, they found that, “the early career faculty in this study clearly indicated that they had experienced at least one supportive relationship that they perceived helped them with their adjustment to academia” (p. 635). They wrote about one participant from their study, Sandra, who enthusiastically discussed the ways in which her new colleagues supported her and offered her mentorship during her first year in her new role as a professor at the university. In addition to her colleagues giving her their home and cell phone numbers, “Sandra noted that her colleagues shared syllabi and course materials. [...] her colleagues encouraged her to prepare a proposal for funding support through the University, which she submitted and subsequently received” (LaRocco & Bruns, 2006, p. 635). Sandra’s experience illustrates that of a supportive departmental culture. However, it’s important to note that Sandra is a full-time permanent faculty member—not a precarious one. Bowman, Mazerolle, and Kilbourne (2018) had similar findings in their study of perceptions of employer socialization tactics during junior faculty transitions into higher education—another study that focused on the socialization of permanent full-time faculty (again), not precarious faculty. However, Bowman, Mazerolle, and Kilbourne’s (2018) findings illustrate a critical conclusion: “that mentoring and orientation are the basic tenets of organizational socialization; however, they must be implemented in specific ways to improve and facilitate transition into the professoriate” (p. 46).

This finding is key, both for tenure-track and precarious faculty being socialized into a department. And, it's likely that these "specific ways" differ depending on whether the faculty member is working on a full-time permanent basis or a part-time contract basis. Furthermore, it is my aim to uncover the specific ways in which I was socialized at the four different higher education institutions in which I was working. In particular, one particular objective of this dissertation is to explore which 'specific ways' of mentoring and orientation within the socialization process have been successful and effective.

3.1.3 Limitations to Using Tierney's Framework

According to Tierney (1988), "organizational culture, then, is the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting" (p. 4). Tierney's framework looks at culture within the organizational or institutional level. Tierney (1988) acknowledges that their framework for analyzing "academic culture" does not include subsets, like subcultures, counter cultures, or disciplinary cultures. Tierney has, in essence, developed a framework for analyzing an institution's culture at the institutional-level, rather than at the departmental-level. Subcultures, especially departmental cultures, play a large role in understanding an organization's culture. The IT department of a university will almost certainly have a significantly different culture than an academic department, for example. That being said, the "socialization" facet of the framework does address the microculture, the departmental culture, in many ways. Tierney (1988) acknowledges this and encourages further investigation into the 'cultural subsets' within an organization, "an investigation of these cultural subsets will provide administrators with useful information about how to increase performance and decrease conflict in particular groups" (p. 18). And, as a reminder, this is the ultimate aim of this dissertation: to investigate these 'cultural subsets'—the departments where I worked as a precarious faculty member for two years *with the*

overall aim to understand the experiences of precarious faculty and, in doing so, improve these experiences for future precarious faculty. That last sentence is bolded and italicized intentionally; education—including higher education—contributes significantly to wider society. The more people in a society operating at their highest potential, the better all of us will be—especially if those people are tasked with teaching and educating younger generations: the leaders of tomorrow.

3.2 Summary

This chapter has explained the theoretical framework applied in this study. Starting with Tierney's (1988) theory of organizational culture, I defined organizational culture within the context of higher education. I then supplemented this theory with conceptual theories of organizational socialization and role models and mentorship. Finally, this chapter has reviewed the limitations of using such frameworks and has addressed these limitations in as much as they can be addressed. The next chapter will detail the methodology applied in this dissertation—organizational autoethnography.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter will outline the research methodology employed in this study. First, this chapter will discuss the approach undertaken and explain why the approach is appropriate. Secondly, this chapter will discuss ethnography at length—specifically adopting an ethnographic perspective, the use of ethnographic tools, the validity of autoethnography, and ethics and risks that come with such a method. Finally, this chapter will conclude by outlining the four different research settings: the Teaching University, the Private Online University, City College, and the Institute.

4.1 Approach and Rationale

Whether entering academia as a new professional or after years of administrative experience, navigating the transition to faculty comes with particular challenges and obstacles. Documenting one's own experiences through auto-ethnography allows for critical self-reflection, exploration of a phenomenon from an insider's perspective, and serves as a gateway for transformative learning. (Perry, Dean, & Hilton, 2019, p. 44)

Vosko (2006) explains that in order to understand precarious employment, one must build a methodological approach that considers the form of employment and the dimensions of labour market insecurity “that is sensitive to the social location and context as well as the dynamics of social reproduction” (p. 18). This leaves many entry points when inquiring into precarious academic work.

In Bauer's (2011) master's thesis, one of the limitations that they outlined with their study on contingent faculty in Quebec was the ability to interview contingent faculty members. Bauer concluded that the contingent faculty population “is a very busy one”, and that it's likely that “prospective participants felt too vulnerable or insecure to discuss their employment history and profile” and that “the contingent academic faculty members are notoriously transient,

travelling from university to university” (p. 117). With this, surveying precarious faculty in an attempt to gather insights into the experience of working ‘precariously’ is difficult since recruiting precarious faculty is a challenge. And, more personally, I would argue that asking precarious faculty for their time is unfair to the precarious faculty members themselves; they are often juggling multiple jobs at multiple institutions—and I would not feel good about asking them to volunteer their time. In my view, precarious faculty should be compensated for their time. This is, in part, the reason why I selected autoethnography as the methodology for this study. In using autoethnography, or—more specifically, organizational autoethnography—I am the sole participant in this study.

When Brian Street (1993) reviewed Martyn Mannersly’s (1992) book, *What’s Wrong With Ethnography?* He explained that ethnographic research has changed substantially over the past three decades. Since 1993, one could argue that ethnography has continued to evolve in the social sciences. Green and Bloome (2004) suggest that the use of ethnographic research has become more sophisticated and that what counts as ethnography and ethnographic research, whom conducts such research, and how agendas are being pursued has been refined. Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2016) explain that ethnography is appropriate if the researcher is exploring how a cultural group works.

4.2 Ethnography

Ethnography as a research method, by definition, is “the study of the cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural settings” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 404). At its core, ethnographic research is a long-term study of a particular phenomenon that aims to understand what’s going on in a particular setting—in a particular “culture.” Culture, in this sense is defined quite widely, as a “set of attitudes, values, concepts, beliefs, and practices shared

by members of a group” (p. 404). Interestingly, Creswell and Poth (2016) differentiate between realist ethnography and critical ethnography, where critical ethnography “is a type of ethnographic research in which the authors advocate for the emancipation of groups marginalized in society” (p. 92). Additionally, critical ethnography helps researchers speak out about inequality and privilege and advocate for underrepresented groups, studying issues of power, empowerment, inequity, dominance, repression, and hegemony. By analyzing the experience of precarious faculty, I am aiming to adopt a critical perspective—precarious faculty are often an understudied faculty group in a higher education organization. And, the intent with this study is to contribute to this understudied group in a meaningful way.

For the purpose of this study, the cultures that are being examined are the organizational cultures of the departments in the specific higher education institutions. Green and Bloome (2004) describe ethnography as a process of inquiry. It’s a process that has been taken up by a broad range of people in a broad range of disciplines, including education. So then, as a “process of inquiry,” what is ethnographic research, specifically? While there is no single way to conduct ethnographic research (Creswell & Poth, 2016), there are steps that should be followed. Green and Bloome (2004) argue that “doing ethnography involves the framing, conceptualizing, conducting, interpreting, writing, and reporting associated with a broad in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group” (p. 184). Therefore, in my research study, to “do” ethnography, it is imperative that I am cognizant about how I frame and conceptualize the social or cultural groups that I analyze.

While traditionally, ethnographic research in education has not been considered as a field in the same ways as anthropology and sociology, Green and Bloome (2004) argue that ethnography and education, as a site for research, are compatible because education has, “its own

(a) history of inquiry, and (b) knowledge base that needs to be accounted for in conducting inquiry and interpreting and reporting data” (p. 193). So, education, as a field of study that has emerged and evolved into a legitimate field of study over the past forty years or so, has become an intellectual site for ethnography as a methodology for research in education, complete with theories, processes, practices, questions and research agendas.

Green and Bloome (2004) argue that there are three approaches to ethnography in education: *doing* ethnography, adopting an ethnographic perspective, and using ethnographic tools. The following sections will address each of these ethnographic approaches and define how my research fits within each of these approaches.

4.2.1 *Doing* Ethnography

One of the key features of ethnography is the thick, rich description that is provided by the researcher. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that this ‘thick’, rich description is a critical part to the validity of a qualitative study, “the purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study” (p. 129). Therefore, the validity of my study depends on my ability to provide ‘thick’ and ‘rich’ details in my autoethnographic accounts.

4.2.2 Adopting an Ethnographic Perspective

Green and Bloome (2004) define adopting an ethnographic perspective as taking a more focused approach to study the particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group. “Central to an ethnographic perspective is the use of theories of culture and inquiry practices derived from anthropology or sociology to guide the research” (p. 184). Since I have lived and worked in the environments/ settings that I am studying for my research, the ethnographic

perspective that I use for my study is the autoethnographic perspective. More specifically, I apply the organizational autoethnographic perspective.

4.2.2.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography, as indicated by its name, is a personal perspective. It is an approach to research that systematically describes and analyzes personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) claim that “autoethnographic performances breathe life into life ethnographies” (p. 50). Boyle and Parry (2007) state that, “autoethnographic accounts are characterized by a move from a broad lens focus on individual situatedness within the cultural and social context, to a focus on the inner, vulnerable and often resistant self” (p. 186). As a Doctor of Education student, it’s critical that the research I conduct be rooted in practice. As previously noted, because I am looking at my practice of being a precarious faculty member in higher education institutions, my practice lives in the departmental organizational cultures of the four different higher education environments in which I worked. According to Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2016), autoethnography, as a research method, is a way for the researcher to use their personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences. This is precisely what I aim to do in my research: I draw on my personal experience working as a precarious (contract or sessional) instructor at four higher education institutions in British Columbia, specifically between the years of 2016 and 2018, when I was hired, onboarded, and began learning the organizational cultures of each respective institution.

Because the focus of my research is within organizational structures of higher education institutions, another filter on the methodology is necessary. This filter is explained in detail in the next section.

4.2.2.2 Organizational Autoethnography

Boyle and Parry (2007) ascertain that the focus of an organizational ethnographic study is to, “illuminate the relationship between the individual and the organization in a way that crystallizes the key conceptual and theoretical contribution to understanding the relationship between culture and organization” (p. 185). They argue that the reflexive nature of autoethnography, as an autobiographical form of research allows the researcher to, “intimately connect the personal to the cultural” (p. 186). In this instance, the cultural refers to the organizational culture of an institution. Perhaps the most appropriate aspect of organizational autoethnography, for the purposes of my research questions, is that the methodology, “has the ability to connect the everyday, mundane aspects of organizational life with that of broader political and strategic organizational agendas and practices” (p. 186). My research focuses on these “everyday, mundane aspects of organizational life”—looking specifically at my experiences, which include the mundane experiences that precarious faculty engage with as part of their work.

Boyle and Parry (2007) also propose that autobiographical and retrospective approaches, like organizational ethnography, are more likely to “unearth and illuminate the tacit and subaltern aspects of organization” (p. 186). This means that this type of ethnography has a way of engaging readers and illuminating organizational processes in ways that other methods cannot. In fact, Boyle and Parry (2007) identify this as a particular and unique strength of organizational autoethnography—that it has the ability to weave the extant literature into the narrative that the author presents. Again, this aligns well with my research questions and the overarching aims for my research. My aim is not to provide substantive evidence on the emergence of precarious faculty within higher education in British Columbia—or to offer any kind of large-scale report on the working conditions, gender prevalence, or strain that precarious faculty face within the

institutions in which they work and serve. The aim of my research is to illuminate a very specific experience—my experience—working within the four different institutions, and use the storytelling autoethnographic method as a way of exploring the ways in which I was socialized as a precarious faculty member at the four different institutions.

4.2.3 Using Ethnographic Tools

Using ethnographic tools “refers to the use of methods and techniques usually associated with fieldwork” (Green & Bloome, 2004, p. 184). So then, what are the ethnographic tools involved with autoethnography? Boyle and Parry (2007) explain that, “in an organizational autoethnographic account, the lens moves from cultural and social situatedness to the inner self and then back again to the situated individual” (p. 186). In this sense, the autoethnography does not finish with the personal, but rather contains constant reminders throughout the writing of how the individual self-interacts with the organizational and institutional context in which they are situated. Therefore, this dissertation will present both the findings (my personal stories) and the analysis together; Chapters 5, 6, and 7, start by reviewing the literature, then turn to my personal reflective autoethnographic stories, and lastly analyze the ways in which my stories align or don’t align with the research. The following sections will describe the importance of focusing on the past and reflexivity, aesthetic style, and audience.

4.2.3.1 A Focus on the Past and Reflexivity

Lived experience cannot be studied directly because language, speech, and systems of discourse mediate and define the very experience one attempts to describe. We study the representations of experience, not experience itself. We examine the stories people tell one another about the experiences they have had. These stories may be personal experience

narratives or self stories, interpretations made up as the person goes along. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 50)

“The narrative that is organizational autoethnography is an explanation of what has happened in the past. It is not a prediction about what will happen in the future to other people in similar situations” (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 189). My narrative autoethnographic accounts and analysis draw on my personal journals during the two-year period as well as personal emails and Excel logs documented in my personal files.

Between 2016 and 2018, I kept detailed files on my personal computer to track all the positions for which I was applying. In terms of application materials, I had three files on my computer labeled, “2016 Applications”, “2017 Applications”, and “2018 Applications.” My 2016 Application file has 141 different application document files within it. And my 2017 and 2018 Application files have 148 and 63 different application documents filed within them, respectively. The types of documents within these files include cover letters tailored to the job for which I was applying, teaching philosophy statements, statement of research interests, completed application forms (downloaded and required for the application for specific institutions), and copies of my student evaluations of teaching. Additionally, to help manage the many applications I was submitting during this time, I had created three different “application tracking” spreadsheets each year. These Excel spreadsheets were a short-hand way for me to keep track of where I was in the application process for all the positions I had applied. Along the top of the spreadsheet, columns titled, Position, Organization, Date Submitted, Closing Date, Position Duration, and Salary are spread across the top of the sheet. When I was invited for an interview, I would colour code that specific entry in my Excel sheet with the colour green. Conversely, when I heard back from the institution that I was not a shortlisted candidate for the

position, I would colour code that specific entry in my Excel sheet with the colour red. These files and yearly application Excel sheets serve as a repository of the applications that I submitted and the positions for which I applied for the two focal years of this study, 2016-2018.

In my autoethnographic accounts, emails are used to help recall responses to requests or other information. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, you'll see excerpts of emails that help to convey the tone of the communications. These are real emails that were sent to me. To protect the identities of those people in my autoethnographic accounts, I have given everyone in my autoethnographic accounts a pseudonym. In order to recall specific events, I relied heavily on my journals, which I kept and wrote in on a weekly basis. These journals included reminders and action items for myself, but were also a place where I reflected and wrote about the events that I present in my autoethnographic accounts. I also had taken some photos of my workspaces at three of the four institutions in which I worked. Originally, these photos were taken for personal reasons (to share with friends and family about my workspaces). These photos, some of which are presented in Chapter 7, added an additional data source for me to draw on when reviewing the literature for themes. At the start of this research study, I began by first reviewing the literature on precarious faculty in higher education in Canada. In my initial review of the literature, many themes emerged, but five different themes seemed to dominate the literature. Those five themes centered around interviewing for faculty positions, performance evaluations, resources, not wanting to "rock the boat", and making difficult decisions. It was in this initial literature review that I was able to draw on and determine the major themes for the specific autoethnographic accounts in this research study. After the preliminary literature review, and after pulling these major themes from the literature, I then used my journal entries, emails, photos, and Excel spreadsheets to

write my autoethnographic accounts of “being interviewed”, “being evaluated”, and “being given resources” at all four institutions⁵.

Because the second research question that guides this study is: *In what ways does my experience as a precarious faculty member illustrate the current literature about precarious faculty in Canadian higher education institutions? And, in what ways does my experience diverge from the current literature?*, I have constructed my findings and analysis chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) in a way that is conducive to this research question. I start Chapters 5, 6, and 7 by reviewing the specific literature that corresponds to the themes of each of my autoethnographic accounts. After reviewing the literature, I present my autoethnographic accounts on the theme (being interviewed, performance evaluations, and resources). Then, I compare the experiences presented in my autoethnographic accounts against my findings from the literature to indicate if my experience is consistent with, or divergent from the literature. Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2016) explain that autoethnography, as a research method, “uses deep and careful self-reflection—typically referred to as reflexivity—to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political” (p. 2).

To reflect on my experiences, in this dissertation, I categorize my experiences by theme. For example, I reflect and discuss my experiences being interviewed at each institution. By doing this, I am reflecting on and discussing my experiences while at the same time connecting my

⁵Initially, I set out to write about my experiences on all five of the major themes from the initial literature review. However, I failed to have enough data to write about my experience “not wanting to rock the boat”, as well as making difficult decisions. For example, I wrote an autoethnographic account for my experiences “not wanting to rock the boat” at only two of the four institutions. Without a full account across the four institutions, I wasn’t able to contribute enough to these other themes that emerged from the literature.

experiences to each of the organizations—within each of the departmental organizational cultures of each institution.

4.2.3.2 Aesthetic Style

Central to autoethnography is the use of an aesthetic style of text (Boyle & Parry, 2007). From 2016 to 2018 when I was employed (or contracted, in most cases) as a precarious faculty member at the many institutions that I served, I kept a journal containing written accounts of events that I experienced in the institutions as well as a series of poems that I wrote, usually in a fit of frustration, happiness, or hope, expressing my feelings and thoughts. They are, as Boyle and Parry (2007) explain, first-person accounts that tell stories of my experiences. These entries served as the seed for my autoethnographic accounts and I referenced them as I was writing the autoethnographic accounts.

Creswell and Poth (2016) synthesize the writing strategies used in ethnography as realist and confessional tales of the researchers experience and claim that it is the personalized account of both the realist and confessional writing that presents compelling and persuasive stories. Boyle and Parry (2007) also stress the importance of producing an engaging narrative. A large part of what gives organizational autoethnographic research its influence rests on the storyline and writing abilities of the author. Boyle and Parry specifically refer to the importance of the storyline not being congested with too many references, unlike the first four chapters in this dissertation. In this sense, there is a wordsmith, or storytelling component to writing autoethnographic research. As I'll explain in the next section, audience or reader impact is critical to organizational autoethnographic research, as well.

4.2.3.3 Audience

Like all forms of autoethnography, the researcher expresses how he or she has struggled to make sense of his or her experience. A distinguisher of organizational autoethnography—and this is key to distinguishing organizational autoethnography from other forms of autoethnography—is that the researcher communicated his or her sense making to the ‘organizational’ audience (Boyle & Parry, 2007). Again, this aligns well with my research questions; I have a particular ‘audience’ that I am speaking to: administrators, decision-makers, faculty, and staff in higher education in British Columbia. Afterall, the trend of relying on precarious faculty in higher education is, primarily, made by senior administrators. And, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Tierney (1988) argues that administrators almost always have more than one choice when making decisions—and that the organizational culture influences the final decision. Autoethnography has the ability to expose the reader to stories that they would otherwise not have access to. In telling stories and recounting my experiences through these autoethnographic accounts as a precarious faculty member over a two-year period, I hope to open the door into the fascinating and incredibly important organizational phenomena of how precarious faculty in higher education institutions navigate the departmental organizational cultures, and more specifically, in higher education institutions in British Columbia.

4.2.4 Criticism of Autoethnography

A major criticism of autoethnographic research comes from a positivist perspective: that the researcher has little control over the research process. There is no guarantee of a correlation between the degree of control over the research process and the resultant impact on a reader (Boyle & Parry, 2007). This criticism is partly why I am drawn to this methodology; the positivist notion that the researcher has absolute control in social science research is inherently

problematic. I wish to contribute to the literature and conduct my research in a way that recognizes and salutes the idea that ‘control’ in research is a ruse, and acknowledge and contribute to the ways in which autoethnography complements and accepts post-structural ways of knowing and being.

Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2016), in explaining the development of autoethnography, echo the criticism outlined by Boyle and Parry (2007), noting that personal experience, storytelling, care and emotions—heavily gendered and traditionally considered “feminine”—were traditionally seen as barriers to producing objective and rational research. They argue that autoethnography, as a methodology, describes the changing idea(l)s of research—the relatively new idea that social science should not leave out the complex elements of social life. Autoethnography certainly cannot help me (or anyone employing the method) to claim objective facts and empirical truths. Again, my aim is to contribute to the improvement of precarious faculty working conditions and precarious faculty employment structures which will ultimately improve the students’ post-secondary experience.

4.2.5 The Validity of Autoethnography

So then, how do I ensure that my autoethnographic account is valid; that it holds up as a high standard of academic research? This is a doctoral dissertation, after all, and there are expectations about it meeting certain academic standards.

Tracy (2010) outlines eight “big tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research in her article published in *Qualitative Inquiry*. I believe that ethnography—autoethnography, specifically—has the ability to touch on all eight of the criteria Tracy outlines: a worthy topic and sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence.

But, the three criteria that are most closely aligned with autoethnography are: that it's a worthy topic, it's sincere, and it's credible.

4.2.5.1 A Worthy Topic

As the previous chapter outlines, precarious faculty are a growing group of workers in higher education. Tensions have resulted and people's lives are being impacted in a significant and systemic way that is indicative of where we are, right now, in time. Tracy argues that, "good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting or evocative. [...] worthy topics just as easily grow from timely societal or personal events" (p. 840). My qualitative study of precarious faculty in higher education is *both* societal and personal. The earlier literature review chapter outlines how this research topic is societally significant; it's also personally significant. I, personally, spent years working in higher education across multiple institutions as a precarious faculty member. It was *my work* and therefore a large part of my personal identity.

4.2.5.2 Sincerity

The second 'big tent' criteria that my research falls within is that of sincerity:

Sincerity as an end goal can be achieved through self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing. [...] Sincerity means that the research is marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher's biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research. (Tracy, 2010, p. 841)

In this criterion of sincerity, Tracy (2010) explicitly refers to the notion of self-reflexivity and notes its importance in ethnography: "Ethnographers should report their own voice in relation to others and explicate how they claim to know what they know" (p. 842). Additionally, Tracy argues that 'good ethnography' should include stories about oneself and autoethnography should

include confessional tales (Van Maanen, 1998) which includes the “researchers’ subjective experiences, hopes, fears, and vulnerabilities” (Tracy, 2010). It is through these personal experiences and connections that my research can ‘illuminate’ the reader’s understanding of the cultural group that I am analyzing: precarious faculty in Canadian higher education. This occurs through the infamous phrase of *show, don’t tell* that’s often referenced in storytelling.

When it comes to engaging in reflexivity, “the researcher discloses their understandings about the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study from the outset of the study so that the reader understands the position from which researchers undertakes inquiry” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 256). By laying all my cards on the table from the beginning, readers will know of my biases beforehand, and will therefore know the full picture of how my past influences inform my autoethnographic accounts. Additionally, this allows opportunities for me to make connections throughout my stories with my past experiences and perspectives.

4.2.5.3 Credibility, Validity, and Thick Descriptions

Tracy’s (2010) criterion for credibility, “refers to the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings” (p. 843). In quantitative research, credibility comes in the form of reliability of sources, replicability, consistency, and accuracy, but for qualitative research, credibility is achieved through thick descriptions (Tracy, 2010). In addition to credibility, it’s also essential that my research is valid. Creswell and Poth (2016), outline multiple strategies to ensure that one’s qualitative research achieves validity, one of which is through thick descriptions. Therefore, ensuring that my research utilizes thick descriptions will help to ensure that my research is both credible and valid.

What constitutes a rich, thick description? According to Creswell and Poth (2016), “thick description means that the research provides enough details when describing a case or when writing about a theme” (p. 263). It’s all about providing detail—be it a physical or activity description, or a string of quotes—this allows the reader to transfer the writing to other settings and to examine the writing from the writer’s objective account. Tracy (2010) explains:

Ethnography’s level of detail should provide a complex and expansionistic depiction.

[...] To illustrate data’s complexity, researchers are advised to *show*, meaning that they provide enough detail that readers may come to their own conclusion about the scene.

This is contrasted from the author *telling* the reader what to think. (Tracy, 2010, p. 843)

It is through this transferability that the reader can arrive at similar conclusions based on the detailed accounts—that makes the research “valid” (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

4.2.6 Ethics and Risks

As with any research that involves human subjects (even if that human subject is just myself), ethics need to be considered. No methodology is immune to criticism and risks. This section will outline the ethical implications of this research, and the criticisms and risks that are associated with ethnography, and more specifically, organizational autoethnography.

As a doctoral dissertation, it is paramount that the research outlined here follows the ethical practices of both the *University of British Columbia* (UBC) and meets the standards for the Canadian *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2) Course on Research Ethics. Based on the information listed on the UBC research ethics website and after completing the TCPS 2 Certificate of Completion, it was determined that a Research Ethics Board (REB) was not required for the undertaking of the research presented in this dissertation.

4.2.6.1.1 Ethics at UBC

According to the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics (2019) website, when it comes to autoethnography, “If there are no other people interviewed or named (or whose identities can be otherwise ascertained) in the narrative, and it draws purely on retrospective reflection, ethical review is not required.” Because I have not included any interviews, nor have I engaged in data collection at a particular field site in the traditional anthropological ethnographic sense, my autoethnographic research does not require REB approval. The research presented is purely retrospective.

4.2.6.1.2 Ethics and the Canadian Tri-Council Policy

In preparation for the research in this study, I completed the “TCPS 2 Certificate” offered through the *Government of Canada’s Panel on Research Ethics*. Doing the certificate, it is explained that, “not every activity involving inquiry and/or human participation is considered to be research involving humans that requires REB review.” Additionally, because my autoethnographic research study takes a retrospective critical approach, the consent of the organization is not required. Module 4 of “Consent” in TCPS 2 states that, “some research seeks knowledge that may critique or challenge an organization. The consent of that organization is not required.” In fact, it is important that REB is not formally undertaken with this type of research because, “this allows research to be conducted on matters that otherwise stay hidden.” Since my retrospective inquiry seeks to uncover experiences of precarious faculty in an effort to yield insights on organizational culture within different institutions, it would be counter-productive for me to undertake the formal REB process.

Even though REB is not required for my research, there are two aspects of my research that I must address in order to ensure that my study is consistent with TCPS 2. Those two aspects are outlined below.

1. I am a human and therefore, I must address the risks associated with autoethnographic research.

And,

2. My research is framed within organizational cultures; former colleagues and supervisors have shaped much of my experiences, even if my reflections are in retrospect.

In an effort to protect the identity of all those I refer to throughout my retrospective reflections, I have taken a number of precautions. While I have not changed the name of the city that I live and work within⁶, I have given each of the institutions I refer to in my study an alias—the Private Online University, the Teaching University, City College, and the Institute. Additionally, I haven't exposed the department in which I worked as a precarious faculty member at any of the institutions. I have changed the names of all the people I reference in all my retrospective autoethnographic accounts.

While reflexivity and writing about one's own experiences can be valuable in terms of exposing certain nuances and intricate experiences within an environment, autoethnography, because it is intertwined with reflexivity, can come with some major risks. Boyle and Parry (2007) suggest that: "exposing the vulnerable self through autobiographical processes can be fraught with personal and professional risk and, in some instances, can be the most dangerous

⁶ The location of my experience is important because higher education in Canada is governed differently across provinces. It's important that the location of these institutions be distinguishable and accurate for the reader.

fieldwork of all” (p. 186). As for the risks to me, the researcher: sharing my experiences in the honest way that I have could have some repercussions on my career advancement, especially if someone I’ve written about here reads my work, recognizes themselves within my writing, and adamantly disagrees with my account of the events that I experienced. Researcher bias is a risk of autoethnography. Murray (2019) describes how fickle the precarious faculty’s academic freedom is and how it can have detrimental effects on the faculty member’s employment:

Although an administrator may be prohibited by university policy from dismissing an instructor because that administrator disagrees with the ideas the instructor is presenting in class or with that faculty member’s scholarship, in the absence of stringent enforced regulations it does not require much acumen to simply remove that employee from the next round of course assignment without giving any reason other than “scheduling changes.” (Murray, 2019, p. 240)

That being said, at the time this dissertation was published in 2021, I already held a permanent full-time position at an institution, complete with academic freedom and benefits. So, career advancement as a faculty member is not an issue for me (anymore). Additionally, telling these stories and potentially having an impact on improving the quality of life for precarious academics is more important to me than career advancement. The stories presented here in this dissertation are real and I experienced them first hand; if an employer fails to see the value, authenticity, honesty, and intention behind this dissertation, then that is a failure on the part of the institution, not me: the individual researcher.

4.2.6.2 The Impact of Autoethnography

Wounded storytellers can empower others to tell their stories. Testimonials, as emergency narratives, can mobilize a nation against social injustice, repression, and violence.

Collective stories can form the basis of a social movement. Telling stories of marginalized people can help to create a public space requiring others to hear what they do not want to hear. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 46)

With organizational autoethnography, the major contribution is that the findings are substantive to the experience of just one person: me. *How* the findings are reported—the way that I write my analysis, findings, and recommendations influence the *impact* of my research. Boyle and Parry (2007) suggest that, “the critical ‘n’ factor in much organizational research is the number of people who read the research, rather than the number of people who are the subjects of the research” (p. 188). In fact, Boyle and Parry suggest that the emotive power that organizational autoethnography promotes is what makes it a more powerful research approach in organizational research than most other mainstream research approaches. This emotive power of autoethnography is a primary reason why I’ve selected this methodology for my research.

4.3 Research Settings

According to Wolcott (1990 & 1994), it’s imperative that I define and describe the ‘culture-sharing group and setting’ within my ethnographic study. This, Wolcott argues, is a good starting point for engaging with and writing ethnography.

According to Pasma and Shaker (2018), “in the Greater Vancouver area, contract appointments make up 58 per cent of faculty appointments” (p. 27). All of the research sites used in my research come from the Vancouver area—where precarious faculty statistically outnumber regular faculty. It should also be noted that while I was a member of the institution’s faculty associations at 3 of the 4 research sites, I never interacted directly with the faculty association.

Using an alias for each of the four different institutions that I was employed at from 2016-2018, the next section of this chapter will provide an organizational profile of each of these

research settings. Each profile outlines the type, and size of the institution, as well as their institutional mission statements, and the nature of my role within the institution.

4.3.1 The Teaching University

The Teaching University is located in the Vancouver area. They have two main campuses and approximately 15,000 students. In 2016, they employed approximately 700 faculty members (note that it is unclear if this figure includes sessional and contract faculty), and approximately 700 staff and administrators. They boast on their website that they offer more than 100 programs, including 15 bachelor's degrees and two master's degrees. They also offer more than a dozen trades and technology programs.

Founded in the mid-1970's, this Teaching University has gone through many transitions over the years. In the early 1990's it went from being a "College" to a "University College." It was at this time that they began offering Baccalaureate degrees. In 2009, along with a handful of other institutions in the Vancouver area and lower mainland, the Teaching University dropped the "College" part of its title and was officially granted "University" status, installing its first Chancellor and awarding its first Master's degrees.

The Teaching University's mission statement is threefold. The first mission is to provide the best undergraduate education in Canada. The second mission is to be a leader in many facets of the local suburb in which it's located. The third part of the mission is to be innovative, "entrepreneurial," and accountable in achieving its goals.

I was hired as a sessional instructor in September 2016. Although I applied and was interviewed for the position of a *Limited Term Instructor* (a one-year full-time contract), I was offered a *Sessional* position (teaching on a course-by-course basis, term after term). I was initially offered a single night class to start. While there were no medical and dental benefits

offered with this position, I was able to opt-in to the provincial government college pension plan. Also, I was a member of the institution's faculty association. I was also given the course textbook, and a key to the departmental 'resource room,' that I was able to share with other sessional instructors, as an office space.

4.3.2 The Private Online University

The Private Online University is a for-profit and non-denominational university that has campuses in New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Ontario. A relatively new university, the Private Online University was established in the early-2000's and delivers practitioner-oriented degree programs, including a handful of Master's degrees and a Bachelor's degree in Business.

The Private Online University's mission statement lends itself well to its online nature, focusing on three main facets: accessibility, rigor, and flexibility. Interestingly, the mission statement for the institution also includes a statement about building a national university that focuses on "practitioner-oriented" degree programs that helps contribute to the betterment of society.

The Private Online University seems to run, almost exclusively, on contract faculty members. Aside from the approximately 30 Deans, Vice-Presidents, Associate Deans, and other senior academic leadership titles, there are only 20 "regular" faculty employed at .25 FTE. The remaining approximately 200 faculty are employed as "contract instructors." No student data is published on their website.

I was hired as a "contract instructor" at the Private Online University in 2013, and became a 0.25 FTE Regular "Core Faculty" member in 2016. As a Contract Instructor—prior to 2016—I was paid in full when the course was over and I submitted an invoice, so had to wait three months to receive payment for my work. As a Core Faculty member—after 2016—I was

paid on salary bi-weekly and expected to work about 10 hours per week on administrative tasks. At this institution, there was no faculty association. I continued to teach online while I was a Core Faculty member, which remained on a contract-basis. In both positions I was not offered any medical or dental benefits, vacation entitlement, or pension plan during the 2016-2018 period. Additionally, I performed most of my work from home, on my personal laptop.

4.3.3 City College

City College was established in the mid-1960's. They currently have a "diverse" workforce of approximately 740 full-time and 480 part-time employees. It's unclear if these figures include both faculty and staff, and it's unclear what is meant by "diverse." City College offers approximately 130 credentials, including: certificates, diplomas, degrees, and post-degree programs. It should also be noted that City College has a robust continuing studies department. In the 2016/17 academic year, approximately 24,000 students were enrolled in City College, and there were approximately 4,500 students enrolled in their continuing studies programs. Almost half of the students enrolled at City College are planning to transfer to another institution to complete their degree.

City College advertises itself as a pathway college, which forms the foundation of one of the two published institutional mission statement's on their website. "Pathway colleges are institutions, or segments of larger institutions, that are specifically constructed to recruit international students who would not otherwise be eligible for entry to a Canadian university, and then prepare them for entry to the larger institution" (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018, p. 209). They claim to provide students with the academic and experiential foundation of their academic and professional careers. In another mission statement published within their current strategic plan, they state that they aim to provide accessible and high quality programs that meet the needs

of the learners that they serve—similar to the Teaching University’s mission statement.

However, as McCartney and Metcalfe (2018) explain, there is a disproportionate number of international students to domestic students at pathway colleges (and, there is a greater proportion of private institutions that operate as pathway colleges).

In the spring of 2017, I applied to City College to teach as a sessional instructor in the fall of 2017. I was contacted by the department head on August 30th, 2017 and was asked if I would be interested in teaching a course in the fall as an “emergency hire.” I said yes, and—without an interview, reference check, or even having met anyone in-person—was offered a teaching contract as a sessional instructor at the institution. With this position, I was a member of the faculty association and was also offered medical and extended health benefits, and—like the Teaching University—was able to “opt-in” to the provincial college pension plan. For the first time in a year, I had health and dental benefits.

4.3.4 The Institute

The Institute—the largest institution in which I worked over the two-year period—began in the early 1960’s as vocational school in the Vancouver area. It has approximately 48,000 students (both full-time and part-time students) at its multiple campuses. They offer many different trades, engineering, health, business, and technology programs and most of the credentials awarded are certificates, diplomas, and apprenticeships—although, they do offer and award baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate programs, as well. The Institute employs approximately 2,000 full-time faculty and staff, and approximately 600 part-time faculty and staff.

Not surprisingly, the mission of the Institute is tied closely to industry—their mission focuses on both the success of learners and serving the needs of industry. They aim to train

graduates so that they are “career-ready” and claim that students receive a “superior return on their investment” with the credentials obtained from the Institute.

I was hired as a .6 FTE Instructor in the fall of 2017 after applying for, and having been interviewed for the exact posted position for which I applied. While, initially, I was only hired for the fall 2017 term, I continued in this position for multiple terms afterwards. Like City College—I was a member of the Institute’s faculty association and I was offered health and extended medical benefits. In this position, was able to “opt-in” to the provincial college pension plan. I was also given an office space to share with two other instructors. Additionally, in lieu of vacation I was paid 20 per cent of my salary, a standard for all ‘temporary’ instructors employed by the Institute.

As described above, I have offered a profile of each of the four institutions in which I worked in as a precarious faculty member. These four institutions outlined above—the Teaching University, the Private Online University, City College, and the Institute, will serve as the sites of my detailed autoethnographic accounts.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has detailed the methodological approach taken in this dissertation.

Autoethnography, as explained, lends itself well to research that details one’s experience within a system or organization where they work along the margins. This chapter has explained the tools associated with autoethnography, as well as the criticisms that are often associated with the methodology. This chapter also outlined the ethics associated autoethnography and attempted to address the ways in which these risks will be minimized. Finally, this chapter concluded by describing the four research settings of my research: the Teaching University, the Private Online University, City College, and the Institute. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will delve into my thematic

autoethnographic accounts and will proceed to analyze each account, comparing and contrasting my accounts to the published literature.

Chapter 5: Being Precarious: Interviewing for Faculty Positions

As a precarious faculty member—as anyone who works on contract can attest to—a fair amount of time is spent worrying about whether or not I have enough work in the upcoming months to cover my expenses. Part of having enough work, in my experience, is ensuring that I have enough institutions to turn to for work. Across the four different institutions, I was paid differently (depending on the institution, as well as whether the course was offered face-to-face or online, and the duration of the course (the number of weeks)), and many courses offered different levels of compensation. For me, the average across all the different compensation levels equated to roughly \$5,000 per course taught; with the lowest compensation being \$3,000 per course and the highest being \$8,000 per course (prior to taxes). So, in order to earn a livable wage (which is \$50,000/ year according to this author), I needed to teach about 12 courses per year. Now, obviously, I preferred to teach those courses that paid the highest; however, I could only accept what was offered—and there was no guarantee with what was offered. Generally, I accepted all work that came my way. From 2016 to 2018, I had seven different institutions or organizations in my portfolio from which I could accept or decline work. This meant that I was constantly applying for new positions, or even re-applying to keep positions that I already held. All in all, I spent a lot of time interviewing at various institutions.

This chapter will first outline the literature around being interviewed for instructional positions in higher education. Secondly, this chapter will detail my autoethnographic account of being interviewed from 2016-2018. Lastly, this chapter will analyze the ways in which my autoethnographic account matches or deviates from the literature reviewed.

5.1 Interviewing for Faculty Positions: A Literature Review

One of the arguments university administrations have advanced to justify their reliance on contract faculty is that contract faculty do not have the qualifications to deserve tenure.

However, the sheer number of contract appointments made by universities—in some cases more than half—suggests a disconnect; you can't simultaneously insist that more than half of faculty appointments are underqualified while continuing to assure students, parents, and governments that universities offer a high-quality education. (Pasma & Shaker, 2018, p. 9)

The vast majority of the literature on hiring and interviewing faculty in higher education focuses on the hiring of tenure-track faculty; this makes sense since it's presumed that faculty positions (once tenure and promotion are awarded) are for life. Therefore, it makes sense that higher education institutions allocate a fair amount of time and resources into the recruitment of tenure-track faculty. However, there's a significant fallacy here; many departments hire just as many contract-type faculty as they do tenure-track faculty... if not *more* contract-type faculty. So, in addition to having best practices for hiring and promoting tenure-stream faculty, institutions also need to have best practices for hiring and promoting precarious faculty. Yet, the literature is limited in these terms; there seems to be limited, if any, literature around the recruitment of contract faculty in higher education. Macdonald (2013) describes instances of precarious faculty who receive phone calls with offers to teach courses just days before the course is scheduled to begin. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) explain:

Teaching-only faculty, for instance, may be recruited at the last minute and forced to use prefabricated course syllabi with prescribed texts, assignments, and other teaching

materials such as slideshows or activities, undercutting whatever agency and respect they would normally be afforded on professional expertise. (p. 33)

So, while the tenure-track faculty recruitment process is elaborate, comprehensive, exhaustive, and (some might argue) performative, the contract faculty recruitment process is non-existent, in contrast. This, from a student's perspective, is concerning since students are instructed by both tenure-stream faculty and contract faculty (more so contract faculty if they are undergraduate students).

Historically, approximately fifty years ago, it was assumed that contract faculty primarily had full-time jobs (in industry) and taught on the side. However, today, this is not the case as contingent hiring seems to dominate the academic recruitment landscape. As described in Chapter 2 (and particularly from Field and Jones (2016) study), precarious faculty, today, are concerned with job security. There are two issues that surround applying for positions for precarious faculty. The first issue comes with applying for positions. As the literature review in Chapter 2 describes, tenure-track faculty opportunities are becoming more scarce. And, contract-style positions are much more widely available. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) note that, "most part-time contingent faculty expressly seek a full-time position but accept contingent ones because of a lack of full-time opportunities" (p. 44). This translates to hours spent applying for contract teaching positions. Rather than devote hours to planning courses or grading student work, faculty are spending significant resources and time simply applying for contract positions at various institutions each year; time that (arguably) would be better spent on course and student development.

The second issue that comes with applying for positions is the issue of applying for positions that one already holds at institutions. While many universities have seniority provisions

in place that give contingent faculty who have been teaching at the institution for years the “right of first refusal” many precarious faculty have to reapply term after term for courses that they’ve been actively teaching for years; every term, precarious faculty are at risk of being unemployed (MacDonald, 2013). So, some institutions demand that contract faculty re-apply for positions that they’ve held in the past. There is no guarantee that the faculty member will be the successful candidate for the contract position the next term. And, even if the contract faculty member is successful in keeping their job through the re-application process, there is often no guarantee that the course(s) they are offered to teach will have enough students registered by the first day so that the course goes ahead as scheduled. As described earlier in Chapter 2, contract faculty are often assigned introductory undergraduate courses to teach, and often, these courses require a minimum number of students to run. If there is not enough demand for a course, then it could be cancelled, along with the contract faculty member’s work and expected wages. If that isn’t enough, additionally, benefits are a major source of personal stress for precarious faculty. “Many work without access to employer benefit plans” (MacDonald, 2013). This process (or lack thereof), illuminates how precarious the work of these faculty members really is.

Kalleberg (2009) writes that precarity is intimately related to perceived job insecurity. The author elaborates that people, in general, are increasingly worried about losing their jobs. This doesn’t just impact the individual precarious faculty themselves; the lack of job security—and the personal strain that precarious faculty feel around the lack of job security—affects the entire institution. MacDonald (2013) also reported that, due to the lack of job security, the tone at universities is changing. Doug Owrarn, former deputy vice-chancellor of the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) explained that surveys at UBCO, “showed that sessionals were the staff group with the lowest morale because of their lack of job

security” (MacDonald, 2013). Additionally, Lopes and Dewan (2014) found that precarious academic faculty often had more than one job and often had to make decisions under short time frames. They found that precarious faculty, “generally knew only a short time before a particular semester or term was to begin whether they would have any teaching hours” (p. 33). Additionally, Lopes and Dewan’s (2014) participants discussed, “not being able to plan for the immediate or long-term future” (p. 33). This parallels the theme and tone of CAUT’s “Fair Employment Week” and the posters that they encourage Canadian faculty associations to distribute, pictured in the figure below.



Figure 3: CAUT "Make It Fair" Poster (CAUT, n.d.d)

As Figure 3 illustrates, the nature of precarious employment means that faculty are forced to make last-minute decisions about their work and livelihoods. Not only does this make it nearly impossible for these people to make any kind of long-term plans in their lives, but it also adds a significant layer of stress. Unfortunately, these hiring practices are quickly becoming the norm in British Columbia's higher education system; for precarious faculty to want more (more lead time or advanced notice on their teaching assignments) is considered unreasonable and unacceptable because the hiring of precarious faculty is demand-driven and teaching assignments are usually allocated after tenured and tenure-track faculty teaching schedules are finalized. The normalized hiring practices of precarious faculty reflect this.

So then, why are precarious faculty complacent in this system of 'last minute work offers'? Courtois and O'Keefe (2015) explain: "Given the increase in competition, young academics are keen to take on work which they hope will add to their experience, making them employable in the future, while those primarily struggling to make ends meet end up accepting anything" (p. 54). Why don't these people apply for full-time permanent positions, rather than contingent positions? The answer to this is: they do! Unfortunately, as previously discussed, tenure-track permanent positions are few and far between. Additionally, just because a contract faculty member applies for a more permanent style position within the institution, that doesn't mean that they'll be shortlisted for it. A tweet from precarious faculty commentator on Twitter, Ross Daniel Bullen, captures the application process ironically and accurately. Figure 4 at the top of the next page is a screen capture of the tweet from Bullen's account.



Figure 4: Tweet from @BullenRoss on February 3, 2020 (Ross Daniel Bullen, 2020)

As Figure 4 above illustrates, just because a contract faculty member has been teaching at an institution for semesters, if not years, that doesn't mean that they're a shoe-in for a permanent position. After all, there's hardly a standard process for hiring contract faculty in higher education institutions; however, the process for acquiring permanent tenure-track faculty is both comprehensive and exhaustive. This lack of standard process for hiring contract faculty is changing, though, as individual faculty associations add provisions and amendments to their collective agreements. This is seen in institutions across Canada as faculty associations make the news during their collective bargaining efforts. Please review Chapter 2, sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5 for a review of the current tensions going on in collective bargaining in Canada and British Columbia, respectively.

The following section will offer my autoethnographic accounts of being interviewed for positions (both precarious and permanent) at the Teaching University, the Private Online University, City College, and the Institute.

5.2 Being Interviewed

Throughout the two years when I started teaching as a precarious instructor, I applied for 127 teaching positions (a healthy mix of both full-time and part-time positions) and interviewed for 19 of those teaching positions. Of those 19 interviews, a few were noteworthy. Two of the 19

were at the same institution and for the same position. In other words, I interviewed for the same position twice—both times the hiring committee was considering me for a one-year contract teaching position and offered me a sessional position instead. Another institution seemed to forget that they interviewed me the previous year, and decided that I was an unsuccessful candidate for the same sessional position I had applied to and interviewed for a mere few months prior. When that institution invited me back to interview for the same sessional position a second time, I could see that they had completely forgotten who I was when I walked in the door (even though we had all met a few months prior in exactly the same circumstances). That same committee, after a second interview for the same position, called me back and informed me, for the second time, that I was not the successful candidate.

The following sections detail my experiences being interviewed for the contract positions at the four institutions—the Teaching University, the Private Online University, City College, and the Institute.

5.2.1 The Teaching University

I interviewed more times at the Teaching University than all other post-secondary institutions combined. The following section details the many interviews that I had at one particular teaching university in the Vancouver lower mainland: the Teaching University.

5.2.1.1 My First Interview

It was a beautiful clear and crisp May morning. As I drove the 40km to the Teaching University campus towards the snow-capped mountains, I practiced my answers out loud. Anyone driving past me might have mistaken my conversation with myself as if I were singing—but I was going over stories where I faced difficulties and overcame them, where I had a pedagogically out-of-the-box idea, and where I was successful in helping students learn. I thought that being selected

for an interview for the full-time one-year contract appointment at the Teaching University was a miracle since I didn't have any face-to-face teaching experience; all my experience teaching had been online for the Private Online University up until that point. My plan was to really leverage my experience as a manager of administration and draw as many face-to-face teaching parallels as I could in my answers to the interviewer's questions—a stretch by any means.

When I arrived at the Teaching University, located on the outskirts of town, I was surprised by how small the campus was. I'd never been there before, and having worked as a manager of administration for a large research university for the past decade, I was surprised that I only had to pay \$1 for parking, and that there were lots of parking spaces available at 10:00am on a Thursday morning. With only six buildings on the campus, finding Building D was rather simple. I managed to make my way from my car in the parking lot to the main office in a matter of a few minutes. When I arrived at the main office, the departmental secretary handed me sample of student work and walked me down the hallway. She invited me to have a seat at a desk in someone's office and instructed me to mark the sample of student work, and when finished, come and return it to her. I took a few moments to look around the desk and the office in which I was sitting. There were a few school photos on the desk, a landline phone, as well as a stack of what looked like student papers on the edge of the desk. I turned my attention to the sample of student work and marked it carefully, with both line edits as well as conceptual and summative feedback on how the student could improve. I even gave the student work a grade: 65 per cent with some summative comments at the bottom.

When I returned the marked student work to the departmental secretary, she led me into a room labeled the “Communications Resource Room” —there were 5 people —sitting around a table waiting for me with papers stacked in front of them. I proceeded to introduce myself, shake

everyone's hands, and offer copies of my cover letter and CV. The questions they asked were all questions that you would expect: tell us about a time when you had to overcome an obstacle, about your proudest moment, about your experiences with teaching... One question was even prefaced with a comment, "Here's a question that Jan insisted that we add to the list of questions" and then they all smiled and gave each other a look while one of them asked me, "what do you like to do for fun?" I was very confused about the backstory behind this question—clearly there was a backstory based on the knowing glances that they all shot one another. Why the interviewer felt like they needed to preface it by crediting Jan—I don't know—but I smiled politely and answered the question⁷. I explained that for fun, which I have little time for since I work full-time and am also a full-time doctoral student, I like to take my dog to the beach. They seemed pleased by the answer. One of the interviewers even added a comment that many of the instructors at the Teaching University live in the small suburb by the beach like me.

Then the committee asked me what I would do if a student were to come to me and ask me if they could re-submit their assignment for a higher mark.

My answer came easy, and I was confident in my reply. I told the committee that I would say yes; I backed up my answer by stating that studies show that when students have the opportunity to correct their errors on their work, they learn better.

I was quite happy with my answer since I knew that this was what the current trend in the literature showed—and therefore, I was sure that my answer would illustrate how current I

⁷ This footnote is to remind the reader that pseudonyms are used for all individuals and organizations involved in my research.

am with teaching and learning literature. After that answer, one of the older men on the committee backtracked and asked me, again, if I would allow the student to re-submit their work.

When I confirmed that yes, I would allow student to re-submit their work because it helps the student learn the course concepts better, he then asked me what theoretical background informed my thinking?

I went from having a load of confidence to feeling like I was about an inch tall. I could see by the expression on his face that he disagreed with my answer.

I tried to explain my position a little more. I explained that I believe that constructivist theories of learning stress that students learn more when they build on their knowledge. So, once a student has the opportunity to read my feedback on their work, then revise their writing based on my suggestions, they might learn those revisions—or what they're doing wrong—better.

I could tell that this answer didn't satisfy this interviewer on my panel. He paused, and then asked me if I could name any specific pieces of research that offer proof of this?

I really didn't think too much of this follow-up question. But, just as I was about to open my mouth to answer his question—another interview panelist—Jan—interrupted the interrogation and told everyone in the room, rather sternly, that we were going to move on to the next question.

After cutting off the interviewer who clearly wasn't impressed by my answer about letting students revise and re-submit work, Jan smiled, and then opened her mouth to ask the next question on her sheet of pre-selected interview questions. But, before she could ask the next question, the unimpressed interviewer shot her a distinct look and asked if he was allowed to ask me some more follow-up questions.

Being in an interview is a tense environment; if there wasn't enough tension in the room, this unimpressed interviewer's comment ensured that the room was extra thick with tension. Jan looked at him and told him that we were going to move on with the interview, at which point he threw his hands in the air asked her if he should leave the room.

At this point, you could have cut the tension in the small communications resource room with a knife. I could feel my heart beating in my neck and was suddenly very aware of the sound of my breathing. The unimpressed interviewer was clearly angry and annoyed with Jan that she wouldn't let him continue to interrogate me about my answer and my belief that students should be able to re-do and re-submit their work. But, Jan was professional, she told the annoyed man on the committee—with a smile—that he could stay in the room and finish the interview.

The unimpressed interviewer shrugged and sat quietly for the rest of the interview, sticking to the script and completely void of any kind of expression.

When the interview finally ended, we all stood up and I shook everyone's hand again, just like I had done at the start of the interview—including the unimpressed interviewer.

The entire drive home in my car, I thought about how that interview had gone—I had never experienced an interview like that before—one where there was disagreement, even some hostility between members of the interview panel. I figured it was unlikely that I would be offered the job, given how the interview had gone, particularly with the unimpressed interviewer. I also figured that the disagreement and the tension that I felt was perhaps a red flag that this teaching university wasn't the healthiest of workplaces. Even if offered the job, I thought, I might want to consider saying, "no thanks."

A few weeks later, I was informed, by email, that I was not the successful applicant for the one-year full-time contract position for which I applied and interviewed. I was a bit relieved, to be honest, after the tension-filled interview I had experienced. *But*, after the news that I wasn't the successful applicant for the position, the next line of that email offered me the opportunity to teach one class, face-to-face, on Monday nights as a sessional instructor. I was shocked that I was being offered a position since there was conflict between the interview panelists during my interview. But, despite my hesitation to work at the Teaching University, I was desperate to get some face-to-face teaching experience. And, this offered me the opportunity to get this experience. So, I agreed to teach the one class on Monday nights the following September: my first face-to-face class.

5.2.1.2 My Second Interview

As my first term at the Teaching University came to an end, I found myself eager to teach more and gain more experience in the classroom. On a snowy December afternoon, Jan, the head of the department and the one interviewer from my interview panel who moved things along when tension became thick, called a meeting to review the student evaluations of my teaching and discuss my future in the department. Nervous and excited, I drove that same 40 KM out to the outskirts of the Vancouver lower mainland, paid my \$1 to park, and found my way to her office. We sat there, in her small office with piles of paper toppling over on what seemed like every surface of her desk and floor space. She was very positive towards me—very encouraging. We went through my student evaluations of teaching, which yielded an average of 4.61/5 on my “teaching effectiveness.” I was also quite pleased with the comments that the students wrote about me. Comments included:

“Knowledge of subject matter” and “very approachable” and “a fair marker and very helpful” —all of which Jan and I agreed were good signs that I am an effective teacher.

Jan then mentioned that the department had just posted another one-year full time teaching contract (the position I originally interviewed for) as well as a new assistant professor position in the department. Both positions I had, of course, seen posted on the website and was hoping and praying that Jan would bring up in our meeting today and encourage me to apply.

Jan then did just that—she said that I should consider applying for both the one-year full time teaching contract as well as the assistant professor position. I was elated. I left her office feeling excited about my future in the department—whether it be as a full time instructor, or as an assistant professor: it was a full time gig doing something that I loved more and more each day.

Within the following month, I had carefully crafted and submitted both applications. This was no small feat—the assistant professor position called for a cover letter, CV, three letters of reference, student evaluations of teaching, a teaching philosophy, a statement of research interests, and a sample of course syllabi. It took me a little over 12 hours to compile all the documents. Also, it wasn’t just me; I reached out to my thesis supervisor and other friends and mentors working in academia for help. They, too, read my documents and offered helpful revisions and recommendations. All in all, the file was so big that I had difficulties submitting it electronically. I ended up having to send the electronic file as a zip file to the human resources department. In the end, no one from the department even acknowledged that I submitted an application for the posted assistant professor position.

Finally, in May, exactly one year since I had interviewed for the position the first time around, I was called in to interview for the one-year full time teaching contract. This position

would involve teaching (something that I had now been doing in the department for the past two semesters) and doing some service in the department. The nice thing, though, is that there would be some security (knowing that I'd be teaching in the department for a full year (not term-by-term, as I had been doing as a sessional), and I would have health and dental benefits—another thing that I didn't have as a sessional instructor in the department. Of course, I would only get all this if they offered me the position.

The interview was scheduled at an inconvenient time—in the middle of the day on a May afternoon. I was teaching a summer course in the department in the mornings at that time, so the only time that I was available to interview with the committee was immediately after I had finished teaching a three-hour seminar. It wasn't ideal, but it was the only time that all the members of the committee were available.

I arrived for my busy three-hour seminar on the day that I was scheduled to be interviewed, and headed to my office to hold my regularly scheduled office hours prior to the start of the three-hour class, which happened to be in the departmental resource room. As a sessional instructor, I was not given my own office space; I was given access to the main departmental resource room, which, for the summer, seemed to double as the departmental storage space. Full-time tenure and tenure-track faculty seemed to be moving offices that summer because there were boxes of binders and textbooks, along with lamps, and trays of pens and white board markers haphazardly stacked along the walls of the resource room. When I arrived at “my office” to hold office hours on this high stakes day, I noticed that the light in the resource room was on. Slowly, I walked down the hallway towards to the door and peered into the window. With a quick one-second glance, I saw three of my tenured colleagues, including Jan, around the table interviewing another candidate—presumably for the same position I would

be interviewing for later that day. I immediately backed away from the door and sat on the couch in the hall across from the door (in case any students wanted to drop by and see me). Imagine if one of my students knocked on the door looking for me while the hiring committee was interviewing a candidate? This was the first time that I felt small and insignificant while working in that department.

After sitting on the couches in the hallway for about an hour, I headed down to teach my three-hour class.

When the class was over, I made my way back to the department and proceeded to be escorted by the department secretary for the interview for the one-year full time teaching contract position, just as she had done one year before. We proceeded to the same “resource room” that I had my first interview in, and that I was inadvertently kicked out of during my office hours four-hours earlier. I came prepared, I brought printouts of assignments that I had created and used in my classes, syllabi that I used, as well as copies of the student evaluations that vouched for my approachability and knowledge of the subject matter. I also strategically wore a dark blue blouse that wouldn’t show any sweat since I anticipated being particularly nervous during the interview.

I was relieved to see Jan at the table, the interim head of the department, as well as another familiar face from my first interview, and a woman I knew was recently hired as an assistant professor—yet to achieve tenure in the department.

Just like the first interview, the three committee members had prepared a set of questions that were all printed and sat in front of each member of the committee. They took turns asking me questions, some of which were the same from when I interviewed for the sessional position one year ago. I was confident with many of my answers—mostly because I assumed that the interview was merely a formality. I had been teaching in the department for the past year and I

had been successful, as evidenced by my teaching evaluations. I was even encouraged to apply for this position by the interim department head. The only difference with this semi-permanent position was that there would be an element of service to the department. Luckily for me, I had spent nearly 10 years working in university administration before starting my teaching career. I figured I was a shoe-in.

As the questions proceeded, one question in the interview stood out in particular. The interviewers asked me about how I structure my classes and I explained that I provide students with all the assignment instructions for all of the course assignments at the start of the term. I explained that I believe that transparency is important—and that students should be aware of what they're expected to do throughout the course right from the beginning. As I was providing the committee with this answer, Jan, the interim department head, started writing notes on her paper aggressively, so aggressive, in fact, that her writing interrupted and distracted me from my answer and I wasn't able to complete my answer to the question.

After the interview, I was appropriately thanked, I shook all the interviewer's hands, and was escorted out of the resource room/ office. Approximately three weeks later, I received an email from the Dean of the Faculty, someone who hadn't been part of my interview committee (and someone that I had never met) that read:

Dear Lisa,

Please accept my thanks for your application to the [position applied for] position #[number] for which you recently interviewed. This is to inform you that you have not been recommended for the position. I reviewed the appointment committee's recommendation and am confident that the hiring committee was diligent in following due process.

This notice is provided to you as per Article X of the Collective Agreement.

If you so wish, I would be happy to meet with you to provide informal and formative feedback on your work with us at [the Teaching University].

Best regards,

The Dean⁸

I read this email ten minutes before I was scheduled to walk into my summer class and I was devastated. I felt rejected, betrayed, and embarrassed. How could I have been so wrong—assuming that I was a shoe-in for the position—assuming that the interview was just a formality? And to make matters worse, I had been invited to meet with the Dean of the faculty to get feedback on my work with the Teaching University—someone who had so much power in the institution and who I had never met.

I waited 24 hours then emailed the Dean back, politely requesting a meeting to get my formative feedback on my work. We scheduled the meeting an hour before my class the following week.

When I arrived at the Dean's office, I introduced myself to the receptionist—told her that I had a meeting with the Dean at 9:00am and that my name was Lisa Allen. The receptionist invited me to have a seat on the plush leather seat in the dentist-like waiting room, and I did. I sat in the lobby of the office waiting for the Dean to come and get me and take me to her office, like a child waiting on the curb after school for their parent to pick them up.

When she came to the lobby, she introduced herself and led me to her office.

⁸ The email referenced here, and the emails referenced throughout this chapter, are directly copied from my email inbox. I have changed names and identifiers in an effort to keep the institution and the people working within it anonymous. Also, in the interest of making these emails clear, I have corrected any grammatical errors in the original emails.

After a few pleasantries, comments on how nice the weather was this time of year, she pulled out a file and opened it up. She proceeded to tell me that it looked like I had been getting good student evaluations but have only taught two different courses in the department; this, in her opinion, was the primary reason why I wasn't the successful candidate for the position.

As a sessional, I didn't have the ability to determine which courses I taught in the department—they ask me if I'd like to teach a particular class on a particular day and a particular time and I say yes or no—take it, or leave it. I wondered if the Dean knew that this is how the sessional system worked.

The Dean concluded that I “just” didn't have enough experience for the full time one-year contract position at the Teaching University. She then proceeded to recommend that I get a little more experience and try applying for this position if it comes available in a year or two⁹.

I was furious. Why would the committee encourage me to apply for the position in the first place if they thought I didn't have enough teaching experience? Why would they humiliate me by making me sit through that interview if they had no intention of hiring me? None of the comments made by the Dean made any sense to me—but I couldn't question her. I didn't even know her. Also, she was the Dean.

I thanked the Dean for her “formative feedback”, humiliated and confused. I went downstairs and didn't even want to go to my “office” out of fear that I might run into any of the committee members, or maybe they were all sitting in my office interviewing another candidate

⁹ Much later, I learned that this feedback—that I had not taught enough different courses—was the feedback that the Dean gave to many sessionals in the department who were not successful in obtaining one-year contract positions. Since I shared an office—the “communications resource room”—with other sessionals, I came to learn that two other sessional instructors had applied for one-year teaching appointments, like me, and when deemed unsuitable for the position, were given the same feedback from the Dean that I received that day.

for the position they had just determined I was not suitable for. I wondered how I would continue to teach the summer class that I was half way through. Up until this point in time, I had never felt so humiliated at work in my entire life. But, with my three-hour class scheduled to begin within a matter of minutes, I put on a brave face, a fake smile, and headed to class.

After class was over, when I finally got to my car, I cried. I cried for a solid 20 minutes. I felt worthless and humiliated. Someone who I had never met before this day—the senior leader of the faculty, my boss’ boss—told me that I wasn’t good enough to do a job I was already doing on a full-time basis. And the worst part: I felt as though I would never truly know why. Having worked in higher education administration for nearly a decade before transitioning into instruction, I knew full well that *real* feedback on why faculty don’t get the jobs they apply for was rare. In my previous job as an administrator, I remember a time when the committee didn’t hire a candidate simply because they thought the candidate was too confident during the interview—they didn’t tell the candidate this, of course, when they notified him that he wasn’t the successful candidate for the position. In that moment, I thought that I would never be able to ask the committee why they thought I wasn’t good enough for the one-year teaching contract.

5.2.1.3 The Fallout

After I met with the Dean, I assumed that since I wasn’t recommended for the position, the department wouldn’t be offering me any courses to teach in the fall as a sessional. If they didn’t think I was good enough to teach on a full-time basis, why would I be good enough to teach in their department on a part-time basis? I immediately applied for every teaching position in the Vancouver lower mainland for which I thought I was qualified. So, I spent the following week applying for 14 positions (when I wasn’t marking or preparing for my summer classes or crying from the terror of not having a job in a couple months).

To my surprise, one week after my meeting with the Dean, Jan, the interim head of the department, emailed me:

Hi Lisa,

Will you be interested in taking a few sections this fall? If so, what is your availability?

I am working my way through the sessional seniority list, and I suspect that there will be some sections available for you. I should know specifically which ones in a day or two.

Please let me know.

Best,

Jan

As one can imagine, I was both surprised and confused. I had just spent the last week humiliated and worried that I wouldn't have a job at the Teaching University come September. I had assumed that this was the department's way of telling me that I wasn't a good fit—that I didn't belong in that department; that I wasn't good enough. Additionally, how could I show my face in the department after they didn't recommend me for the full-time position? I couldn't figure out how I was good enough to be a sessional faculty member, but not good enough to work with them full time.

Ultimately, I replied to Jan the next day, politely accepting her offer and was assigned two night classes in the fall term. Internally, I was so angry with myself. Yes, I needed the work, but not telling the Teaching University to fuck off diminished every ounce of pride and self-worth that I had. It's like being in a romantic relationship for a year and then asking your partner to marry you and they say no. And then they tell you that they'd like to continue dating you.

Fast forward into the fall term. I was administering student evaluations for a colleague on a Tuesday evening—the same colleague that sat on my hiring committee for the second interview. She was the assistant professor who was being reviewed for tenure. I was aware that she wasn't well received from her students—they thought she was disorganized and mean (some students who had been in her class told me). While we were waiting for her class to begin so that I could administer her student evaluations of teaching, we got to talking.

She mentioned that she was really interested in one of my teaching methods: that I post all the assignment instructions for the term at the start of the course on the course's learning management system. Her comment took the wind right out of me; I was confused. This was the exact teaching strategy that Jan, the interim head of the department, seemed to vigorously dislike judging by the aggressive notes she was taking as I was answering the question in my interview.

I told her that I believed in transparency and I think the students really appreciate knowing what's expected of them from day one in the course.

My colleague, who held the title of Assistant Professor at the Teaching University then told me, off the cuff, that she was really impressed with a lot of my teaching strategies. I was caught off guard; I wasn't prepared to gain insights into the painful process of not being hired earlier in the summer. Perhaps because it was a late night in the middle of the winter, or maybe because she was undergoing a review process of her own teaching strategies through the tenure process, but she seemed willing give me some hints into what actually happened with my interview.

Still standing at the front of her class, waiting for her students to arrive for the 7:00pm start time, she divulged that there was one person on the committee who didn't agree with some

of my teaching strategies. And then she told me that I could probably guess who on the committee didn't agree with my teaching strategies.

I knew right away; it was Jan.

My assistant professor colleague alluded to the fact that she was coming up for tenure, and didn't want to make waves on the committee, even though she thought my teaching strategies that I discussed and divulged in the interview were good enough to adopt for her own classes.

Learning this information, I was both furious and satisfied. Furious in the sense that someone on my hiring committee was impressed with my teaching strategies—so much so that she wanted to adopt my strategies as her own—but that she didn't feel that she was able to vouch for me. I was furious that the single person that was on my hiring committee had enough power to first encourage me to apply for the position, and then refuse to hire me for the position. But, at the same time I was satisfied in learning this information, in having the information that I suspected validated by someone who was privy to inside knowledge.

So, after the remaining students entered my assistant professor colleague's class and sat down, I told her that I would email her some of my materials and that she was more than welcome to use some of my strategies and materials in her own classes. She left the room while I distributed the papers for her student evaluations of teaching. While the students were evaluating my colleague my mind was racing. What could I do with this new information—this validation of my assumptions. One thing was clear: I could never trust Jan again. She didn't like the way I taught my classes and clearly didn't feel like I should be teaching at the Teaching University.

So, my resolve after that night, when a loose-lipped assistant professor validated my spirit-crushing assumptions was as follows:

1. The head of the department doesn't like the way I teach, so I should avoid her. I should just show up, teach my classes, and then go home.
2. I would never be offered a permanent or semi-permanent teaching position at the Teaching University as long as the current head of the department was in charge. So, the Teaching University would never be my professional home.

Since all of this happened within my first year of teaching as a sessional instructor at the Teaching University, I spent 2017, and every year after, as a commuter instructor for the Teaching University. What is a commuter instructor? It's someone who drives into campus, teaches their class and holds their office hours, and then drives home. I have since been invited and encouraged to attend departmental meetings, colloquiums, year-end parties, departmental celebrations—and I have not attended a single function. My contract that I get each term stipulates that I am only being paid for my teaching services. So, that is exactly what I give the department that I teach at the Teaching University.

5.2.2 The Private Online University

When you want to be an instructor, it can be challenging to find a place to teach. It seems as though every instructor job posting requires candidates to have some teaching experience in their “required qualifications” section of the posting. But, if you don't have this experience, how are you supposed to break into instruction¹⁰? While I'm a strong believer in *public* education, trying to break into instructional roles from an administrative background, I couldn't discriminate when

¹⁰ Of course, most people do this by TA'ing while in graduate school. But, I have never been a career student. I've always worked full time while doing my studies on a part-time basis. Surely I'm not the only one who completes their graduate education in this fashion? Surely there are people like me—people who aren't career students—who pursue instructional careers? How do they break into these instructional roles?

it came to post-secondary institutions looking for faculty. This section of the chapter details my first interview and how I broke into my first instructional position.

5.2.2.1 A Desire to Teach

After I received my first Master's degree in 2012, and after having worked as a Manager of Administration for an academic unit in a large research university for five years, I knew that I wanted to be an instructor at a post-secondary institution. I knew that I wanted to go on and get a doctorate, and then pursue a career as an instructor, working with students and engaging in a life of reading and writing. But, I knew that my options were limited. Firstly, I had a day job: I worked 9 to 5 and spent about 4 hours a day commuting—this limited my ability to teach in a face-to-face program. Luckily, my master's degree was in educational technology, which lent itself well to teaching online (something that was still a relatively new concept in 2012). I had experience in business; I did a minor in economics during my bachelor's degree, and had completed a few management-type certificates over the years. So, I scoured the continent and applied for every online instructional job that was advertised. After about a year of applying for every instructional position that I felt I could do, in the summer of 2013 I finally received a request to be interviewed to teach at the Private Online University—a for-profit private university that operated solely online. I was excited that one of my applications (one that had a typo in the cover letter, I might add) got me to the interview stage.

In the late summer of 2013¹¹, I logged onto an online teleconferencing platform and interviewed to be a business instructor for the Faculty of Business at the Private Online

¹¹ Because this first interview that I had with the Private Online University was in 2013, and therefore outside the two-year (2016-2018) boundary that I've delineated as the scope of this project, I will only provide you, my reader, with enough information to give you a background for the interviews that I experienced from 2016-2018 while at the Private Online University.

University. I disabled the camera on purpose so that the committee couldn't see how young I was (I assumed that being 28 and looking younger than my actual age was a disadvantage as an instructor—luckily, I've always sounded older than I look). My interview with the Dean of Business was scheduled at 6:00am PST (since I was in Vancouver and they were on the east coast of Canada) and lasted a whole 20 minutes. My answers to her questions were weak, a stretch by any means. I had zero experience teaching and tried to parallel questions about teaching with my experience in management. I remember getting off the computer and thinking that that was the last I would hear from the Private Online University. But, about a week later they called me and told me that I was the successful candidate and that I was all clear to attend their 3-week Online Faculty Orientation Workshop. This workshop, which required 3-5 hours of my time every week was both unpaid and mandatory if I wanted to be considered for online teaching contracts with the Private Online University. So, I took the online unpaid, mandatory workshop, passed with flying colours, and began teaching introductory business courses online in the fall of 2013.

5.2.2.2 Let's Have Coffee

About a month before I decided to quit my full-time job as a Manager of Administration in 2016, a position that I held for just over eight years, it was announced that the Online Private University that I had been teaching at virtually for the past three years was opening a campus in downtown Vancouver. Excited at the prospect of expanding my academic role, I reached out to my Dean and asked about any academic positions that might be opening up with the launch of the new campus. In a phone conversation with the Dean in June of 2016, I was told that the Dean was under the impression that I didn't want to work for the organization in a full-time capacity. I

was quick to clarify that I was very interested in moving into an academic role on a full-time basis, especially if the university was about to open a campus 25km from my house.

The Dean then connected me with another Dean, the Dean of Academics for the new campus and she was quick to call me. She asked to meet me at a local coffee shop to chat, since the Vancouver campus wasn't habitable yet. I enthusiastically obliged.

Deciding what to wear for an interview at a coffee shop for a position that you're not even sure exists—in the middle of a sweltering summer—was difficult. I went with a long sleeve blouse and black dressy capris with business casual sandals.

The very friendly Dean of Academics greeted me at the coffee shop, and we instantly bonded over organizational behaviour and communication theories—a topic that I was just brushing the surface of having just finished the first year of my Ed.D. program. We sat; she discussed the Online Private University's future plans in Vancouver; I listened and asked questions where appropriate. At the end of our easy and low-pressure coffee meeting, she told me that she was looking to hire three 0.2 FTE faculty members to be anchored at the Vancouver campus. She explained that I could keep accepting instructional contracts for the online business courses from the Dean of Business, and that this “core faculty” position would focus on service work at the Vancouver campus. I then expressed interest in the position and she hired me on the spot. Within the week, I had been formally offered the job, signed my new appointment letter, and was waiting for the physical campus to open. Until then, I would teleconference 10 hours/week participating on various committees. All in all, with at least three online courses every term, all this work was on equal footing to a full-time position.

5.2.3 City College

As someone who wasn't accepted directly into a research university after high school¹², my only option for higher learning was a local college. I started my academic studies at one of the then local "university colleges" and was immediately hooked on being a student. During my first two years as an undergrad, I learned to appreciate learning and became curious about the world. Much later, after completing my master's degree, I reflected on my history in higher education and came to realize the important role that the local college played in my life; how the local college helped me fall in love with higher education. When I started thinking about where I wanted to teach, my professional home as an instructor, I couldn't think of a better type of post-secondary institution than a local college. How great would it be, I thought, to be able to help young people engage with learning and higher education, just as I had done years before. Of all the places I applied to teach, City College was the one that I thought best matched my passion and experience. This section details my experience interviewing for an instructional position at City College.

5.2.3.1 The Interview That Wasn't

At the end of the summer of 2017, I was excited. I was excited because I had secured enough contract work to the point where I was finally going to be financially comfortable. I was getting continuous work from the Teaching University (and was operating as a commuter instructor) and

¹² I graduated high school in the Vancouver area in 2002. At the time, one needed at least an 85 percent average to get into a general arts or science degree program at the two local research universities: the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU). Very few people from my graduating class "got in" to university—most of us who were interested in higher education had only one option for higher education: the local colleges. In fact, one of my peers from high school gamed the system by applying to the forestry program at UBC because it had a lower entrance requirement, 78 percent, I believe, and was planning on transferring into an arts program after his first year.

I had a nice full-time load with the Private Online University—with both my 0.2 FTE service faculty position and my regular online contract teaching work that I had been doing for a few years. Going into September 2017, this was the first time that I felt as though I had managed to cobble together enough contract work to make a career out of being an instructor. Then, on August 29th, 2017, I received a phone call from the head of the department at City College. I had applied for a sessional teaching position in the department back in the spring during my application frenzy when I thought the Teaching University wasn't going to offer me any more courses, but didn't hear back. By June, I had assumed that I wasn't successful with my application at City College. My application from spring—I assume—is where the head of the department got my resume and contact information.

During our phone conversation, the head of the department explained that they were short on faculty for the fall term and asked if I would be interested in teaching a course or two at City College for the fall term (which started in about one week). Not one to turn down any instructional work, I told the department head that I would be happy to help out and teach one or two sections of the course at City College. She suggested that I come to the college and meet with her in person as soon as possible, and I agreed.

I met with the department chair at City College—an institution that I had never been to before—on August 31st, two days after she had called me up out of the blue and hired me on the phone. The thing about living in the Vancouver area is that the nice weather often bleeds into September; this can sometimes make summer can feel as though it goes on forever. 2017 was one of those summers. I walked onto that campus to arrange my paperwork and acquaint myself with the department and the head of the department on the sunniest of sunny days. Walking onto the campus with all the flowers and trees in full bloom and students swarming the campus during

their orientation—all bright-eyed—I was mesmerized by how adorable and humble the institution was. Sure, the buildings were old and the hallways had that musty smell to them—but I liked it. It certainly wasn't fancy, but it gave off the impression that it was an institution for regular people, perhaps people who just wanted to learn. This, of course, resonated with me.

I finally made my way up to the department head's office for our meeting. In keeping with the style of the rest of the institution, her office was old and musty, and she had about a million different things crammed into every inch and corner of her office—from books and binders, to mismatched furniture. I perched myself on an uncomfortable chair as we talked.

She handed me a series of forms to fill out as a new employee for the college, and explained that I was what they called an “emergency hire”—they didn't have anyone on staff available to teach an introductory course online. This happens every once and a while, she explained, and they have to reach into their last application pool and quickly hire an instructor to teach the course. There are a lot of different names for precarious faculty like myself—but “emergency hire” takes the cake for the oddest label of precarious faculty in my book. It has become particularly clear to me that the categories for precarious faculty serve only the institution and not the students whatsoever. Yes, I swooped in and saved the day for the department—but what would the students think if they knew that I was an “emergency hire” faculty member. Bizarre.

The department head was grateful that I was available and willing to take on the course with such short notice. I liked her right from the start—she was kind and humble—qualities that aren't usually consistent with faculty in leadership positions. She even had my CV printed out on her desk, and noted that “with my experience and education” she was surprised that I was willing

to teach... hinting that I was over qualified to teach at City College. I remained my positive and eager self—I told her that I was excited for the opportunity. The head of the department cut right to the chase on all matters throughout the meeting. She explained that the department was very short on office space and asked if I needed an office. She held her breath as I said that I didn't think an office was necessary since I'm just teaching the one course online. She exhaled with relief. She also explained that, just because I was an "emergency hire", that didn't mean that I was "officially hired" as a sessional in the department. She explained that, if I wanted to be considered for future sessional positions in the department, I would have to re-apply and go through a formal interview process.

The head of the department provided me with some sample syllabi that other instructors have used for the course, we arranged for the textbook I required to be available in the Bookstore on campus, and after a short 20 minutes (and many interruptions from students and faculty knocking on her door and her phone ringing about every four minutes), I was out of her office with a series of papers to deliver to different departments and a plan to quickly design an online introductory course within the next couple days. It was a tornado of a meeting.

But I left her office feeling excited. As I made my way around City College to the different departments—Human Resources, Payroll, Educational Technology—the institution started to grow on me. I proceeded to sign and deliver all my forms to the respective departments on campus, and within an hour, I was on my way home.

I locked myself in my bedroom for the next two days and was able to design an introductory course with hours to spare before September began. There were a few phone calls back and forth with the educational technology department—but I was, miraculously, up and running with the course by the first day of the term. I taught the course as I would any other

course, and the students never knew that I was an “emergency hire” for the department. In fact, I received excellent student evaluations by the time the course was over. The excellent student evaluations—I thought—would probably seal the deal and get me hired in that “regular sessional pool” when I re-applied for the position next term.

5.2.3.2 Re-applying for a Job I Had Just Done

I was excited to see that City College posted a call for sessional instructors in the department I had just been an “emergency hire” for in late October 2017. I figured I would be a shoe-in for the position. After all, I was doing a great job with my online course—my students were happy and I was low maintenance for the very busy department head. I think I only ended up sending her 1 or 2 emails in total over the term asking for clarification on the course or the institution. So, I crafted a well-written cover letter and resume and sent my application off for the job that I was currently doing... just so that I could continue to have the opportunity to work on a contract basis with City College. I saw the application process as more of a formality than anything else. But alas, just like my experience at the Teaching University, I was wrong.

In mid-December, within days of my online course being over, I received an email from the head of the department that read:

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your application for our recent job posting. I’m sorry to tell you that you were not selected for an interview.

This was a very competitive round of hiring, and the committee gave priority to applicants who were qualified to teach [two different types of] courses within the department.

We appreciate your being available on such short notice to step into a teaching position this past semester. If any appropriate work comes up in the future, we will be in touch. In the meantime, please let me know if you would like to be added to our Markers list¹³.

All the best,

[Head of the Department]

And so, that was it. I wasn't even shortlisted for an interview to do that job that I had just successfully done for an entire term. I was disappointed, to say the least. It's difficult to not get too emotional about all the applications and the hiring process when you work in these precarious positions in academia. I had so many questions for the head of the department when I received this email. But, not wanting to burn any bridges (because you never know what will happen in the future), I replied with a simple two-liner email explaining that I was grateful for the opportunity and that I understood that they went another way with the position.

5.2.4 The Institute

As previously explained, I went into a state of panic when I wasn't hired at the Teaching University for a one-year full time position—I thought the interview was just a formality; I didn't think for a minute that they wouldn't re-hire me into a more permanent position of one that I was already doing. Confused and sad, I assumed that not getting the semi-permanent position meant that the Teaching University didn't believe that I was competent enough to teach at their institution anymore. Worried about how I was going to continue to make a living as an instructor—I decided it was time to flood the market with my CV; I needed to visit the website

¹³ I don't know what the "markers list" refers to here in this email. I never worked with any Markers in the department and wasn't aware that City College employed Markers.

of any and every post-secondary institution within driving distance to my house and see if there was some teaching position—any teaching position—for which I could apply.

With my new resolve to flood the market with my CV, I drove the four-hour drive to visit my parents and siblings for my regular seasonal visit. I spent the first two days of my three-day visit with my family applying for every job I thought I could do in post-secondary institutions in Vancouver and the lower mainland. All in all, I applied for 47 positions throughout those two days. Of those 47 positions, one was to work as a temporary instructor at the Institute: a trades and technology-focused institution. I was thrilled to receive a call in early June 2017 from the Institute, asking me to come in for an interview.

5.2.4.1 The Interview

The call to be interviewed at the Institute was pretty standard. I was instructed to prepare a short 10-minute lesson on a topic within my field and deliver that lesson to the hiring committee. I was also told that I would be required to mark a sample of student work to show the committee how I approach assessment. Then, the committee would ask me a series of questions about my education and experience. All in all, they told me that the interview would take approximately two hours.

So, I did as all good candidates do, I showed up to the interview early on that early-June morning. I was greeted by the Program Assistant who hurriedly and matter-of-factly showed me to an empty desk, gave me a sample of student work and told me to bring it back to her when I was done marking it. I followed instructions. Then, the Program Assistant walked me down what seemed to be about 20 different corridors until we arrived at a large conference room, with seven people sitting around a large table, and a laptop set up at the head of the table—presumably, for me to set up my instructional PowerPoint presentation for the “mini-lesson” I was asked to

prepare for the committee. I greeted all members of the committee with a handshake, trying desperately to remember everyone's name. I even made a joke, "this must be the hot seat" I said, motioning to the seat at the end of the table.

I sat down and proceeded to plug my USB stick into the laptop to show my PowerPoint presentation that I had prepared. All set for the meeting, I waited for the committee to settle. One woman on the hiring committee pulled a KitKat chocolate bar out of her bag and proceeded to open the wrapper. She offered everyone on the committee a piece of her chocolate bar and then turned to me and asked if I'd like a piece. While I declined a piece of the KitKat bar, the gesture of including me in her offer set a more casual tone at the start of the interview and helped me relax. Unlike my experiences at the Teaching University, the committee at the Institute acknowledged that I was in the room, and treated me more like a person than a candidate for the position. It's funny how such a small act can make such a huge impact for the interviewee during what is usually a stressful and intense meeting.

I started the interview with my mini-lesson and was relieved to see most of the committee members nodding their head in agreement as I progressed through my lesson. One woman, in particular, was expressive in the manner in which she provided me with feedback through her body language. Later I would refer to her as the head-nodder on my hiring committee.

During the question and answer period, I was very honest with all my answers. Unlike previous interviews where I would glaze over experiences I hadn't yet had and didn't really answer the questions—in this interview with the hiring committee at the Institute—I felt compelled to be genuine and honest about all my experiences in my answers to the interview questions. At one point they asked me if I had experience with team teaching and I answered, "no." I had never been so honest during an interview in my life. If they were going to hire me—I

thought—I wanted them to hire me for me. I was as transparent as they come. And, transparency and all, the interview went well. The committee members were receptive to my answers, the head nodding never stopped throughout the interview; the vibe was strong. Any time I felt like my honesty and lack of experience may put a damper on my interview, I looked over at the head-nodder and I was immediately assured that I was doing well.

At the end of the two-hour interview, I stood up, shook everyone's hands, and thanked them for meeting with me. I walked out of the glass doors of that conference room with confidence. While I did get lost trying to find my way back to my car, I was gleeful and running over the answers I had given in my head. The moment I got back to my car, I called my parents and told them that I thought the interview went very well and that I had a good feeling about this job.

5.2.4.2 The Offer(s)

The day after I interviewed at the Institute, I received an email from Jan, the Department Head at the Teaching University. The email read:

Hi Lisa,

Will you be interested in taking a few sections this fall? If so, what is your availability?

I am working my way through the sessional seniority list, and I suspect that there will be some sections available for you. I should know specifically which ones in a day or two.

Please let me know.

Best,

Jan

Interim Department Head

Now, you can imagine how surprised I was to receive this email—and the casual tone in which it was written. After being devastated and humiliated when I was not offered the permanent position at the Teaching University, I was sure that the department thought I was not qualified to continue teaching at the Teaching University anymore. The only reason I even applied to every job that was posted in my field that summer was because I thought I wasn't going to be employed by the Teaching University. I wasn't fit to teach on a regular, full-time basis, but I was qualified to teach the same courses on a temporary, part-time basis? I was confused and angered by this offer to continue to teach courses in their department after they had rejected me for the permanent position.

But, what could I do? I couldn't say no. Yes, I had some prospects—I felt good about the position with the Institute—but even that position was a part-time position and there were no guarantees. While burning the bridge with the Teaching University would have satisfied my ego, it would have also put me into even more of a precarious financial position. So, I replied to Jan the next day:

Great news! Thanks, Jan!

Yes, I am available and my schedule is fairly flexible - but nights and Fridays work best for me.

Cheers,

Lisa Allen

If I've learned anything from working in precarious positions over the last few years, it's that swallowing your pride and maintaining relationships with people and organizations that hurt you is necessary if you want to survive as a precarious faculty member and it depletes your self-confidence and self-worth as a professional at the same time.

But, my willingness to accept whatever work I could get and the cheery-tone in which I communicated got me, and continues to get me, work at the Teaching University. Jan wrote me back within a couple days offering me two courses for the fall 2017 term.

The day after I reluctantly accepted two courses for the fall term with the Teaching University, I got a call from the Head of Personnel at the Institute. In fact, when I got the call in mid-June, I had just finished teaching a class at the Teaching University. I had just got into my car in the parking lot when my cell phone rang. It was about 30 degrees out and, worried that the Head of Personnel would be able to hear my car running in the background, I decided to sit in the sweltering hot car and talk on the phone with the car off.

The Institute offered me a .6 FTE position, which, at the Institute equates to 9 hours of in-class teaching per week. While I thought the teaching load for a .6 position was heavy, I was excited to add the Institute to my collection of institutions that I was teaching at for the fall 2017 term. I did have to negotiate one teaching day during that phone call (since I had just agreed to teach on that day with the Teaching University). But, in general, the Head of Personnel was very kind; he told me that everyone on the committee was impressed by me at the interview and that they were excited to add me to their team. It was a bit odd that the Head of Personnel's kids were yelling and talking to him in the background while he was talking to me. It's interesting that he thought it was acceptable to offer someone a job with his kids talking to him (and he answering their questions) in between giving me details about the position and the classes he was going to schedule me to teach—meanwhile, I didn't even think it was appropriate for me to have my car running in the background.

After a twenty-minute phone conversation with the Head of Personnel from the Institute while sitting in my sweltering hot car in the parking lot of the Teaching University, I was happy

to have accepted another part-time teaching position at yet another post-secondary institution. Sure, sweat was dripping down my face and I was pretty sure that I had heat stroke from sitting in a hot car in the dead of summer for twenty minutes, but I was financially set for the fall term.

As I drove home, in my head, I started tallying all the jobs that I had said “yes” to for the fall term. While it is nearly impossible to predict how much work one will get next term, I had managed to set myself up for a more-than-full term. I was going to be teaching five or so online courses at the Private Online University while doing 0.2 FTE in academic administrative tasks for a campus that hadn’t been built yet—whatever that meant, two evening classes with the Teaching University, and nine teaching hours/ week with the Institute. One thing was clear: I was going to have a very busy teaching schedule and the fall 2017 semester was going to be hard. Little did I know that in about six weeks, City College would be calling me and offering me a course a week before the term was scheduled to begin.

5.3 Being Interviewed: Analysis and Discussion

One of the main pillars of Tierney’s (1988) framework for organizational culture is leadership. Tierney (1988) defines leadership within the organizational culture framework as the president and senior leadership’s patterns and styles of communication that reinforce institutional culture. As my autoethnographic accounts in the above sections of this chapter illuminate, the ways in which all those people in leadership roles—the Dean, the Program Heads and Program Chairs—communicated with me about my prospective roles within the different institutions had a significant impact on me as an early-career academic. Two main themes emerged in my autoethnographic accounts of being interviewed at the four institutions. The first main theme is that the ways in which people in leadership positions communicated with me (encouraging me to apply for more secure faculty positions that were being advertised, for example) had a significant

impact on me. Since there is no standard hiring process for hiring precarious faculty, I depended on the communication I received from the institution's leaders to guide me. Tenure-stream faculty can count on the advocacy of their respective faculty association to outline hiring and promotion procedures, but precarious faculty don't have this same option. Since faculty associations are currently fighting to include provisions and amendments to include contract faculty, the collective agreements they steward will one day include more for precarious faculty. The second major theme that emerged from my autoethnographic accounts, in comparison to the literature, is that my career stage, as an early-career (hopeful) academic played a significant role in the ways that I received leadership's communication about my employment status with the various institutions in which I worked.

5.3.1 A Lack of Standard Processes and Practices

When I read the autoethnographic accounts I wrote about my experiences applying for faculty positions being interviewed again, and again, the one thing that sticks out the most is how emotional I was about every process. As explained in Chapter 2, Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) call this "concealed anguish" (p. 65)—I felt this concealed anguish consistently throughout my two years working as a precarious instructor. Applying for work and being interviewed—the prospect of working for a new (or existing employer), for me, is exhausting. I care a lot about my career. At this point in my life, I've invested decades and tens of thousands of dollars on tuition. And I'm not alone in feeling this way; Field and Jones (2016) explain that job security is of primary concern for precarious faculty. As I searched for an appropriate professional home from 2016-2018, I found myself in something of a *Goldilocks* fairytale. As mentioned earlier in the literature review of this chapter, there are (almost universal) application standards when one is applying for tenure-stream positions. A prospective tenure-track professor

knows the expectations involved with applying and interviewing for tenure-stream positions. Usually, the institution will pay for the prospective tenure-stream faculty candidate to come to campus, there is a day or two scheduled with faculty, the program head, students, and maybe alumni. There are lunches, coffees, and dinners. And, there's teaching demos and presentations on research... It's an exhaustive and comprehensive process. The process is exhaustive and comprehensive because tenure is (theoretically) for life. When a department hires a new faculty member, they want to ensure that the candidate they choose is a suitable fit within the department and larger organization. This is in stark contrast to the process and (lack of) standard practices that exist when a department is hiring precarious contract-based faculty. As the autoethnographic accounts in this chapter illustrate, one thing is certain: there is no standard practice or process when it comes to hiring precarious faculty in higher education.

It is this lack of process that, I think, was the basis of most of my frustration—my concealed anguish. It caused me so much strain and angst. Across all four different institutions, I continually found myself spending time figuring out what the process was. And, when I inquired about the process at various levels, I found that my queries weren't taken seriously, nor was my quest for job security. For instance, at the Teaching University, as my autoethnographic accounts suggest, right from the beginning, I was interested in a full-time teaching position but was offered a single class as a sessional instructor. This is also in keeping with the literature. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) explain that precarious faculty are frequently hired for short term positions when they applied for positions that were posted as permanent or semi-permanent. There seems to be a disconnect between advertised positions and the kinds of positions that are really being offered. When I made efforts to secure full-time and longer term work with the Teaching University, I was met with barriers. And, when I inquired about those barriers, I was

met with—what I think was—general feedback that didn’t allow me the constructive criticism I needed to continue to pursue full-time work with the Teaching University. I felt that the process for hiring full-time faculty at the Teaching University wasn’t transparent, and I failed to decode that process. Similarly, I found myself confused, again, with the process to secure more full-time and longer-term faculty work at City College. City College initially hired me sight unseen; they didn’t interview me, nor did they care to since I was an “emergency hire” and was hired a couple days before the start of the term. When I applied for longer-term work after my initial appointment of one course, I wasn’t even shortlisted for the longer-term advertised position. That’s what hurt me the most: that even though I was already teaching at the institution, I wasn’t even shortlisted (or longlisted) for the longer-term position the next term. And, like the Teaching University, I didn’t know why. In the case of City College, the program chair didn’t even follow-up with me after letting me know that I wasn’t shortlisted for the longer-term position. My experience illustrates these poor human resource practices. This is significant, not just for the precarious faculty members themselves, but it’s also significant for the higher education institutions, as well. Higher education institutions are losing out on good people, and as people-based organizations, these institutions are turning away and discouraging qualified prospective faculty from working at their institution—and in many cases discouraging qualified prospective faculty from working within higher education entirely.

The lack of communication on the process for hiring full-time permanent faculty was evident, also, in my account about my experiences with the Online Private University. In the case of the Online Private University, I reached out to senior leadership inquiring about opportunities and was offered—at a coffee shop of all places—a regular continuous position that was never advertised.

The only institution that had clear communication on the process and procedure for continuing within the department and obtaining a full-time permanent position was at the Institute. In fact, the process for obtaining a permanent full-time position at the Institute couldn't have been more clear. After my comprehensive interview (complete with instructional demo), both the Program Head of Personnel and the Associate Dean of the larger faculty would check-in with me, coached me on the process to become regularized, and were, generally speaking, transparent. And honestly, this made a world of difference for me. I came to respect and enjoy working at the Institute. Transparency of the process allowed me to not focus on de-coding the process for re-appointment and therefore gave me the time that I needed to focus on doing my job well and develop relationships with my colleagues. As previously described in Chapter 3, Filstad (2004) argued that it is critical for new faculty in an institution to have role models (i.e. from established colleagues in the department)—this is an important component to the new faculty members' success in their new role. I wasn't able to develop any relationships with anyone from the Teaching University, City College, or the Online Private University. But, I was able to develop multiple relationships with established colleagues at the Institute. Not having to constantly figure out how to secure employment for the following term, I had the time and capacity to develop and model my professional persona at the Institute. This is consistent with the literature around role models and mentorship for new faculty coming into a department. As Filstad (2004) explains, newcomers need mentors to help them form their own professional identity. And, of course, I modelled that professional persona after those faculty that I had befriended and admired in the department. In other words, I was able to find role models at the Institute, and that made all the difference.

5.3.2 The Importance of Career Stage

In Chapter 2, I discussed the importance of career stage. Feldman and Turnley (2001) argue that early-career faculty tend to be more dissatisfied with their job position than their mid and late-career counterparts. The importance of career stage—I think—played a significant role in the ways that I navigated the prospective job market and the ways that I behaved and reacted when I was trying to get re-appointed for some longer-term faculty position (posted or not) within the departments.

Because I was just at the start of my academic career, I was hopeful and ambitious. This wasn't a side hustle that I was trying out; I didn't have a full-time position in industry to fall back on. All I had were the courses that I was being offered. I believe that this is the reason I kept saying "yes" to courses the next term—in whatever instructional capacity the Teaching University wanted me, I was at their mercy—I needed to keep teaching until I was able to obtain a full-time permanent job. A participant in Lopes and Dewan's (2014) study explained, "They keep calling me back—the devil will do it, she'll take it on! Despite the fact that they told me they didn't want me anymore, they keep calling me back. And I said, "look, make your mind up!" Either a place wants me or they don't" (p. 33). Perhaps the most difficult thing for me, throughout my entire two years as a precarious faculty member at these four different institutions, was the need to continually swallow my pride and accept teaching offers from the Teaching University in those first few terms. In all of my professional experiences, I never felt so humiliated and embarrassed as I did when I was encouraged to apply for the Limited-Term Appointment, only to interview for the position, and not be successful. It was absolutely soul crushing; I felt like I was led astray. I resonate strongly with the "shame" that Shahjahan (2019) attributes to the isolation and feeling 'out of place' for precarious faculty. This leads me to

believe that career stage is also very connected to one's emotions. As an early-career academic, I felt intense feelings of vulnerability, exploitation, helplessness, and humility whilst trying to navigate the institutional hiring process. Again, this is in keeping with the literature which explains that precarious faculty are subject to personal and financial strain. Additionally, it's no surprise that, after a few years in the hamster wheel of precarious teaching, faculty are finding themselves burnt out and often leave the profession entirely (Gill, 2017).

The feedback that I received at the Teaching University about my performance—to teach a wider variety of courses in the department (something I had no control over), and to “just wait a couple years and apply again”—devastated and angered me. That being said, I don't think I would have been as bothered by the (lack) of process if I was a mid- or late-career academic. If teaching university courses was something that I did in addition to my full-time day job (where I didn't have to worry about the future of my finances and whether or not I'll be employed come January), I wouldn't be pursuing a full-time position with the same persistence and ambition that I am as an early-career academic wanting to make this my full-time occupation. Career stage as a new precarious faculty member and whether or not one wants to work full-time in academia at an institution does make a difference.

The issue here is that there are more “early-career” academics than there are mid- or late-career academics. Because of the shortage of tenure-stream faculty positions and the disproportionately larger numbers of PhD holders that are graduating every year, more and more early-career academics are settling for precarious positions until a tenure-stream faculty position becomes available (Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015). This means that there are a lot of early-career academics, like myself, out there trying their best to navigate each post-secondary institution's process for advancement (if one even exists) towards a full-time permanent faculty position. And

what's truly unfortunate, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, is that these early-career academics, like me, most likely spend more time trying to figure out their futures, fretting over what they're going to do—rather than focus on the actual work of teaching the students who have enrolled in their courses. Imagine if precarious faculty (at any career stage) could focus solely on the job that they were hired to do: work with students.

5.4 Summary

This chapter started by reviewing the literature on hiring and interviewing of faculty in higher education. The literature suggests that there is an almost universal exhaustive and comprehensive process for the hiring of tenure-stream faculty in higher education institutions; however, there are no best practices when it comes to the processes of hiring precarious faculty at these same institutions. The literature review here also outlines the important work that CAUT is doing with 'Fair Employment Week' every October in an effort to promote fairness. Then, this chapter offered a series of autoethnographic accounts focused on my experiences being interviewed at the four institutions: the Teaching University, City College, the Private Online University, and the Institute. Finally, this chapter concluded with two major themes that emerged from the comparing the autoethnographic accounts presented with the literature: that the lack of consistency in processes for hiring precarious faculty caused incredible (and unnecessary) frustration and ultimately, took the focus away from developing my skills as a new university instructor, and put the focus on navigating the specific institutional hiring practices in attempt to gain longer-term employment with the institution. Finally, the second major theme that emerged was the importance of career stage for precarious faculty and its impact on the precarious faculty experience. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, I will offer another autoethnographic account—one that focuses on performance evaluations.

Chapter 6: Being Precarious: “Performance” Evaluations

Every job I know of includes some form of evaluation—to ensure that you’re doing what you need to do, to ensure that your “performance” meets the needs and requirements of the position. Working as a faculty member in higher education is no different. However, unlike a tenured faculty member, one bad performance review when you’re a precarious faculty member could jeopardize your future with the institution. A negative performance review in one term has the potential to ensure that you’re never invited back to teach at the institution again. In many ways, as long as you’re a precarious faculty member, you’re essentially on probation in your position at the post-secondary institution.

In this chapter, I will first review the literature, describing the ways in which faculty are reviewed within their precarious roles, and the challenges that they face. Secondly, this chapter will describe my experiences being reviewed at the four institutions in which I worked, through personal autoethnographic accounts. Lastly, this chapter will offer an analysis, connecting the ways in which my autoethnographic experience connects and diverges from the literature.

6.1 Performance Evaluations: A Literature Review

Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) can [...] be used to stifle efforts to diversify higher education, foster interdisciplinarity, and undo long-standing hierarchies. Furthermore, in academia, pressures to conform often look like a discourse of “cooperation,” “civility,” and invoking “our” department culture and the way “we” do things. (Rodriguez, 2019, p. 1)

Recent research suggests that students tend to be more hostile towards women (as opposed to men) when evaluating their professors in student evaluations of teaching (Peterson et al., 2019). Additionally, research from Winslow and Davis (2012) suggests that students use the anonymity

that comes with course evaluations to write particularly uncivil to insulting comments which, “could be problematic for faculty, especially adjunct or contingent faculty, whose job retention is based on these course evaluations” (LeFebvre, Carmack, & Pederson, 2020, p. 4). LeFebvre, Carmack, and Pederson (2020) also found that, since precarious faculty outnumber tenure or tenure-track faculty, “the effect of qualitative comments on faculty performance evaluations cause problems of fairness, questions about survey validity, and negative influence on personnel decisions” (p. 21). In other words, the qualitative comments that students write on the student evaluations of teaching, whether the comments are valid or not, can have an impact on precarious faculty’s ability to retain employment with the institution. LeFebvre, Carmack, and Pederson (2020) call for further exploration into gender, racial, and employment status in an attempt to uncover the systematic and contextual flaws of student evaluations of teaching particularly as they lend themselves to faculty performance. In Ontario in 2018, in fact, “in a precedent-setting case, an Ontario arbitrator [had] directed Ryerson University to ensure that student evaluations of teaching, or SETs, ‘are not used to measure teaching effectiveness for promotion and tenure’” (Farr, 2018). Therefore, if SETs aren’t to be used for measuring teaching effectiveness for tenure and promotion, logic follows that SETs shouldn’t be used to measure the teaching effectiveness for precarious faculty, as well. However, as Chapter 5 discussed, there are few, if any, best practices in place that dictate how precarious faculty are to be evaluated on their job performance. More and more faculty associations are beginning this work now—working to include performance evaluation of precarious faculty into their collective agreements. Unfortunately, at the time this dissertation was published, this author was unable to find any institutional collective agreements that outlined best practices for evaluating precarious faculty (including statements that exclude student evaluations of teaching from the process).

Webber (2008) identifies the issue of pandering to students when it comes to student evaluations of teaching. The interview response in Webber's (2008) study indicated that contingent faculty perceived that student evaluations inform future hiring decisions for non-permanent faculty members: "The non-permanent faculty speak to having to adapt their style according to student reaction because positive student evaluations are necessary (they believe) for rehiring" (p. 48). This perception has a significant impact on how precarious faculty conduct themselves in their classrooms. One of the respondents in Webber's interviews stated that she refrained from self-identifying as a lesbian in her classes as it was too "risky" to disclose as a non-tenure-streamed faculty member. This inability to take "risks" in self-identification as a teacher can be problematic, especially for some subject areas in the social sciences and humanities (Webber, 2008). Additionally, some aspects of one's identity cannot be undisclosed, such as race and ethnicity. But, more importantly, it is highly problematic for the precarious faculty themselves, as their faculty status and the perceptions that they carry with that status heavily impact *who* they can be with their students.

What's more—this is not just the precarious faculty's perception—their student evaluations of teaching really do impact their job prospects in the future. Rodriguez (2019) explains, through his autobiographical case study, that student evaluations of teaching are, "used to assess faculty performance and as a proxy for student learning" (p. 13). Murray (2019) confirms this, stating that from an organizational culture perspective, many institutions' sole source of data for faculty performance and evaluation comes from student surveys. Xu (2019) has similar findings and argues that post-secondary institutions consider using multiple measures to assess instructors rather than solely relying on student evaluations of teaching. Rodriguez (2019) refers to student evaluations of teaching as a powerful weapon that "undermines

academic freedom” and “bullies and eliminates untenured and contingent faculty who are “different”” (p. 13). In the 2018 Ryerson University case, Farr’s (2018) article explains that the arbitrator in the case cited serious human-rights issues, “with studies showing that biases around gender, ethnicity, accent, age, even “attractiveness,” may factor into students’ ratings of professors, making SETs deeply discriminatory against numerous “vulnerable” faculty” (para 9). And, as we know from the literature review discussed in Chapter 2, “vulnerable” faculty tend to dominate precarious faculty roles on campus. Additionally, Rodriguez (2019) found that tenured colleagues in his department bullied the untenured colleagues in the name of scholarly “rigor” and “our way of doing things”. These departmental “standards” are an effort to discipline or eliminate difference, undermine diversification, and protect academic hierarchy (Rodriguez, 2019). Rodriguez also explains that the everyday relations of power can be disguised as “mentoring” untenured faculty—“mentoring” as a cover for an “institutionally legitimized form of coercion” (p. 13). Dawson, Meadows, Kustra, and Hansen (2019) confirm that, “tenured faculty have a large influence on the overall institutional culture and therefore, despite their large numbers, sessional faculty are in the wake of their tenured colleagues” (p. 125). So, while precarious faculty match, or in some cases outnumber tenure and tenure-track faculty on campus, it’s the tenure and tenure-track faculty who get to participate in the academic governance of the department and university operations more so than the precarious faculty on campus. Tenure and tenure-track faculty are the ones that sit on committees that hire and evaluate precarious faculty within their respective departments. And as such, the tenure and tenure-track faculty are responsible for reinforcing departmental standards for precarious faculty.

The following autoethnographic account examines the ways in which I was mentored and assessed in my performance at the four different institutions.

6.2 Being Evaluated

I have never been evaluated on my performance as much as I was between 2016 and 2018 as a precarious faculty member. These two years while being hired at the various institutions that I worked at felt like everything that I did and said was under a microscope. Every conversation with a student, every grade I gave, and everything I said (or didn't say) at a faculty meeting—I was constantly being judged and evaluated. Every time I distributed my student evaluations of teaching, I handed out the papers knowing that the fate of my career as an instructor, in part, lay in the hands of those mostly 18-year-olds who were commenting on my instructional abilities. Every time I had conversations with colleagues who I knew were on the hiring or “appointment” committee, I made an extra effort to listen to their thoughts and stories, even if I thought their informal comments and attitude towards students was inappropriate or disrespectful. My overarching goal was to be nice and fit in—I wanted a permanent position within the organization.

The following sections detail my experiences being evaluated at the four institutions—the Teaching University, the Institute, the Private Online University, and City College.

6.2.1 The Teaching University

Having worked as an administrator in higher education in my previous life, I started my career as an Instructor with a huge advantage. In many ways, I was already well versed in the multitude of evaluations that new instructors are subject to when they start at a new institution. Walking into the Teaching University in my first term, I knew that I would be evaluated by the students on my instructional ability and what that might look like in practice—even though no one from the Teaching University told me about student evaluations of teaching when I started.

6.2.1.1 My First Evaluation

About five weeks into the term, I received an email from the department assistant telling me that I was scheduled to be evaluated for the course that I was teaching and would need to administer student evaluations of teaching. The caveat: I would need to find another instructor to volunteer their time to come into my scheduled class at some point in the term and administer the student evaluations while I left the room for 15 or so minutes. Do you know how awkward it is, as a new instructor who knows virtually no one in the department, to solicit a request to people you've never met asking them to volunteer to come in on a Monday night to "do me a solid"? For me, this was incredibly awkward. But, I did it. I managed to find another instructor who taught on Monday afternoons and we agreed to administer each other's student evaluations of teaching—so in the end, it all worked out.

When I received my first term of teaching evaluations back (which, by the way, I stressed excessively over for weeks after the students completed them), I was elated to see wonderful and kind comments that the students had written. Additionally, the students gave me an "overall average" of 4.56/5 as an instructor—which I thought was awesome. I was called in to "chat" about these student evaluations with the head of the department at the end of my first term, in the fall of 2016.

So, on a cold Friday December afternoon, a couple days before Christmas, I got in my car and drove for one-hour on the snow-packed roads out to the campus to meet with Jan, the head of the department, in her office. She was overly smiley when I arrived at her office and offered me a seat amongst the towering piles of paper that she had on her floor. When I sat down, she pulled out a hard copy of my student evaluations of teaching, admitting that she hadn't yet had the chance to review them, so needed a minute or two to browse through the comments. I sat

there, in silence, trying to not look at her while she read through my student's comments of how I was an effective teacher. When she finally finished, she looked up at me and told me that it looked like a couple students said that some of my classes were "lecture-heavy"—and then she proceeded to suggest ways that I could include more activities into my classes so that they're not so lecture-heavy. Then, Jan proceeded to tell me about the different activities that she does in her class so that there's less of a lecture component. While I welcome constructive criticism, I was disappointed that Jan didn't address any of the positive comments (many of which littered the pages of student evaluation forms), and instead focused solely on the two negative comments that had been written. It was at this time that Jan also encouraged me to apply for the newly posted positions (see the previous section 5.2: Being Interviewed) which lead me to believe that she thought I was competent enough of an instructor to teach full time at the Teaching University—so I must be doing a good job. Overall, this meeting, for which I took the morning off and drove for one-hour—lasted 13 minutes in total. But, I did walk away somewhat reassured that I was deemed suitable to continue to teach at the institution.

6.2.1.2 That Time I Was Almost Fired for Giving Everyone an A

A few semesters later, I had been teaching at the Teaching University for two full terms but had only taught the same class: an introductory class for first-years. I felt like I was really starting to master the class. In the summer of 2017, they offered me a new class: a second-year class. I was elated that they were giving me more classes and I was elated at the prospect that I was diversifying my teaching skills with more than just the introductory class. I jumped at the opportunity. As I was teaching this second-year class, I soon realized that many of my grading rubrics that I had invented myself and was using in the course were yielding some pretty high grades. At the end of the course, my class average was 83 per cent and the majority of the

students received a grade of an A- at the Teaching University. Needless to say, I was nervous that my grades were too high, and that the grades might be flagged in some sort of system¹⁴. It is a requirement that faculty submit their final student grades to the head of the department before they are posted into the official university system. When I sent my grades to the head of the department, I received an out-of-office message explaining that Jan was on holidays and that I needed to send my final student grades directly to the Dean for approval before I submitted them into the university system. So, I followed the instructions in the out-of-office message and sent my final grades to the Dean for approval accompanied with an explanation that I knew the grades were very high, that I had a number of mature students in the course who were all very well versed in the subject matter in addition to my overly generous grading rubrics.

The email that I received from the Dean in response read:

Hi Lisa,

Thank you for connecting on this matter.

I am concerned about the overly high averages for both courses, while recognizing your reflections on why the grades are what they are. I did reach out and have a conversation with Jan and she also expressed concern. I've emailed Jan on my response.

At this time, please submit the grades.

Lisa, could you please make arrangements to meet with Jan in advance of the start of Fall term? I think it would be good to have your proposed assignment changes reviewed and to have a general discussion about assignments and assessment in the courses you teach. The

¹⁴ Grading at the Teaching University was at the discretion of the Instructor; this is what the institutional policy stated, at least. No one during my first few terms at the Teaching University told me that my classes had to have a certain grade distribution or class average. I was operating from a place of total control when it came to student grades. But again, this was an assumption—an incorrect assumption.

faculty vacation period is over as of August 21st, so there will be time to do this before the start of term.

Best,

The Dean

In all honesty, this email made my heart sink. By this point, I had just been deemed an unsuitable candidate for a more secure position in the department a few months earlier, and I felt as though my days at the Teaching University were numbered. I was also frustrated that I had to wait a few weeks to speak to the head of the department, since she was on vacation until August 21st, and I was planning on visiting my family out-of-town for the last two weeks in August. So logistically, I couldn't connect with the head of the department to have my assignments reviewed and this "general conversation" that the Dean recommended. I followed this up with a very long email to the head of the department that contained a proactive plan and thoughts on how I could restructure the courses that I teach so that I would never again have such a high class average¹⁵. My response was met with a very simple:

I am planning on contacting all the sessionals to come in for a small workshop on teaching the introductory course. This will probably be scheduled for the week of August 21, but I'll confirm the date next week.

I was both relieved and disappointed with this email. I was relieved in the sense that it appeared as though they were keeping me on contract to teach the classes that they had contractually scheduled me for in the fall (I was banking on that work, financially). But I was disappointed that I had to attend a meeting on campus (and prepare for that meeting in advance) during one of

¹⁵ If I were a student and I knew that my instructor was in trouble (and potentially was about to lose her job) because her grades were too high, I would lose my shit. Don't we want students to be successful in their classes?

the weeks that I had planned on visiting my family out of town. Additionally, I wasn't being paid to attend this meeting—it was scheduled outside of the timeframe of my contract and therefore I was donating my time, and sacrificing the little window of time I had allocated to spend time with my family before the start of a busy September. Nevertheless, I did it: I cancelled plans and rearranged my life so that I could attend this meeting at the end of the month.

6.2.1.3 Getting Past Probation

When I was hired at the Teaching University, it was not made clear to me in any way that I was going to be undergoing a one-year probationary period. There was no mention of a probationary period in any of the official contractual letters that I received from the university, nor did the head of the department provide me with any notification. So, you can imagine my surprise when, after a tumultuous summer of being encouraged to apply for a job in the department, then interviewing for that job and not getting it, along with giving out too many high grades to students, I received an email notifying me that it was time for the review committee to review my performance. Apparently, there was a one-year probationary period at the Teaching University, and I was up for review. The following is an email I received from the new head of the department on November 7th following the tumultuous summer:

Hi Lisa,

You are nearing the end of your probationary period with our department, and I would like our Standing Selection Committee to review your course materials before we decide on re-appointment. Could you please send copies of your syllabi, course assignments, and sample marking for each course you have taught for us so far.

This is a new procedure the department will be using for all sessional hires¹⁶. You have time to compile this information, since the Committee is meeting on November 20.

Best,

The New Head of the Department

I won't lie, when I received this email I thought, "here we go again". I proceeded to compile all my documents and hand delivered a USB with all my materials to review to the new head of the department, Susan.

I was, admittedly, happy to have a new head of the department; after everything that had occurred over the summer, I was convinced that the outgoing department head, Jan, hated me. With a new department head, I felt like I might have a chance at a clean slate, and that my future at the Teaching University had a little more hope. Sure enough, eight days after I submitted my materials to the review committee, I received an email from Susan:

Hi Lisa,

The Committee has reviewed your materials. Thanks for providing them. We agree that you should continue with our department, but we would like you to receive closer mentoring over the next year.

[the rest of the email was an offer to teach courses in the winter term].

¹⁶ In 2018, the department in which I was working at the Teaching University rolled out a new procedure for hiring sessional instructors. The procedures outlined in their departmental procedure manual that was circulated via email and attached to a monthly faculty meeting agenda package, indicate that the evaluation of precarious faculty would include student evaluations of teaching, as well as an in-class observation, and some self-reflective documents. In other words, after 2018, the evaluation process for precarious faculty became a lot more robust and almost tenure-like at the Teaching University.

I was a little surprised that I was successful in passing my probation since I knew that Jan, the outgoing department head, was on the committee. But, I passed—I passed a probation period that I never knew existed in the first place.

6.2.1.4 Post-Probation Assessments

Even though I passed my probation at the Teaching University, I passed with the caveat that I would receive “closer mentoring” over the next year. At the time, I had no idea what this meant since the department didn’t seem to have a policy that outlined any of this. It turned out that this meant I would meet with the department head a few times to review my course syllabus and assignments in fine detail before the courses were scheduled to begin. I was receptive to this “mentoring” and actually found these meetings with the new department head, Susan, very helpful. She was constructive and collaborative in ways that didn’t make me feel like I was totally unfit to be an instructor. After I revamped my course syllabi with Susan, I had established a solid foundation for the two courses that they continued to offer me at the Teaching University. While I continued to make small changes to the syllabi and my assignments, I had finally developed courses that had a nice flow to them and assignment rubrics that were no longer overly generous.

In the fall term of 2017, I agreed to teach an introductory class on Saturdays. Being a sessional is interesting because you always get offered night classes and classes on the weekend—basically, all the leftover classes that the permanent faculty don’t want.

Even though I had just passed my probationary period, I was still scheduled to have my students evaluate me in my Saturday class. Remember, at the Teaching University, it’s up to the sessional instructor to solicit another instructor in the department to administer the student evaluation on your behalf while you putter around in the hallway outside the classroom door

until your colleague emerges with the sealed envelope and gives you the all clear to head back into your classroom. I was at a total loss as to whom I should ask to come in and help me with my evaluations on a Saturday afternoon, so I emailed the head of the department, Susan, and asked her whom she thought I should ask to administer my evaluations on a Saturday afternoon. She responded quickly saying that she'll come in and do them for me.

On that Saturday that Susan was scheduled to come into my Saturday class and administer my student evaluations of teaching, she arrived early with her daughter in tow. She sent her daughter off to the back corner of my classroom and told her to play on her iPad, and the little girl abided. Susan proceeded to stand at the front of the classroom with me while we waited for my students to show up for the class. I started the conversation by thanking her for taking time out of her Saturday morning to administer my student evaluations of teaching for me and how appreciative I was. She “you’re welcomed” me and started to discuss the importance of the student evaluations that she was about to administer.

During our short conversation while we stood at the front of the classroom, Susan told me that it was important that we all be on the same page when it comes to teaching the introductory-level courses. She then went on to explain that, for that reason, the department purposefully hires sessionals who don’t have a lot of experience—because they don’t want people who come into the department already “set in their ways”.

Within minutes of our short discussion as we stood at the front of the classroom, the entire front row of the class was already seated, in clear earshot of what Susan was saying.

Susan concluded the discussion by explaining that some sessional instructors—who have been with the department for a while—have long passed probation and are not in alignment with the rest of the department. Further, she explained that whenever they get a student who has come

from one of these instructors' classes, they're often underprepared for the higher-level classes. By the end of our short discussion, I could see that two of my top students who were seated in the front row heard every word that Susan said.

When 10:00am finally rolled around, I was sent out into the hallway and I closed the door behind me while Susan administered my student evaluations of teaching. Standing out in the hallway I started processing what Susan had just said to me.

First—they purposely hire people with no experience so that they can mould sessionals into the teachers they want them to be... Obviously this means that they hired me so that they could “mould me” to teach in the same ways they did. Even though I was asked questions about my educational training, experience, and pedagogy during my interview—I guess that was just to make sure that my training, experience, and pedagogy of teaching was “mouldable.”

Second—does this mean that the only reason they hired me is because I had little experience? And, the opposite of this, does that mean that they deliberately didn't hire people who were experienced? Were people who were significantly more qualified than me not being considered for sessional positions at the Teaching University because they had too much experience and were “set in their ways”? And, does that mean that one day in the future, if I want to apply for a sessional position, I might be denied the opportunity because I have *too* much experience? Do all university hiring committees adopt this hiring strategy when hiring sessional or contract instructors? If so, then I better land myself a permanent position in a department somewhere pretty soon.

Third—I was surprised that the head of the department divulged all this information to me. Well, not just to me, to me and all my students sitting in the front row. Not only was it difficult to find a way to respond to this conversation (all I could muster up was: “yes, of course

all us introductory-level instructors should be on the same page”), but, I found this incredibly unprofessional. Having a conversation about how you only hired me because I was inexperienced and “mouldable” and complaining about other instructors who have passed their probationary period and have gone “rogue” in the department is not something that you do while standing at the front of the classroom with a handful of students listening.

Finally, after about 15 minutes, Susan, clenching the brown sealed envelope filled with my student comments and ratings, opened the door. Her daughter trailed behind her and they left the classroom and wished me a good day. This was, hands down, the oddest student evaluation experience I ever had.

After the class was over, I headed home and thought about everything that Susan had said and reflected on my experience and performance evaluations at the Teaching University.

As usual, after I submitted all the student grades for the term, I received my student evaluations of teaching for that term. My rating scores and comments continued to be in the 4.5/5 range and student comments continued to be positive. However, at this point, more negative comments on my evaluations started appearing in the comments section of my evaluations. In particular, those comments referred to how hard of a marker I was...

And, apparently, that’s all. Once I passed my probation at the Teaching University, I was only required to administer two more student’s evaluations of teaching. In the winter term of 2018, I was no longer required to conduct student evaluations of my teaching. As far as I know, there’s no further assessment of my teaching required, but then again, the Teaching University does have a history of not informing me of the processes and procedures, so you never know.

6.2.2 The Private Online University

By 2016, I had been teaching online courses with the Private Online University for three full years, term after term. At the end of every course, I would sometimes receive an email that contained a PDF of my student evaluations of teaching. During the 2016-2018 time period, I never received a student evaluation that had more than five respondents. Often, there were very few comments and the content of the comments focused more on the design of the course than on my teaching. After all, the content of the course was prescribed, and I was merely a facilitator of the course (marking and fielding questions from the students).

There were no peer evaluations of my performance in the online courses as far as I'm aware. One time, however, I was invited to a professional development seminar on how to better engage with students in online discussion forums. While attending the session, I noticed that some of my online posts that I had posted in my course were included as examples of "best practices" during the session.

At the Private Online University, when it came to assessment, no feedback seemed to mean that you were doing things correctly. And, I received almost no feedback on my instruction.

6.2.3 City College

Like most institutions, I wasn't given any instruction on assessment when I was hired at City College. About two months into the online course I was teaching in the fall of 2017, I emailed the department chair asking about the process for assessment; surely there was some kind of process that I needed to follow—student evaluations, at least? She replied back with the following answer:

Hi Lisa,

There is no mechanism for "official" student evaluations for emergency instructors, but if you'd like feedback from your students, there are two options.

OPTION 1: your own version of an official evaluation

1) Email them the attached evaluation form (feel free to edit it if you feel some questions aren't useful, and/or you'd like to add questions)

2) Tell them to email the completed form to me at [\[department head email address\]](#) (explain that their anonymity is protected, and that you won't be allowed to see their comments until after final grades are in)

3) I will collate their submissions, and send them to you in the new year.

OPTION 2: a faster and more casual evaluation

1) Create your own questions in a more informal style/format than the evaluation form, and email them to the student explaining that you are inviting their feedback, rather than conducting an evaluation

2) Ask them to email their responses directly to you (possibly for bonus participation marks, as a motivator...)

All the best,

[Department Head]

Even though I was teaching the same introductory course as permanent faculty in the department (despite being an “emergency hire”), the process for evaluation was basically entirely optional. I opted for the first option that the department head presented, since it seemed more official: asking the students to send the evaluation form directly to the department head.

Then, in the new year, after being deemed not suitable to even be called in for an interview, I sent an email to the department head asking her to share any students’ evaluations of

teaching she received for me. The department head responded, explaining that two students completed the evaluation form, and she attached those two student evaluations to her reply email.

6.2.4 The Institute

Unlike the other three institutions that I had been working at, the Institute was very clear on the assessment practices for new faculty. Within the first week of my appointment at the Institute in 2017, I received a PDF letter from the Associate Dean outlining the assessment process at the Institute.

The letter explained that, in addition to the student evaluations of teaching that I would administer at the end of the term, I was required to invite at least three faculty members from the hiring committee to my class so that they could perform a “peer evaluation of teaching” for me. Additionally, I was required by the Associate Dean to solicit feedback from all the heads of the departments that my courses served. For example, if I taught courses in the School of Business and the School of Health Sciences, I would have to solicit feedback from the department heads of those schools and direct that feedback to my superior—the Associate Dean. I was even given a blank *Departmental Head Feedback* form that was to distribute to the department heads I worked with for them to fill out and return directly to the Associate Dean. The appointment letter that I received from the Institute was very clear—I was hired to teach for one term. There was no promise of additional terms if I did well.

6.2.4.1 The First Term

The first term I taught at the Institute, in the fall of 2017, I was hired to teach five sections of two different classes. I was given material for both of the courses, but was given a fair amount of freedom to construct the courses as I liked. I brought in lots of the activities that I had designed during my previous year at the Teaching University.

In October, I began sending emails to those who had been on my hiring committee, inviting them to come to my classes and evaluate me as part of the “peer evaluation process.” This, I admit was quite odd: soliciting people that I didn’t really know and asking them to come to my class for an hour and evaluate me. A peer had never evaluated my teaching, let alone a peer I didn’t really know. But, my new peers at the Institute were responsive and collegial; all (the Program Head, the Associate Dean, and another Instructor in the department) agreed to visit one of my five classes in the coming months and observe me teach.

When the time came for the evaluations, I was nervous. As I previously mentioned, no one had ever observed my teaching before and I was riddled with self-doubt in my abilities. The first scheduled peer evaluation was with the Program Head. He arrived at the start of the class with the rest of the students and I introduced him to the students, explaining that he was there to evaluate me, and my instructional abilities—not them. The Program Head took a seat at the back of the room and took his notes out of his bag. The students seemed unbothered by his presence, although a bit quieter than normal. I started with an activity and proceeded with a topical worksheet to work through with the students.

The Program Head was attentive, seemed to take lots of notes, smiled at me from the back and gave me encouraging head nods throughout the class. An hour in, half way through the class, he packed his notebook into his bag, got up, and waved to me as he exited the class. Later that day, I received an email from the Program Head asking if I were available to meet with him to review his notes and evaluation from his observation of my teaching; I nervously agreed.

When I arrived at the Program Head’s office to review his evaluation of my teaching I was incredibly nervous and sweating profusely. He invited me to sit down and gave me a copy of the notes he had made. He complemented the activities that I planned and went through with the

students and said that it was apparent that the students respected me and enjoyed being in the class; I was thrilled. After complementing me for about five minutes, the conversation then evolved and progressed into the reappointment structure at the Institute. The Program Head alluded that I would be considered for more work next term, if I were interested. He also said that I was an excellent fit in the department. Needless to say, I entered that meeting with the weight of an elephant on my shoulders and left the meeting weightless.

The next of three peers that were scheduled to observe and evaluate my teaching was the Associate Dean. She arrived at my class in the same way that the Program Head had, took a seat at the back of the classroom with a notepad and began writing from the moment the class began to the moment that the class ended. The students were on their best behaviour—meaning that there was minimal side bar conversations in the back of the room and they were raising their hand when they wanted to say something. I was 100 per cent less nervous with this observation since my first observation with the Program Head had gone so well. Again, at the halfway point in the class when we took a 10-minute break, the Associate Dean collected her hand-written notes, got up, and disappeared from the class. I think that the intent behind this stealth-like disappearance is an attempt to not be disruptive. But, not knowing that this is how we “do peer evaluations” at the Institute, the first time this happened it was a bit quite concerning. Again, later that day I received an email from the Associate Dean asking me to come to her office for a meeting to review the notes that she had made—her evaluation of my teaching—with her. The next day we sat down together and went through her comprehensive play-by-play of the activities that we went through as a class during the hour that she was there. We chatted about other things—mostly her international travel and her experience at the Institute—and then I was

excused. Again, I left the meeting feeling as though she thought my teaching skills were good, if not excellent.

Lastly, the third and final observer was scheduled to observe my teaching during a final exam review class in early December. I had been working closely with this Instructor in the department over the last three months and truthfully, we were very similar and got along very well. She had been working with the department for the past seven years or so and was always interested in my ideas and acted as a sounding board when I had questions about best teaching practices, activities, and assessment. She is, perhaps, the most supportive colleague I have ever worked with throughout my entire teaching career. So, by the time she was scheduled to observe me in class and evaluate my teaching, I wasn't nervous; I was excited. Like the other two peer evaluators, she arrived at the start of the class. I had made a Jeopardy game for the students to help review the material for the upcoming final exam. And, like the previous two observations, she made notes, gave me encouraging head nods throughout her observation, and left at the halfway point of the class. Later that day, she casually provided me with a copy of her evaluation of my teaching, told me I was awesome, and asked me if I would like to continue working with her the following term. Of course, I was thrilled, and told her that I would love to continue working with her.

In addition to these three peer evaluations I organized and agonized over, I (expectedly) administered (my own) student evaluations of teaching at the end of the term. Additionally, I emailed the two heads of the departments that the two different courses I taught were part of and asked them to both complete the evaluation form and send it to the Associate Dean for my file.

I should note that I wasn't even full time at the Institute during my first term there. I was appointed at 60 per cent of a full-time equivalency (FTE)—yet I still went through the most comprehensive and rigorous assessment process than I experienced at any institution. By the end of my first term with the Institute, the hiring committee knew everything there was to know about me, and my teaching abilities. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly as a precarious faculty member, I knew where I stood as an instructor in the department at the Institute.

6.2.4.2 The Second Term

Before the Christmas break in 2017, after having been with the Institute for just over three months, I was told that I was deemed a “suitable” candidate and did not need to reapply for the instructional position I currently held. I was issued another contract for the next teaching term, this time at 80 per cent of a full time load. This equated to teaching three different courses and a total of five classes. I received the same appointment letter at the start of January. It instructed me to solicit classroom observations from three of my colleagues, solicit feedback from the heads of the programs that my courses were in, and distribute and administer student evaluations of teaching at the end of the year. This is the exact same assessment process that I had followed in the previous term so I knew exactly what I could expect.

The first part of the assessment, like last term, was to organize my peer evaluations. I sent an email to the same three colleagues that observed my teaching last term (the Associate Dean, the Program Head, and the Instructor that was on my hiring committee), inviting them to, once again, observe my teaching in the classroom and evaluate me.

The first person scheduled to evaluate my teaching this time around was the Associate Dean. The same process was followed from my first term. She arrived at the start of the class, sat at the back of the classroom, took a flurry of notes, and then left at the break (half way through

the class). She then called me into her office where we reviewed the notes she had made, talked a little about teaching for about 10 minutes or so, then talked about more Institute-wide topics for the remaining 20 minutes. During the latter half of our meeting, the Associate Dean took the time to outline how “regularization” of faculty worked at the Institute. I tried to not read too closely into this conversation since I had a similar conversation at the Teaching University a few months earlier and that only led to disappointment and frustration. But, it was interesting to learn about the process since the Institute is not a college or university, there is no assistant, associate, or full professor distinctions. All faculty at the Institute are “Faculty”, and within this distinction, there are “temporary” and “regular” faculty. Essentially, at the Institute, if you’re a “regular” faculty member, or if you’ve been “regularized,” then you’ve got the equivalent of tenure at a university. The Associate Dean also explained that once a temporary faculty member works for three years continuously, they will automatically become “regularized” going into their fourth year (so long as the hiring committee deems you “suitable” year after year). It’s difficult to not read into these conversations as hints that they want to keep you around. I left that meeting optimistic, but didn’t let myself get carried away believing that I was “in” the department just yet.

The instructor who was on my hiring committee was the next observer scheduled to come and observe my class. As predicted, she followed the same process. She came at the start of the class, sat at the back of the classroom and wrote feverously on her evaluation form as I lead the class through an activity. At the halfway point, she packed up her things and left the room. Later that day, she approached me in my office to informally review the overly positive feedback she had written on the form. She then copied me on the email she sent to the Associate Dean to add her observational feedback to my file. The email read:

Hi [Program Head] and [Associate Dean],

Attached you'll find the notes from my most recent observation of Lisa's teaching. It was a pleasure to visit her class and see such an outstanding instructor in action.

[Program Assistant], I see that [Associate Dean] has an out-of-office automatic reply. Could you please add this observation to Lisa's file?

All the best,

[Instructor on Hiring Committee]

I included the email above to illustrate the positive tone and language that I received consistently from all my peer assessments, and particularly the one from the Instructor, at the Institute.

The last person scheduled to observe my teaching was the Program Head. It was awkward soliciting people in the department and asking them to come and watch me teach, especially since teaching 15 contact hours every week was the standard in the department—it was difficult to find a time when people were available and weren't teaching themselves. I had arranged for the Program Head to come and observe my teaching later in the term. But, by the time the end of the term rolled around, his schedule got even busier. Finally, in an attempt to have him visit my last class of the term, another scheduling conflict occurred and he was unable to visit. I asked him if it would be a problem that I would then only have two peer evaluations of my teaching rather than the required three that was outlined in the letter I received at the start of my appointment. He assured me that it wasn't a problem.

6.2.4.3 The Beginning of Becoming 'Regular'

At the end of my first year in 2018 at the Institute, I felt confident. Colleagues in the department—including the Program Head and the Associate Dean—had observed me and performed peer evaluations of my teaching, students had given me overwhelmingly positive

feedback on my teaching, and most importantly, the informal feedback that I was receiving (at the photocopier, in the hallways, while waiting at the microwave for my lunch to heat up), were all hints that I was doing well in the department and that they wanted to keep me around.

The Program Head mentioned, on more than one occasion, that being an instructor in the department was a lot like being a unicorn. Not in the sense that unicorns are majestic (or, maybe this was part of the analogy, I'm not sure), but in the sense that good instructors in the department at the Institute are so rare that they're almost mythical. It was clear that the Institute wasn't just looking for a good teacher, but that they were also looking for someone who would fit in with the department, and I seemed to be doing that well.

One afternoon in late May 2018 towards the end of the term at the Institute (and the end of my first full teaching year), I was driving in my car from one institution to another, as precarious faculty do, when I received a phone call from the Program Head. I knew that the Program Head and the hiring committee had met the previous week to determine whether or not I would be deemed suitable to continue in the department, and I knew this was the phone call that would tell me if they thought I was a unicorn, or—like my experience at Teaching University—they were just stringing me along and had no intention of me continuing to work there on a permanent basis.

When I answered the call, the Program Head cut right to it: Lisa we would love for you to continue to teach with us in the department next year. And, this time, we'd like to offer you a full year (September to May) teaching contract, rather than just one term. I didn't even know that full year teaching contracts were an option at the Institute. I enthusiastically agreed and tried to contain the excitement in my voice in an attempt to act professional. After all the conversations I had over the last year and everything I had learned about the Institute, I knew that I was finally

on track to becoming ‘regularized’—the equivalent of tenure at the Institute. I was about to head into my second year with the department; one more year after that, and I would be ‘regular.’ And, if someone in the department retired, there was only one ‘temporary’ instructor in the department who was more senior to me (had an extra year on me). Things were finally starting to look up.

However, the Program Head cautioned me from any celebrations because the hiring committee decided that Elaine [the other temporary instructor who was more senior than me in the department] was not deemed “suitable” by the committee and will not be offered a contract next year.

I didn’t ask for further details about why Elaine wasn’t being hired back after having worked in the department for two full years even though I was curious. Was Elaine not a ‘unicorn’? Or, was this a common practice that they did at the Institute—string temporary employees along for a few years and then cut them loose when they’re about to be permanent?

When the phone call finally ended, I was of two minds. On the one hand, I felt like I was finally on track to having a regular job. I enjoyed working at the Institute—I liked the students and the people—and it seemed as though that feeling was mutual. On the other hand—look what happened to Elaine who was just one year ahead of me. Granted, I knew nothing about her assessments and how she was doing, but she had worked for two years in the department—she even led the department’s social committee—and just one year before she was scheduled to become permanent they decided she was not suitable to continue in the department. I couldn’t help but wonder if this was common at the Institute. Perhaps the Institute was just like the

Teaching University, stringing temporary employees along and getting their hopes up only to not re-hire them when a whiff of job security presented itself?

In the final two weeks of my first year in 2018 at the Institute, I celebrated behind office doors with colleagues I had become close with. I wished everyone a great summer and expressed excitement that I would be coming back in September. I ran into Elaine in the hallway just once and was nearly paralyzed with sadness for her but I masked it with a smile. I'm sure at that point she knew that I was returning in September. I felt awful. But, I was coming back in September. Moving forward, I had to make sure that I could give the hiring committee no reason to cut me loose, as they did with Elaine, after my second year in the department.

6.2.4.4 Year Two

Year Two at the Institute felt like I was being thrown into the deep end. I had spent the first year at the Institute at 60 per cent of a full-time load in term one and 80 per cent of a full-time load in term two, so when I started my second year at 100 per cent of a full-time load, teaching six sections of three different courses (two of which I hadn't taught before), I felt overwhelmed. In fact, even though my appointment didn't start until the end of August, I was in the office at the end of July prepping for these three different courses. I was also a bit disappointed that the Program Head gave me courses that I hadn't taught before and, arguably, had a large learning curve to. In addition to the two new courses I was given, I was also assigned the second largest class in the department, a class that had over 200 students—this would be my first time ever teaching a large lecture-based course. While there were 200 students in the course, I would deliver the lecture to the students but would only work with about 90 of them in seminars throughout the week. The Institute calls this being the “lead instructor” for the course. As a lead instructor, I would have other faculty in the department—regularized faculty—teach alongside

me, leading their respective seminars. But, as the lead instructor, I was “in charge” and responsible for making sure that the course was as consistent as possible for all students. Here’s where it gets really weird: one of the faculty members who I was “in charge” of, or a “lead instructor” for was the Associate Dean. Yes, you read that correctly: one of the instructors that led one of the seminars was my boss. As can be expected, it was a very odd experience to lead a course and have your boss (and the person who has the most amount of power on the hiring committee and therefore is almost entirely in charge of whether or not I was going to continue to work in the department) taking direction from me on the course.

But, I dove into my second year at the Institute head-first and without reservation (after having spent the bulk of the summer preparing for the courses in an unpaid capacity). Just like my previous appointments with the Institute, I received a letter detailing that, as a temporary employee, I was required to solicit three peer evaluations of teaching, solicit feedback from the heads of the departments that I taught in for the year, and that I would be required to gather student evaluations of teaching. All this solicitation wasn’t new to me. But, by this time, I was now the most senior temporary employee in the department. In fact, two new temporary instructors were hired at the start of my second year—both at 100 per cent load. Additionally, coming into my second year, I had developed real relationships with many of the ‘regularized’ faculty in the department. I would often chat with them in the hallway or at the photocopier. Many of them would offer me advice and reassure me that I would be regularized soon, and that I was doing a great job.

Year two was more stressful than year one. The heavier load and new classes meant that I spent many nights prepping and researching to stay ahead. Additionally, there was a new program head in the department in my second year—a program head who had a mandate to

implement new policies and procedures to make the hiring process more transparent and methodical. When I told him that my doctoral dissertation was all about ‘temporary’ faculty and how it feels to be onboarded in a department, he was very interested (and I think a bit nervous about what I was writing about).

Nevertheless, I proceeded throughout the term, facilitated my three peer reviews of teaching (from the new program head, the associate dean, and another member of the hiring committee). As usual, all of my evaluations came back overwhelmingly positive. While my appointment was for the entire year (through until May), the two new temporary instructors were following a similar path to me. They were only on a one-term appointment. One of the two new hires wasn’t asked to return in January, and the other new hire didn’t make it past their second term. Heading into the second term, the department hired another two new temporary faculty members. Since I was given a year-long appointment, I only had to organize the circus that is the assessment process once throughout the year (instead of organizing the process both in the fall and winter terms). This made for a more relaxed second term. However, in the second term many of the instructors that I had worked with in the first term were off on various leaves of absences. This meant that I was required to be the lead instructor for the course of 200 students (again—the second largest class in the department), with two of the newly hired temporary faculty and one regularized faculty member. When talking with the one regularized faculty member, I reminded them that I was only in my second year, and that I was still a temporary faculty member; they responded by saying, “yes, but you’re a senior temporary faculty member.”

What made the second term of my second year odd was not so much that I was leading a team of instructors, of which half of them were new to the Institute, but that members of the hiring committee would walk into my office, shut the door behind them, and ask for some

feedback on how these new temporary hires were doing. They were soliciting my feedback, my assessment, on the performance of these new instructors (none of which I had observed in the classroom) who I barely knew and with whom I only had short conversations. Of all the odd experiences I had at the Institute, this one took the cake for making me feel the most awkward. I kept my assessment of my fellow temporary faculty professional, positive, and brief. I still wonder if those on the hiring committee realize the awkward position they put me in: I was still a temporary employee myself and would be for at least another year. After years of not being recognized for my experience, I found myself rattled by the sudden request to draw on my experience.

6.2.4.5 One More Year Until Regularization

As year two at the Institute came to an end, I was—technically—one year away from being a regularized faculty member at the Institute. With only one month left on my contract, I was told that I would be returning the next year and that I should “have my resume ready” in case one of the current regularized faculty members were to retire and a regular position were to come available over the summer months. And, while other temporary faculty didn’t make the cut at the end of this year, I was starting to feel like I was inches away from having a permanent regular job in the department at the Institute. One more year to go, I thought.

6.3 Being Evaluated: Analysis and Discussion

The literature on student evaluations of teaching, for both tenure-track faculty and precarious faculty, focuses on the inherent double-standard of student evaluations. As the review of the literature earlier in this chapter explains, student evaluations of teaching are not an effective measure for measuring a faculty member’s performance. Murray (2019) explains that precarious faculty are, “constantly faced with difficult choices between maintaining academic rigor,

enforcing policy and rules, holding students personally accountable, enacting appropriate classroom management and keeping students happy” (p. 238). While my autoethnographic account presented earlier in this chapter doesn’t necessarily focus on my pandering to students so that they would write good things about me when it came time to evaluate me, I am sure there was some element of pandering to students of which I’m unconscious. Additionally, I am sure that if you compared my student evaluations against those from a male colleague of mine, you’d find some gendered expectations and comments. The analysis that follows will focus on three major findings:

1. Student evaluations are tied closely to reappointment.
2. Performance evaluation practices are critical and should be communicated to the new precarious faculty member at the start of their appointment within the department.
3. Precarious faculty are evaluated informally. And, as such, the departmental organizational culture impacts precarious faculty performance evaluations significantly.

6.3.1 Good Evaluations = Reappointment

When I read that Webber’s (2008) research findings indicated that contingent faculty perceived that student evaluations inform future hiring decisions for non-permanent faculty members, I wasn’t surprised. From my experience as a Manager of Administration at a large research university, my previous career, I knew that unpopular precarious faculty are rarely re-hired to teach again. Word gets out amongst the students really quickly when there’s a “bad instructor” in the department—be it through websites like ratemyprofessor.com or Reddit. Once the word gets out, no students want to register for the class with the “bad instructor”—it creates scheduling issues within the department.

What's most surprising is that it's well-known that student evaluations of teaching are not an effective measure of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness—we know this in higher education. The popular discourse on social media (i.e. Twitter) and across various media and publications is that student evaluations of teaching are *one* tool that can be used to evaluate faculty, not *the* tool. And, as mentioned in section 6.1 of this chapter, in 2018 an arbitrator ruled that student evaluations of teaching are incredibly biased and should not be used for faculty evaluation at the tenure and promotion level. While this is a precedent for tenure-track faculty, this arbitration ruling doesn't automatically transfer over to precarious faculty; however, it does set the stage for not relying solely on student evaluations of teaching. Yet, for precarious faculty, it seems like some departments are relying solely on student evaluations to inform performance and that ultimately determine whether or not the precarious faculty member is re-hired or re-appointed for the next term. The departmental organizational culture here is the steward of the kinds of evidence that program heads use when evaluating precarious faculty member's performance. The culture at the Teaching University, for instance, was to rely solely on student evaluations of teaching, whereas the culture at the Institute was to rely more on peer evaluations of teaching. As explained in Chapter 3, this is how the socialization process in a particular organization remains stagnant for many years and ends up getting passed down from generation to generation (Gaus, Tang, & Akil, 2019). Faculty associations could play a larger role in aiding this issue in the future. In their advocacy, faculty associations can work to include more parameters around precarious faculty performance evaluations so that student evaluations of teaching are not the only metric (if you can call them a metric) in one's performance evaluation.

The autoethnographic accounts in this chapter offer evidence as to why it is that precarious faculty perceive that student evaluations inform future hiring decisions—*because they*

do! At both of the institutions that seemed to have some kind of performance evaluation process—the Teaching University and the Institute—formal conversations with the department head quickly turned to conversations about re-appointment and my future at the institutions. First, with Jan at the Teaching University; I drove out to campus a few days before Christmas for a 13 minute meeting that, I thought, was to review my student evaluations of teaching. While we did review my evaluation together, most of our conversation focused on Jan encouraging me to apply for the semi-permanent lecturer and the tenure-track faculty positions that were posted in the department. As my autoethnographic account indicates, I walked away from that meeting thinking that I must have a strong performance evaluation if the head of the department wants me to apply for a tenure-track position that's posted in the department. The second time that I was called in to review my evaluations in a formal meeting was at the Institute. However, at the Institute, the review didn't focus on student evaluations of teaching, but rather peer evaluations of teaching. In fact, the student evaluations of teaching didn't seem to be a topic of discussion at the Institute; my performance as an instructor was primarily evaluated through peer evaluations. As my autoethnographic account indicates, at all three of my meetings with my colleagues (and the Associate Dean) in the department, the conversation about my performance was not the main topic of conversation—but my future in the department was. The Associate Dean explained the process for becoming “regularized” at the Institute, and the Program Head telling me that I was a great fit and perhaps a “unicorn.” Even though performance evaluations at the Institute focuses more on peer evaluations (rather than on student evaluations), the discussion about evaluation with all those who had the power to hire me back the next term focused primarily on my future within the department.

Therefore, of the four institutions in which I worked, only two of them had formal performance review processes in place: the Teaching University and the Institute. While the Institute had a rigorous performance evaluation process, they were transparent about the process from the beginning and focused more on peer evaluations than anything else. The Teaching University, on the other hand, seemed to rely on student evaluations of teaching until the precarious faculty member reached their probation one-year after the initial appointment. As my autoethnographic accounts indicate, there was no transparency in this process. In Moorehead's (2011) Ed.D. Dissertation, they explored department chair's perceptions of part time faculty in the Maryland higher education system. One of their concluding recommendations was that, "Institutions should develop policies for formal evaluations of adjuncts that include evaluation in the classroom by peer faculty members and institutional student evaluations at the conclusion of each course" (p. 145). Overall, in my experience, the lack of communication around how I was being evaluated at these institutions seemed to cause me the most amount of anxiety.

6.3.2 The Importance of Communication

As my autoethnographic accounts illustrate, the formal performance evaluation process was communicated to me at the start of my employment appointment at only one institution: the Institute. Right at the start of my appointment, I was informed of how I would be evaluated, what I needed to do, and how the entire process would unfold. Now, this process was admittedly cumbersome and extensive, but at least I knew what was expected of me and how I was expected to proceed and organize my performance evaluation process. As my autoethnographic accounts indicate, being evaluated was stressful, whether I knew what the process was or not. However, at the Institute, I stressed over the evaluation process, and at the other three institutions, I stressed over not knowing what the process was, and whether or not I'd be hired back the next term.

At the other three institutions: the Teaching University; the Private Online University; and City College, I received no communication from the department heads or administrators that explained the performance evaluation process. Schrodtt, Cawyer, and Sanders (2003), give a comprehensive background on the research that's been published on this issue and explain why it is an issue:

Researchers have suggested that competent communication between newcomers and organizational veterans is vital to successful socialization (Cawyer et al., 2002; Miller, 1989). Through such tactics as storytelling (Brown, 1985) and providing new hire feedback (Ashford, 1985), the uncertainty of work is reduced (Teboul, 1994), and newcomers are offered the opportunity to understand the culture of their new organization (Miller, 1989; Morrison, 1993; Wanous, 1992). (p. 19)

In 2018, as I was reading the literature to write this dissertation, I was surprised to read so much of the literature discussing “personal strain” amongst precarious faculty¹⁷; at the time, I didn't see the stress I was dealing with, nor did I fully see physical impact that stress was having on my health. However, when you read the autoethnographic accounts presented in this chapter, you can hear the frustration in my writing, especially in my experience at the Teaching University. I now see that I felt disrespected at the Teaching University, disrespected as an employee and as an expert in my field. I attribute my feelings of disrespect to a serious lack of communication that I had with the department. I was afraid of asking too many questions because I didn't want to be “that instructor” in the department that asked too many questions and was therefore high

¹⁷ See section 2.3.2.5 for a further explanation on personal and financial strain amongst precarious faculty in Canada.

maintenance. I wanted to fit in; and to fit in, I thought, was to take the lead from the department. I now know that I tolerated this entire process. I should have spoken up and asked more questions about the evaluation process and I should have asked for clarification at many different points in time throughout the two years that I worked at the Teaching University. Had I just spoken up and asked the questions, I would have saved myself so much anxiety and “personal strain” from wondering and worrying about my future at the Teaching University. In large part, this is a testament to the culture of the department at the Teaching University and is in keeping with Kezar, DePaola, and Scott’s (2019) concerns that commuter instructors never get the chance to really be socialized into the departments in which they work. The main difference between the departmental cultures at the Teaching University and the Institute, is that at the Institute, I was given the opportunity to connect with my (regularized) colleagues. At the Institute, I felt safe; I felt like I could walk next door and ask my colleague a question (and I did ask many, many questions of my colleagues by just knocking on their door and asking them). I wasn’t able to do this at the Teaching University. At the Teaching University, I was usually alone—the only colleagues that I did talk to were other sessionals with whom I shared a resource room as an office. In other words, I had a direct communication line to my colleagues at the Institute and, in contrast, had limited communication with my colleagues (if any) at the teaching University.

The communication I received from the Institute was extraordinary. Not only did the Institute have a comprehensive process for evaluating faculty¹⁸, but they effectively communicated the entire process with me at the very start of my contract. For me, this signified

¹⁸ Interestingly, all faculty are reviewed in this way at the Institute regardless of whether the new faculty member is “temporary” or “regular.”

that the Institute respected me and my career development. The level of stress and worry I experienced at the Institute paled in comparison to level of frustration, worry, and stress that I felt at the Teaching University, the Online Private University, and City College.

Higher education institutions are complex organizational structures (Tierney, 1988). But ultimately, departments are responsible for hiring and socializing new faculty within the human resources framework that the wider-institution determines. The departments are responsible for interpreting the organization's policies and applying them within their own departments. Departments, therefore, create and re-create their organizational culture through communication (or a lack of communication). Language and norms, as Tierney (1988) explains, is part of the organizational culture. This means that it's up to the departments to ensure that they are communicating effectively with new faculty. Departments must have processes and procedures in place *and* communicate those processes and procedures with new faculty, tenure-track or precarious. Therefore, it is important that program chairs and deans take a real look at their departmental academic cultures and assess the ways in which they are communicating with all employees in their department. As Tierney (1988) writes, culture impacts the decisions that are made within an organization. Therefore, understanding their culture will only help senior leaders make better-informed decisions. Communication about the evaluation process, in particular, helps to relieve stress felt by new faculty, thereby encouraging faculty to focus more on teaching and their students: the reason we're all here to begin with.

6.3.3 Informal Performance Evaluations

One of the pillars in Tierney's (1988) framework for organizational culture is socialization. Tierney (1997) defines socialization as, "the successful understanding and incorporation of [symbolic and instrumental] activities by the new member of the organization" (p. 3). As

discussed in detail earlier in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.2), organizational socialization lives within the mundane day-to-day activities of working within an organization. Being socialized within an organization comes, “from the less dramatic, ordinary daily occurrences that take place as we go about the normal business of being a professor, student, administrator, or staff member” (Tierney, 1997, p. 3). And, working as a precarious faculty member was no exception to this. I came into instruction in higher education having already worked within higher education for nearly 10 years, so I was already aware that faculty are reviewed informally, as well as formally. About eight years ago, when I was a Manager of Administration, the department was hiring a new tenure-track faculty member. At the time, the faculty discussed the “fit” factor: that, in addition to hiring the new faculty member based on their credentials, publications, and teaching dossier, the hiring committee also discussed the candidate’s potential to “fit” within the existing department. And, to do this, the committee asked themselves, “would I want this person to be my colleague?” While, at the time, I was administrating and coordinating the committee (I wasn’t actually a member of the hiring committee), having an insider’s view of the conversations that went on in hiring committees was enlightening and really informed my perception of what was a “good” faculty member. This notion of whether a candidate would ‘fit’ within the department was the way that the hiring committee was assessing the candidate’s fit within the existing organizational culture of the department. It was more than just being likeable; it was a matter of being someone that people in the department would *want* to work with.

What is particularly interesting about two of my autoethnographic accounts—at the Teaching University and the Institute—is that in both cases, “evaluation” was both formal and informal. The Teaching University and the Institute both had formal procedures around new faculty evaluation (even if that process wasn’t communicated to me). However, they both had

informal ways of evaluating new faculty. The more explicit case of informal evaluation appears in my autoethnographic accounts at the Institute. In “Year Two”—section 6.2.4.4., I explain that I was leading a large undergraduate course and was working as the lead instructor with two ‘temporary’ faculty teaching alongside me. At the time, I was asked to give feedback to the Program Head and the hiring committee about the two new temporary faculty. As my autoethnographic account explains, I was uncomfortable providing an informal evaluation of my temporary peers in the department since I myself was a temporary faculty member. Effectively, the Institute was asking me to evaluate whether these other temporary faculty ‘fit’ within the culture of the department. Meanwhile, I didn’t even know if I ‘fit’ within the culture of the department. Additionally, at the Institute, I had very few interactions with the other temporary faculty members, even though they were on my team: I never saw them teach, nor did I ever see them with students. How was I supposed to evaluate these new temporary faculty members? By whether I liked them or not? What this does show is that people in the department discuss new faculty—and not just their performance—they evaluate them based on their behaviour in meetings, conversations at the photocopier, conversations at an informal lunch, or just a quick chat on the way to pick up a morning coffee. Being “someone they want to work with” is important. And, for precarious faculty, we’re being informally evaluated at every waking moment.

While not as explicit as my experience at the Institute, I suspected that these informal evaluations got the better of me at the Teaching University. In my “Getting Past Probation” autoethnographic account in 6.2.1.3., I admit that I thought Jan hated me. After some non-verbal feedback during an interview (see “My Second Interview” in 5.2.1.2) and then verified during a casual conversation that I had with another faculty member in the hallway one evening (see “The

Fallout” in 5.2.1.3.), I suspected that Jan, the department head at the Teaching University at the time, disliked me. Aside from the conversation I had with a colleague, I can’t prove that Jan disliked me and that’s the reason why they kept me on a contract-to-contract basis, I have always suspected that as the reason why I was unsuccessful in obtaining a permanent position within the department.

What’s perhaps most interesting about this is the paradox of it all. As an instructor, a large part of the job is evaluating students. Anyone who teaches students will tell you that students demand to know how they are being evaluated throughout the course. Instructors have detailed rubrics that use language very carefully and break down different categories for evaluation. Rubrics and evaluation methods must be communicated to students (usually at the start of the term). And, as instructors, we put so much thought and attention into our grading. Yet, when it comes to evaluating precarious faculty on their performance, we are not as transparent as we are with our students.

My experience at the Institute and the Teaching University exposes that new precarious faculty are evaluated informally. Additionally, the culture of the department influences the informal evaluations. Everything that the new faculty member does, from how they conduct themselves in meetings, to how they interact with colleagues, and even the chit chat at the photocopier—that’s all part of the evaluation process and, perhaps equally as important, this informal evaluation and how one “fits” within the department does determine whether or not a faculty member is hired back to teach more classes next term in the department.

6.4 Summary

The literature on performance evaluations and precarious faculty is fairly limited to the tools themselves: the student evaluations of teaching. However, the literature does argue that creating

a performance evaluation system that is based solely on student evaluations is ineffective since it impacts who faculty can be with their students and the risks that faculty take in the classroom. The literature also illuminates the ways in which new faculty (and particularly faculty of colour) are bullied for being different under the guise of “our way of doing things” and using mentoring as a disguise for “institutionally legitimized forms of coercion” (Rodriguez, 2019). In fact, my autoethnographic accounts confirmed that departments do evaluate new faculty for “departmental fit” and that one’s likeability does play a role in whether or not a new faculty member is asked to come back for another term or considered for more permanent positions within the department. My autoethnographic accounts also illuminate the critical role that communication of the evaluation process plays for a precarious faculty member. And, my autoethnographic accounts showcase the ways in which reappointment is tied up in good evaluations of teaching—either from students or colleagues.

Chapter 7: Being Precarious and Resources

What kinds of resources do you need to be an instructor? Things like white board markers, a photocopier, and an email address with the institution's name all come to mind. Also, things like a laptop, access to office space, and even parking are all resources that instructors need in order to carry out their jobs. Physical space and resources are a reflection of any institution's organizational culture: "The physical workspace that an organisation or group occupies is often reflective of its culture; that is to say its shared values, beliefs, goals and practices" (Pinder et al., 2009, p. 16). At all four institutions that I worked at as a precarious faculty member from 2016 to 2018, the resources that I was provided with were different. At one institution, I wasn't given an email address and had to use my personal email address to communicate with my students, while at another institution I was required to pay \$28/ day for parking. This chapter will review the literature that focuses on resources provided to precarious faculty in higher education. Secondly, this chapter will describe my autoethnographic account of being given resources at the four institutions at which I was precariously employed. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an analysis of the ways in which my autoethnographic account parallels and diverges from the literature.

7.1 Resources for Precarious Faculty: A Literature Review

Organizational culture theory is used extensively in the field of business studies. Taylor and Spicer (2007), influenced by Lefebvre's theoretical framework of space, in their paper in the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, note that:

Perhaps the largest body of research on organizational space, certainly the most commonly explored, focuses on the question of workspace layout. This examines the

measurable relationship between furniture, machines, architectural objects (doors and windows, for example), and those who occupy the workplace. (p. 4)

While much of the literature in business studies focuses on whether or not an ‘open plan’ work space is effective for business employees, the literature on workspace applies here because it influences the organization’s culture, and, more importantly, studying the workspace helps to uncover power relations within the organization: “Studies of space as materialization of power relations are a valuable challenge to work that focuses on distance and proximity as objective measures of organizational practice” (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 9). Taylor and Spicer (2007) argue that it’s not so much *how* the space is configured, but rather, *why* the space is configured the way that it is. Taylor and Spicer draw on the work of Foucault (1991) and control when they conclude that, “any spatial arrangement, no matter how apparently innocuous, is a materialization of deeper structures of power and domination, with a ‘hidden logic of control’ which underlies it” (p. 9). Perhaps the most significant contribution that Taylor and Spicer (2007) add to the vast body of literature on organizational space is a framework for analyzing workspace:

To study organizational spaces might involve tracing spatial practices through observation and interviews, mapping spatial planning through plans, charts, maps, and spatial features such as buildings, and understanding spatial imaginaries through textual analysis and interviews. The space thus formed can then be compared against other social spaces at different spatial scales. (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 13)

Additionally, as part of Taylor and Spicer’s framework, one could study workspace as distance, materialized power relations, and as experience. Austen (2011) provides a first-hand example to illustrate this:

Funny story: In my current appointment as a limited term faculty member, I have found myself negotiating a tricky space of liminality. From my second floor office window I look down upon the portable I used to occupy as a sessional instructor and in which my sessional colleagues still have offices. One of my friends from that portable and I have joked that my current position literally offers me a position in the ivory tower. (Austen, 2011, p. 14)

To apply Taylor and Spicer's (2007) framework to the research undertaken in this dissertation, I apply both 'space as experience' and 'space as materialized power relations' and therefore define workspace as "understanding and interpretation of space" and "relations of domination made material" (p. 14). Therefore, symbolism, aesthetics, actors, interpretation, and discourses, as well as workspace architecture and work-non work divide, are all key analytical concepts when collecting observational data.

As discussed in Chapter 3, socializing faculty into the department is critical to the faculty's success both as a colleague and as a teacher. Physical space that faculty are allocated is important for their socialization into an institution and department. Webber (2008) also discusses the physical space as impacting contingent faculty, and their engagement with the department. Here, the author notes that precarious faculty are "frequently spatially separated from the program or department in which they are hired. They are often given office space/ desk space outside of the department" (Webber, 2008, p. 44). In Webber's findings, these precarious faculty—separated spatially from their departments—claimed that they felt the disconnection in their more limited ability to engage with the rest of the faculty, and with the department as a whole. Murray (2019) confirms this, arguing that:

All the faculty I know still find ways to support the students they teach and perform high-quality work even if that means holding office hours out of the trunk of their car, writing letters of recommendation on their own time, dealing with shared office space with no way to have a private conversation, and sometimes being treated as virtually invisible by some departments that take contingent labor for granted. (p. 238)

While Webber (2008) analyzes this primarily from the perspective of the department, and the loss of connectivity that the department suffers from this kind of contingent faculty disengagement, there is a considerable impact on the individual precarious faculty here as well. Fleming, Goldman, Correll, and Taylor (2016) explain that the physical office location matters, based on the results of their study:

Faculty whose offices were in close proximity to other faculty in their department had a much easier time getting help from and interacting regularly with colleagues than those who were more physically isolated. We suggest that departments be thoughtful in assigning new faculty to workspaces that give them ready access to potential mentors, senior colleagues and other new hires. (p. 567)

This suggestion of assigning new faculty—part-time and full-time—physical work space in a strategic way is consistent with the organizational socialization theoretical literature explained earlier in Chapter 3. One's physical workspace can reinforce departmental cultures by physically putting employees in certain places. In some institutions, tenure and tenure-track faculty will sometimes occupy completely different buildings from their precarious colleagues in the same department. Webber (2008) notes that the disconnection from the larger department impacts how the precarious faculty members approach their teaching assignments—it affects their behaviour as faculty. Similar suggestions were made by Tucker (cited by MacDonald), who in 2013,

offered creating office space in an area close to regular faculty as a solution to improving morale and collegiality amongst precarious faculty (MacDonald, 2013). Finally, physical proximity to the department and all the faculty that compose that department is key to any new hire's success—especially when it comes to teaching and working with students. Kronberg (2004) confirms this:

If part-time instructors have no private meeting place, students will not drop by for mentoring, for career advice, or for sharing extracurricular interests. Likewise, the faculty member will not know the students as well and will show less interest in student activities outside of class. (p. 94)

So, not only is it in the department's best interest to keep all faculty close together and provide them with physical space to work (and meet with students) for the sake of the faculty member's success, but it's also connected to student success, as well. After all, if a student wants to meet with their instructor, but the instructor's office is untenable or non-existent, well then, that's a problem.

In addition to physical office space, precarious faculty also draw the short straw when it comes to professional development activities. Vander Kloet et al. (2017) identifies that, “institutions present contingent instructors with a mixed message: research and [scholarship of teaching and learning] are desirable and frequently encouraged, but contingent instructors are often ineligible or presented with few opportunities to pursue it” (p. 11). Xu (2019) confirms this, explaining that: “part-time adjuncts are typically not compensated for participating in professional development, and even if they are interested, campus workshops or programs are often offered during regular working hours on weekdays when many part-time adjuncts are not available” (p. 396). Dawson et al. (2019) researched the perceptions of institutional teaching

culture by tenured, tenure-track, and sessional faculty of three large research universities in Ontario, Canada, and found significant differences between the three different groups of academic faculty. Their research found that sessional faculty were paid less, had fewer employment benefits, likely didn't have their own office space, and felt like their institution rewarded them less than their tenured or tenure-track counterparts for effective teaching. It's not surprising that Dawson et al. (2019) found that sessional faculty felt as though they were less supported by their institution since it is common for sessional faculty to often be excluded from institutional teaching award competitions, and—because sessional faculty often teach at multiple institutions—they are likely to “be less aware of the ways that their institutions recognize and support good teaching” (Dawson et al., 2019, p. 123). Dawson et al. (2019) concluded that sessional faculty are likely to feel a lack of a sense of belonging in the departments that they work. Trevor Tucker, a long-time English sessional instructor at the University of Ottawa echoes this disconnect between precarious faculty and the department or university and argues that sessional faculty need to feel like valued members of the university community. Tucker went on record saying that, “the need for connection to the university [...] may be a bigger issue than the pay issue” (MacDonald, 2013). Vander Kloet et al. (2017) conclude that, even if precarious faculty are able to overcome the structural barriers of their employment contracts, their ability to be engaged in teaching and learning development activities is negatively affected. Ultimately, based on their research, Vander Kloet et al. (2017) were reluctant to encourage precarious faculty to undertake professional development teaching and learning opportunities offered through their institutions—any scholarship of teaching and learning, they argue, is “beyond the scope of paid instructional responsibilities” (p. 12). They recommended that contingent instructors should not

be expected to engage in professional development activities unless they are compensated for such activities (Vander Kloet et al., 2017).

Ultimately, the literature explored here supports the notion that all faculty within a department, regardless of the classification of their appointment, should work within close proximity to one another. Additionally, the literature argues that all faculty, regardless of the classification of their appointment, be given the resources they need to develop their teaching practice. The following section will offer my autoethnographic account, detailing the ways in which I was supported and given resources while working precariously across four higher education institutions in the Vancouver area.

7.2 Being Given Resources

None of the institutions that I worked at—the Private Online University, the Teaching University, City College, or the Institute—were consistent. At every institution, I had to learn what I was entitled to and the norms around resources for a precarious faculty member, like myself.

7.2.1 The Teaching University

As a self-proclaimed “commuter instructor” at the Teaching University, I wasn’t offered much in the way of resources. In fact, I found that driving to campus at nights or on the weekends, my car quickly became my office. I ate dinner in my car, stored my files in my car, and even had a basket of stationary in a bin in the trunk. The following sections details the resources that I was provided with at the Teaching University.

7.2.1.1 Computer and Electronic Resources

The only computer that I was given access to at the Teaching University was a desktop computer that lived in the “Resource Room” which also happened to be my office space. It was an older

computer that required me to login with my Teaching University credentials and was connected to a desktop laser printer. Since I was given the departmental resource room as my office (along with all the other sessionals in the department), this meant that I wasn't alone very often. Many times, my office hours overlapped with other sessional instructors who also accessed and used the desktop computer. As a result, I used my personal laptop almost exclusively while I worked at the Teaching University.

Not being issued a departmental laptop at the Teaching University wasn't a big deal; all but one of the classrooms that I taught in at the Teaching University had desktop computers in the classroom that was connected to the overhead projector. I quickly got into the habit of using my personal laptop exclusively at the Teaching University, mostly because it was convenient.

Electronically, I was given an email address with the Teaching University. The department published my name, a headshot of myself (that they solicited from me), and my research interests on their departmental homepage. Additionally, I was given access to the online human resources portal (where I could access my pay stubs, class lists, and other employee and faculty administrative information required for my instructional position). The online portal, as well as all the online platforms, were easy to access, and I didn't experience any issues with connectivity or access.

7.2.1.2 Physical Resources

Physical resources at the Teaching University were slim-to-none. There were faculty and staff parking lots, but when I asked about getting access to them, I was told that those parking lots were only for regular staff and permanent faculty—not sessionals. I was required to use the

student parking lots and pay the \$1 for 2 hours rate¹⁹. The cost of the parking wasn't an issue (and was, in fact, quite cheap as university parking lots go in the Vancouver area). The issue was finding a parking space. The parking lots were quite small at the Teaching University and finding a spot was sometimes impossible. This meant that I often had to arrive hours before my classes were scheduled to begin in order to find a parking space.

I was given access to the departmental resource room for my office space. The departmental resource room seemed to function as a meeting space and other flex space for faculty. Figure 5 below pictures the departmental resource room at the Teaching University:



Figure 5: Office Space at the Teaching University

¹⁹ It should be noted that the Teaching University was not accessible by public transit from my home. Even if I wanted to take transit to campus to avoid the parking situation, I didn't have the option of doing so.

As Figure 5 illustrates above, the office space that I was provided with at the Teaching University was a multi-functional, shared space. During the summer of 2018, in particular, the space functioned as a storage space for permanent faculty who were changing offices. During that summer, there were moving boxes piled and toppling over against every wall in this cramped little room. It was particularly embarrassing when students would come and visit me during office hours because it looked like I worked out of a storage unit.

Additionally, I wasn't given access to any teaching supplies. Things like white board pens, paper clips, etc. were all resources that I had to go and purchase for myself out of pocket.

I was given access to the photocopy room and the photocopiers at the Teaching University. I was required to login with my university credentials in order to photocopy any materials that I needed for my teaching. After teaching at the Teaching University for the first year, a notice was emailed to all instructors in the department letting everyone know that we were not allowed to use the university photocopiers anymore because it was too expensive for the department. Instead, we were instructed to use the printing service on campus. This required us to submit print jobs two business days in advance and then collect our print jobs from our respective mailboxes in the mailroom. This new photocopying policy was an issue for me, since I was only on campus two nights every week (the days that my two classes were scheduled.) I didn't have the capacity to submit my print jobs ahead of time, and then collect them before my class started. So, it was at this time that I reconstructed all of my teaching materials at the Teaching University so that they were electronic. The only resource that I printed for the students was the course syllabus that I distributed at the start of the semester.

7.2.1.3 Access to Professional Development

The Teaching University didn't inform me of any professional development funds that were available to me as a sessional instructor; this is not surprising since, in retrospect, they informed me of very little when I started teaching at the institution. It wasn't until after a year of working at the Teaching University that I emailed and inquired about any funds that might be available to me (after all, I was a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia paying professional tuition fees that totaled nearly \$12,000 every year). The woman in the Human Resources Department replied to my inquiry and let me know that my professional development fund allocation was calculated based on the number of classes that I taught in the last year. However, it was unfortunate that I inquired about this in mid-August since the professional development funds are only calculated and distributed in the spring. The following year, when I was aware that I was both eligible for professional development funds, and that I had to apply for my funds in the spring, it was calculated that I was eligible for \$403 to apply to my tuition that summer term (which totaled \$4,000). At least I was eligible for professional development funds, even if they only covered 10 per cent of my summer tuition fees.

Other professional development activities that I had access to as a sessional employee at the Teaching University included events and seminars that were hosted by the institutional learning and teaching centre—mostly about how to best use Blackboard, the institution's learning management system. I attended a few of these workshops and seminars hosted by the learning and teaching centre but found very little value in them. Sacrificing a day to walk step-by-step through tools that I would barely use in my courses seemed silly, especially when I had few days "off" from teaching. Since I wasn't paid to attend these seminars and workshops, and in fact, would have to drive one-hour out to the campus to attend them (and be lucky enough to find

a spot in the student parking lot, and pay for parking), I soon realized that these seminars weren't worth my time. The department head would, however, host one or two hour "orientations" as she called them, at the start of the fall semester to review all sessional faculty's course syllabi and go over (department) expectations. These orientations were mandatory.

At one point after teaching as a sessional for a year at the Teaching University, I met with the department head at a local Starbucks to review (and redevelop) a course that I was teaching over the summer. At this meeting, the department head mentioned that she was going to hold a sessional orientation day and invite all sessionals. Since there was no published information about departmental orientations on the Teaching University's Faculty Association website, I relied solely on communication from the department head. She mentioned that it wouldn't be a paid day of orientation for the sessional instructors, but, that "she'd provide breakfast and lunch." I remember being livid when she mentioned this. I wanted to say: "I don't work for breakfast and lunch." I wasn't a graduate student any more²⁰. I didn't work for meals. I was a working professional: my time was worth more than breakfast and lunch. But of course, I couldn't say this; I was still on probation. I still needed to impress the department head; I needed to seem eager and engaged, even if I was insulted by her assumption that I would attend a day-long session in exchange for free breakfast and lunch.

7.2.2 The Private Online University

Being given resources at the Private Online University was different—mostly because I was hired at the Private Online University on contract. For the first three years that I taught online courses for them, I was required to send in an invoice for payment after the courses were

²⁰ Even though I *was* a graduate student—doing a professional doctorate.

over—meaning that I wasn't paid for my teaching until the class was complete. Additionally, payment was a flat fee: no taxes or any deductions were taken off the payment. This, I think, is how the Private Online University justified not giving their instructors any resources (other than a university issued email and access to the online courses that instructors were paid to teach.)

7.2.2.1 Computer and Electronic Resources

In 2016 when I accepted the 0.2 FTE Regular Faculty position at the Private Online University, I was put on payroll, complete with regular tax deductions. I was also issued a beautiful office at the local campus in downtown Vancouver when it opened in 2017. In addition to the beautiful view from my private office's window, I was given a desktop computer, a laptop computer, and full access to the central printer and photocopier. I was provided with more electronic and computer resources at the Private Online University than any other institution at which I worked.

7.2.2.2 Physical Resources

As previously mentioned, the Private Online University gave me a private office space at their campus in downtown Vancouver. Figure 6 below pictures my office at the Private Online University.



Figure 6: Office Space at the Private Online University

As Figure 6 illustrates, I had floor-to-ceiling windows in my office, a spacious desk (with a desktop and laptop computer (provided by the Private Online University), and an incredible view of downtown Vancouver. Of all the office space that I was given (or not given) as a contract faculty member, this office at the Private Online University was the nicest. Having these resources made me feel like I was important to the institution; it made me feel like I was valued. In my mind, I was important enough to have been given a professional space in which to work.

That being said, *getting* to the downtown campus was another story. The downtown campus was accessible by transit, which is how I commuted to the campus most of the time. But, there were times where I taught until 9:30 at night. On these days, I preferred to drive because I felt safer getting home and it was also faster to drive later at night. The unfortunate part is that the cheapest parking I could find near the downtown campus (since there was no faculty, staff, or student parking) was \$25/ day. Therefore, even though I had a beautiful office at the Private Online University, getting to and from the campus was incredibly expensive.

7.2.2.3 Access to Professional Development

Being a .2 FTE regular “core” faculty member at the Private Online University, I was told that I had access to professional development funds. One of my colleagues who held the same position as me was planning on attending and presenting at a conference out of the country. I learned through him, and his experience, that as a core faculty member I had access to \$2,000 in professional development funds—a lot of money. However, because we were only hired on a part time basis—him at 0.1 FTE, and me at 0.2 FTE—the professional development funds were pro-rated based on our employment. For me, this meant that I was eligible for \$400. I inquired with the human resources department about using the funds to help me pay for my tuition for my doctoral program that I was taking, and I was told that tuition was not an eligible activity for the

institutional professional development funds. I thought it was odd that the university didn't value doctoral tuition as a professional development activity. Because I taught in a faculty where a master's degree is considered a terminal degree, perhaps the doctoral degree was not required. Apparently, though, the only eligible expenses I could apply my professional development funds towards at the Private Online University was conference travel and accommodation.

As a contract instructor at the Private Online University, I was invited to attend professional development virtual seminars that were hosted by the university's Dean of Faculty Development. There were about four sessions that ran every year. Topics included things like, "how to engage your students in an online class" as well as some faculty who volunteered to share their scholarly work with the university community. I attended a few of the sessions; however, they were difficult to attend since they were often scheduled in the middle of a weekday when I was already scheduled to teach at another institution. Additionally, I found little value in the sessions that I did attend. Often it would take 10-15 minutes at the start of every session just to make sure that everyone's technical capabilities were working (sound, video, etc.). After attending two professional development sessions at the Online Teaching University, I decided that they weren't for me and that my time would be better spent on other activities.

7.2.3 City College

As an "emergency hire" at City College, one can already guess the kinds of resources I was provided with at the institution based on my title alone.

7.2.3.1 Computer and Electronic Resources

Since I was hired a couple days before the term was scheduled to begin, I was issued a temporary login ID and password to login to the institutional employee portal as well as the learning management system to design the online course that I was hired to teach. Interestingly, I was

never issued anything other than a temporary login id and password. My ID handle for the entire duration of the term was “TempID42.” Even though I was only given temporary credentials, I was able to access my online employee and faculty portal, as well as my online class. However, having temporary credentials also meant that I did not have access to an institutional email address. Therefore, since I was teaching an online class and my students needed to be able to reach me virtually, I gave all my students my personal email address. The department also contacted me through my personal email address. I was put on their email listserv and received multiple emails every week about departmental events and meetings. Even after the term was over, I continued to receive departmental emails from them—even after City College didn’t re-hire me the next term. I continued to receive departmental emails from City College to my personal email address for months after my “emergency hire” appointment was over. I wasn’t provided with a computer at City College, nor was I given access to a printer or photocopier. This wasn’t a big deal, though, since I was only teaching an online class.

7.2.3.2 Physical Resources

When I met with the Chair of the department for my “orientation” at City College, she looked at me and asked me, “do you need an office?” Trying to be low maintenance and make a good first impression, I told her that I was OK to not have an office. As soon as I said that, the Chair breathed a sigh of relief and said, “that’s good because we’re really short on office space here.”

Based on the size of her office, and the awkward hallway that her office was in, I believed her. So, I wasn’t given any physical footprint on campus. That being said, faculty and staff parking was available, but everyone seemed to take transit to the campus, so no one I asked knew how much parking was. This didn’t matter anyways; with an online class and no office

space on campus I didn't set foot on campus after my orientation with the Chair of the department on the last day of August in 2017.

I took up hardly any space in the department at City College. Perhaps this is why I wasn't re-hired the following term. No one knew who I was. I was only a name on the email list at City College.

7.2.3.3 Access to Professional Development

At City College I wasn't informed of whether I was eligible for professional development funds or not. Additionally, I didn't inquire about funds that I might be eligible for—aside from asking the Chair of the department, I wouldn't even know who to ask.

As previously mentioned, my personal email address somehow got added to the departmental listserv. I wasn't invited to any professional development workshops or seminars that were hosted by City College (and I'm sure that their learning and teaching centre hosted them), but I was invited to many brown bag style talks that the department hosted by way of email. Admittedly, I didn't attend any of the talks since they were mostly during the weekdays when I was teaching classes at other institutions.

7.2.4 The Institute

Joining the Institute in the summer of 2017 felt the most like I was joining a *workplace*. Unlike the other institutions at which I was working, the culture at the Institute felt the most 9 to 5ish—it felt like a workplace that I recognized²¹.

²¹ In many ways, the culture at the Institute felt a lot like the culture at the large research university I had worked at for nearly a decade as a manager of administration. At the research university, I worked Monday to Friday, 9 to 5. It was very routine and predictable in many ways. Classes at the Institute only ran from 8:30-5:30pm, so I often found myself “at work” during the day.

7.2.4.1 Computer and Electronic Resources

One of the first things I was asked by the Program Assistant at the Institute was whether or not I wanted an Institute-issued laptop computer. Having worked as a precarious instructor for the past two years, and unsure of whether or not I'd be continuing past the fall 2017 term at the Institute, I politely declined the offer of a laptop and opted to use my personal laptop. At this point, I had developed a system—working across four different institutions—and my personal laptop held all the files that I needed.

I was also promptly issued an institutional email address and was given access to the institutional online portal so that I could view my pay stubs, weekly course schedule, among other faculty and employee information. I was also given access to the two photocopiers that were housed on the same floor as my shared office. There were no limits to how much I was able to print or photocopy.

7.2.4.2 Physical Resources

For the first time, I was given access to a series of office supplies: pens, white board markers, paperclips, etc. This was the first institution that gave me access to a cupboard full of all the stationary that I needed to do my job as an instructor. I even had access to coloured paper.

I was also given a desk in a shared office. Because I was hired at 0.6 FTE (not full time), I was required to share an office space with two other instructors. This was outside the norm since most full-time instructors in the department shared an office space with only one other instructor. The issue, as illustrated in Figure 7, was that my desk, in comparison to other instructor's desks, was comically small.



Figure 7: Original Office Space at the Institute

As Figure 7 illustrates above, my desk (on the left-hand side of the photo in the corner of the room), was about 1/3 the size of everyone else's desks. This made it awkward when students would come visit me during office hours. On more than one occasion a student asked me why my desk was so small. I would jokingly answer that if they gave me a bigger desk, then they would expect me to do more work.

After working at the Institute for a full year, I was hired on as a full time Instructor (1.0 FTE) the following year in 2018. At this point, I was given a new office space complete with a full-sized desk in an office with one other full-time Instructor. Figure 8 below illustrates the office I was upgraded to after working at the Institute for a year.



Figure 8: Office Space at the Institute After My First Year

As Figure 8 illustrates above, not only was I given a new office space to work out of in my second year at the Institute, but I was also given a full-sized desk right next to the window in the shared office space. Granted, the view out the window was of a rooftop and the windows on the other side of the building but at least I was taking up space in a regular way, for the first time. This office, like the office I had been given at the Online Private University, was a reflection of my space at the institution. I may not have been a full-time *regular* employee yet, but they sure were making me feel like one by giving me all the resources that “regular” employees at the Institute received.

Even though I was given an appropriate office space, one issue that came up was that everyone that came into my office made comments about how little “personal stuff” I had in my office. Everyone else’s offices were appropriately decorated—with photos of their children on

their desks, pictures of their favourite artists on the walls, accolades from awards received, etc. To me, all these things were a representation of being secure in your job. Of course you would put pieces of your favourite things in your life in your office and surround yourself with them—you know you're not going anywhere. This wasn't the case for me. Heading into my second year at the Institute, I was given a contract for nine months (September 2018 to May 2019). According to my contract/ appointment letter, the Institute only employed me until the end of the winter term. How could I bring in my favourite things? How could I litter my office with personal items when I knew that there was a chance I wouldn't be returning after the academic year? So, it was always awkward when people would look around my bare office and make comments like, "you need to get some stuff on the walls" or, "you need to get some stuff in here." Eventually, as students and colleagues would give me "thank you" cards after the term was over, I started tacking them onto the bulletin board on the wall. This seemed to keep the constant comments of filling my office up with personal stuff at bay.

Finally, one of the best physical resources I was given at the Institute was access to faculty and staff parking. I couldn't believe it when they told me that a.) I had access to the faculty and staff parking lot, even as a temporary employee, and that b.) Parking cost \$2/ month. Yes, you read that correctly. Faculty and staff only pay \$2/ month to park their cars (with no limits) in the faculty and staff parking lot. I couldn't believe this when they told me this at first. Additionally, the faculty and staff parking lot is virtually right next to the building in which my office was located. And, as if that wasn't enough, if I wanted, I could also park my car in any student parking lot for free with my faculty and staff parking pass. So, on days when I had an afternoon class and had to come into campus later when the faculty and staff parking lot was full,

I was able to park my car in any student parking lot. This was also helpful when I had classes in a building across campus; I could jump in my car and drive across campus to the building.

Later on, after I had worked as a precarious faculty member for a few more years and was presented with a few different more regular and permanent positions from multiple institutions, the faculty and staff parking perk at the Institute was one of the biggest “pros” that I had while weighing options.

7.2.4.3 Access to Professional Development

My first appointment letter at the Institute stipulated that, as a new faculty member, I was required to complete the “Instructional Skills Workshop” (ISW)²² and that I should register to take this course with the teaching and learning centre on campus immediately. However, in late August when my employment contract with the Institute began, I was told that the ISW workshop was full, and that I would have to take the course (on campus) in October over four Sundays (9:00am-4:00pm every Sunday). I was not impressed with this condition of my employment, obviously, mostly because this condition meant that I would have to volunteer my time on top of working a regular work week. And, working at four different institutions, I didn’t have time for that. I needed my Sundays to prepare for the busy weeks ahead. However, I did want to make a good impression at the Institute, so I didn’t complain. I registered for the ISW over four Sundays in October. I attended every session and managed to successfully complete the course. I worked 80+ hour weeks that October, if you count the ISW that I was enrolled in at the Institute. Upon reflection, that October (which saw me balance all four institutions as I

²² This is a standard workshop that is run by many higher education institutions in British Columbia. It’s also usually taken as a required course for the Provincial Instructor Diploma Program (PIDP). This credential is offered by Vancouver Community College. This program is usually taken when someone wants to enter into teaching and instruction but doesn’t have a teaching background.

worked the equivalent of a 2.75 FTE, across four different institutions) was the most stressful and overloaded that I have ever felt.

Towards the end of my first year at the Institute, I received this email from a representative in the human resources department:

Hi Lisa,

As a new eligible employee for PD allocation under the Article [X] in F/Y 2018 you have a choice of joining existing PD pool or to remain in an individual account (you can get more information about your choices in the 'Guidelines' document – attached).

PD pool will have to accept you as well, but at this point I need your decision (PD pool or going individually). I would suggest you to talk to your department colleagues to get more information regarding PD funds and benefits of being in the pool compared to going individually.

I need your reply ASAP in order to prepare allocation of the funds.

If you have any question please contact me.

Thank you.

P.S. Please note that final eligibility will be established based on April 1st information (additional reports will be prepared: first set on April 1st and second set on April 15th to capture late Banner entries).

I was mightily confused by this email. Luckily, since I had been coming to campus at the Institute on a regular daily basis, I had the opportunity to develop relationships with my colleagues. At the Institute, there was a real culture of *coming to campus*, working 9 to 5. Being around my colleagues on a regular basis allowed me to talk with them more and really establish a

strong sense of community and engagement. These connections helped me de-code the email that I received from human resources.

From the three different Instructors in my department that I spoke to, it seemed like the obvious choice was to join the “pooled” PD fund, in which, as they described to me, there were more available funds. Additionally, apparently joining the “pool” meant that I would be eligible for more PD funds, should I require it. This made me wonder why anyone would choose not to join the PD pool?

So, I replied back to the representative from human resources explaining that I would join the pool, and in that same email, I inquired about using the funds to purchase a new laptop computer. She forwarded my request to one of my colleagues in my department, who apparently was the professional development representative for the department.

Within hours, my colleague emailed me and explained that a laptop would be a sufficient expense for a professional development claim, and that I could go purchase a laptop for myself and get reimbursed. I wasn’t instructed to stay below a certain amount of money, nor was I given any parameters around what computer I could get. I also didn’t quite understand the role of my colleague from my department—what was his role in my professional development claim? Was he approving the expense? I was confused, but happy that they were willing to fund my new laptop.

The following year, I was standing in the photocopy room, photocopying worksheets for my class when my boss, the associate dean of the department and wider faculty that the department was a part of, came up to me and struck up a conversation. The associate dean just so happened to have completed the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Policy program at the University of British Columbia (UBC)—the very same program that I am

completing, but she completed the program a few years ago. The associate dean asked me how my Ed.D. program was going. I explained that it was going well and spoke a little about where I was at with my dissertation. She then mentioned that I could and should get my professional development funds to cover the cost of my tuition. I was stunned. She knew how much my tuition was since she, herself, was in the program. I asked her, “would the Institute pay the entire tuition fee for the term?”—to which she replied, “they should: a doctoral program is an eligible expense.” I told her that the tuition was rather expensive to claim— “\$4,200?” I asked, “would the Institute give me \$4,200 to cover the cost of the term?” She reassured me that the Institute should cover the cost of my tuition and that I should contact the PD departmental representative to start the PD claim for myself. I thanked her and went back to my office shocked at the prospect that the Institute might cover thousands of dollars in tuition for me. After all, I was still a temporary employee with the Institute; my appointment in the department was scheduled to end in just a couple months before summer. This sent a strong signal to me. The Institute wanted to keep me; they wanted me to get “regularized” and become a permanent member of their department. After all, you don’t invest thousands of dollars in something or someone that you don’t plan on keeping around. This small gesture: first, that the associate dean took the time to encourage me to claim my tuition to the pooled professional development funds in the department, and second, that I was encouraged to take \$4,200 even though my employment appointment in the department was ending in a matter of months, was perhaps the most hope that I felt in my entire career as a precarious employee that I would soon become a permanent faculty member.

When I returned to my office, I composed the following email to the PD departmental representative:

Hi [Departmental Rep],

I was talking with [The Associate Dean] yesterday and she mentioned that I should apply for PD funds for my tuition payments (I'm doing a doctorate at UBC).

I paid just over \$4,200 in September for my tuition. I've attached a screen cap of my UBC online page that shows the payment here.

What do I need to do to initiate this process?

Cheers,

Lisa

I received a reply within a couple hours from the departmental rep. I was surprised both by how quickly he replied, and that the answer was “yes”

We can cover the \$4,200 tuition this term.

I'll email again on the weekend with more details and the attached forms, but I thought you might want to know about the coverage right away.

[Departmental Rep]

Since this whole process was new to me, and to be honest, rather confusing, I was relieved by this speedy and thoughtful reply. Truthfully, I had never experienced this type of thoughtfulness in my over ten years of experience working in higher education in Canada—either as a staff or faculty member. In my previous experience, when one requests something from the institution, there’s often a long bureaucratic process involved—one that takes days, weeks, or even months to yield an answer. Additionally, people usually aren’t that forthcoming with funds that are available. As I’ve written about in my experiences with the other

three institutions that I worked at, it's rare to be told (let alone encouraged) to access professional development funds, especially when you're on contract.

7.3 Being Given Resources: Analysis and Discussion

The literature on the resources that precarious faculty need to be allocated in order to be successfully onboarded into the department when they start at a new institution is clear: give them an office space within the department, or at least close to the department. Now, having been a manager of administration, I know that space is tough these days in higher education. The problem is that departments were given floors of buildings, or even full buildings to house their faculty and staff but many departments have outgrown their original space footprint on campus. I know, first hand, that it's next to impossible to negotiate for more space for a growing department. So, it's no mystery why faculty office space is a challenge for university departments. Most of the time, administrators are working with what they have. And naturally, it makes sense that those faculty who are with the institution "for life"—with tenure, should have an office space within the department. But that's not a good enough excuse to put all your precarious faculty into portables, or across the campus, or pile them all into one old classroom or resource room. Physical office space and access to resources, as the research and my autoethnographic accounts illustrate, is one way that the institution tells its employees that they are valued members of the university community—valued members of the organization. Perhaps what's most surprising is that the research on this is clear, and my accounts verify the literature: precarious faculty need to be housed centrally within the department; they need to be part of the physical department on campus. We know this is critical to successfully onboarding and socializing new precarious faculty, yet, it's rarely done and there's little importance placed on ensuring, or fighting, to house all faculty—part-time and full-time—in the same place on

campus. The following discussion will focus on two major themes that emerged from my autoethnographic accounts: that office space is a representation of one's power within the organization, and, that professional development is a two-way street, it's a required investment from both the faculty member and the institution. In this regard, my experiences align almost perfectly with the research and literature.

7.3.1 Office Space as Power

The major theme that emerged through reviewing the literature and my autoethnographic accounts is that, whether the department intends to do it or not—giving precarious faculty office space and access to resources in the department is an expression of power. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Taylor and Spicer (2007) draw on the work of Foucault (1991) when they conclude that spatial arrangements in organizations are innocuous and “a materialization of deeper structures of power and domination, with a ‘hidden logic of control’ which underlies it” (p. 9). The autoethnographic accounts that I have presented here in this chapter all illustrate this in different ways. Additionally, “power” as I am referring to it here, is deeply connected to an employee's inclusivity and belonging.

Firstly, at the Teaching University, space as power was blatantly obvious right from my first day on campus. As a faculty “member” at the institution, I wasn't given access to the faculty and staff parking lot. As my account about physical resources at the Teaching University earlier in this chapter states: “there were faculty and staff parking lots, but when I asked about getting access to them, I was told that those parking lots were only for regular staff and permanent faculty—not sessionals.” The parking situation meant that I wasn't categorized as “faculty.” According to their categorization, a sessional does not fall within the “faculty and staff” category. So, by campus parking lot standards, I wasn't “faculty” as a sessional faculty member

of the community. As my autoethnographic account indicates, this was the first instance where, not only did I feel like an “other” at the institution, but I felt like I was “less than” faculty and staff. I couldn’t even park in the faculty and staff parking lot on campus.

Secondly, at the Teaching University, I was given the departmental “resource room” as my office in which to meet with students on campus and hold “office hours.” First of all, it should be mentioned that I didn’t even know where everyone else who worked in the department was physically located on campus. The resource room wasn’t across the hall from all the faculty and staff offices—the departmental resource room, otherwise known as my office, was located in a different building from where all of the permanent faculty and staff had offices on campus. My “office” was located off a major hallway where most of the computer labs on campus were located. There was no physical connection to any permanent members of the department. In fact, throughout my two years of working at the Teaching University, aside from working with the head of the department, I didn’t know any permanent faculty within the department that I worked. Imagine working at an organization and never meeting most of your colleagues. However, while I didn’t know any of the permanent faculty, working out of the departmental resource room with all the other sessionals, I was able to form relationships with many of my sessional faculty colleagues at the Teaching University. This was fruitful because, connecting with other sessionals in the department allowed us to compare notes and best practices particularly as it relates to being a sessional at the Teaching University. One term in particular, I showed up to my first scheduled office hours only to meet one of my sessional colleagues (for the first time). We started talking every week, since we both had scheduled office hours at the same time. I came to learn many strategic sessional practices from talking with my colleagues at the Teaching University. One such strategic sessional practice that I learned other sessional

faculty were doing was making sure that they made their students complete the “student evaluations of teaching” every term as early as possible in the term. The rationale for this practice was that, if you have your students complete their evaluations of you as a teacher before you hand back large graded assignments, students won’t complain about you being a “tough marker” on the evaluations. Essentially, having your class complete the student evaluations of teaching as soon as we are notified that we need to complete them yields a “better” result from your student evaluations. In addition to strategic sessional practices, me and the other sessionals at the Teaching University compared notes on how the Teaching University operated, where to go to find support, and how to be as efficient in preparing for courses as possible. However, this wasn’t so much of a community of practice as it was a bunch of outsiders randomly bumping into one another and helping each other out where we could.

Finally, at the Teaching University, as my autoethnographic account explains, the resource room that I was given to hold my office hours turned into a storage room one summer when I was teaching. Boxes were piled all along the sides of the room and stacked until they would tumble over if you looked at them the wrong way. It was embarrassing to work out of what was essentially a storage room on campus, a storage room for all the permanent faculty’s stuff. This provokes strong images of power at work. What do people put in storage? People put stuff in storage that they don’t want to see anymore—they put stuff in storage that doesn’t fit within their home. That’s exactly how I felt all summer working out of that storage space. I felt like the department didn’t want to see me; the department didn’t see me as fitting in with the larger department. It felt as though I was never part of the departmental culture at the Teaching University.

Whether intentional or not, the power embedded within the way that the Teaching University assigned space to their precarious faculty had a strong impact on the way that I was socialized into the department. As I mentioned, right from the beginning, I wasn't given access to the "faculty and staff" parking lot, then I was given access to the departmental resource room (which also functioned as a storage space) to do the work required as an Instructor at the Teaching University. Tierney (1997) explains that it is these ordinary occurrences at work (of being given a space to work and access to a parking lot) that help us become socialized into our new workplace. Not only did I not *feel* like a faculty member at the institution, but I was also disconnected from the larger department. I was not socialized into the department, nor was I set up to be successful in my job as an instructor.

At the Institute, I had similar challenges, at first, with office space. The comically small office desk I was given was laughable—and students who came to see me during office hours did laugh at my small desk (in comparison to the other two desks that were in that office). However, at least I was given a desk within the department! Having an office space within the larger department close to all my colleagues (both permanent and non-permanent) meant that I was able to form relationships with my colleagues. I was able to ask them about different strategies that they used in their teaching and run different teaching ideas by them. I *felt* included in the department. Being in the epicenter of the department and constantly being surrounded by colleagues meant that I was socialized fully into the department. Colleagues would swing by my office and ask me if I wanted to go for coffee, or eat lunch together. Over coffee or lunch we would talk and I would learn more about them and the department. I quickly came to have mentors in the department through simply having coffees and lunches with my colleagues. Being physically located within the larger department allowed me to organically find mentors within

the department. It is these mentors and my relationships with them that, I think, was the key to me being successful at the Institute. And, as explained earlier in Chapter 3, this is the key to socializing new faculty in any department—connect them with mentors (Filstad, 2004).

Additionally, when my contract at the Institute was renewed, I was given a new office space, still in the heart of the department, but with a regular sized desk²³. As my story explains, when I moved to this new office space, “at least I was taking up space in a regular way.” Even though I was still a “temporary” employee, I still felt like faculty (unlike how I felt at the Teaching University.) What’s more, I felt like I belonged to the department—like I was part of the community. In other words, I was a regular faculty member in all but name. I was part of the departmental culture at the Institute.

At City College, I would argue that I was never socialized into the department. Firstly, as my story explains, I was never given a proper login username. My identification handle for the entire duration of the term was “TempID42.” Therefore, according to City College, I wasn’t Lisa Allen logging into the institutional systems, I was “TempID42.” Additionally, the fact that no one in the organization thought that the username that I use to login to the system with should reflect my actual name leads me to believe that I wasn’t even important enough to be given a name in the organization. If you’re nameless, then you certainly don’t have power within an organization. Secondly, since I only taught one course online with City College, I never stepped foot on campus after the one day I went in for my “orientation” with the Department Chair. In fact, the Department Chair was the only person that I ever met at City College. Aside from reading the names on some emails that came to my personal email address, I had no idea who

²³ By “regular” here, I mean the same sized desk as everyone else in the department.

any of my colleagues in the department were. I met no one. As the literature suggests, socialization of new department faculty members depends on them being housed within the department. Information, another pillar of Tierney's (1988) framework for organizational culture, is illuminated here. Tierney describes information as written or oral and noted that both formal and informal channels have an impact on organizational culture. Not having an office space on campus or access to any resources meant that I never came to campus. This, in turn, meant that I was never socialized into the department.

Finally, at the Private Online University, I was given the most impressive office space that I've ever had (in my life). As I mention in my story, the office space I was given at the Private Online University made me feel as though I was an important employee at the institution. I *felt* valued. I literally had a view of a major downtown Vancouver street in one of the most expensive areas of Vancouver²⁴. My office space was located right next to my colleagues; I was in the center of the department. Again, this allowed for me to develop relationships with my colleagues even though they weren't on campus as much (since most of the courses offered by the Online Private University were online). I was able to develop a strong bond with the Dean (whose office was right next door to my own). The Dean was my mentor at the Private Online University. She offered me career advice and connected me with other parts of the university by recommending that I join different committees and working groups that she knew I would be passionate about and contribute to. The Dean quickly became my gateway to more opportunities at the institution. Because of her, I was able to meet more people and therefore develop a larger

²⁴ One of my colleagues at the Private Online University told me that a restaurant right next to the building we occupied paid \$1 million/ month to rent out the space!

working network of people that supported me and I them, in return. I felt connected and valued. I had access to all the resources I needed to teach (and then some). In many ways, by giving me office space and resources, the Private Online University gave me power within the organization.

As this section has explained, at all four of the post-secondary institutions that I worked at between 2016 and 2018—the Teaching University, the Institute, City College, and the Private Online University—the assignment of office space played a major role in my socialization, or lack of socialization, within the departments that I worked. It also played a major role in my ability to find mentors within the department. My office space, in this sense, controlled my socialization process at all four institutions.

7.3.2 Professional Development as a Two-Way Street

The great thing about professional development at any organization is that it's a two-way street. When the organization contributes to an employee's professional development, either by giving that person time and/or funding to engage in professional development activities, they are showing their employees that they value them enough to invest in them. Additionally, when an employee at an organization engages in professional development activities, they are showing the organization that they are committed to advancing their skills; skills that they will ultimately use while working within the organization. So, in this sense, professional development requires an investment from both the employee and the organization. Higher education institutions, by the nature of their industry (higher education institutions are literally in the business of personal and professional development), usually have robust professional development programs for their employees—for faculty and staff. However, since a significant proportion of faculty work precariously at the institution, and are often balancing work at multiple institutions, the traditional models of professional development don't accommodate all faculty. Xu (2019) said it

best: “part-time adjuncts are typically not compensated for participating in professional development, and even if they are interested, campus workshops or programs are often offered during regular working hours on weekdays when many part-time adjuncts are not available” (p. 396). Again, like the literature on office space and power, my experiences working across the four different higher education institutions confirms the issues that come with trying to access professional development activities while working on precarious employment contracts—both in terms of PD funds and PD seminars hosted by the institutions.

Firstly, as my autoethnographic accounts explain, I encountered many barriers to professional development funds and seminars offered at the Teaching University, in particular. As my accounts indicate, I was not informed of whether or not I was eligible for professional development funds at the Teaching University. It wasn’t until more than a year after I was working at the University that I found out I was eligible and that PD funds were tied to the number of courses that sessionals taught, and that there was a specific time of year that one could apply for PD funds. Additionally, as I mentioned, the Teaching University offered many PD-style seminars to all faculty and staff through the institutional teaching and learning centre. However, just like the research shows, I didn’t have the time or capacity to attend these PD seminars since I was juggling my teaching contracts at four different institutions. But, my lack of participation in the PD seminars didn’t seem to matter too much to anyone at the Teaching University. It would have been helpful to have this information available on a website that I could reference. It would have been helpful to me if the Faculty Association at the Teaching University, for example, had published on their secure website some information about what sessionals are entitled to, especially since sessionals contribute to faculty association dues on every pay cheque.

Secondly, at the Private Online University I was disappointed when I was told that tuition was not an eligible activity for the institutional professional development funds. I didn't have much time to attend conferences and events which were the types of PD activities that the Private Online University told me were the eligible expenses for the professional development fund. Also, since I was employed as a 0.2 FTE at the university, pro-rating professional development funds to fit the appointment (as what happened to my colleague who was told that he could access 10 per cent of the \$2,000/ year PD fund—or \$200 to fund his conference travel to Asia) made accessing the professional development funds more of an administrative hassle than a benefit in my opinion. Since uncovering that I couldn't use the funds for my tuition coupled with the fact that I could only use the funds to present at conferences, I never once put in an application for PD funds at the Private Online University. However, as I mentioned, all of the institutional-sponsored webinars (hosted by the Dean of Faculty Development) weren't always the most appealing topics; however, the webinars offered were accessible. All institutional PD webinars were free, online, easy to join and access²⁵, and were always offered at different times of the day. Again, there was very little pressure to attend these PD webinars and no one seemed to care too much that I wasn't attending the majority of the sessions.

Because I taught at City College for only one semester (and it happened to be my busiest semester to date), I didn't even get a chance to inquire about PD funds. While I wasn't told whether or not I had access to any funds to support me while I was finishing my doctorate degree, I didn't even have the time to inquire. Additionally, as I mentioned in my

²⁵ All PD webinars were accessed through a Zoom-style platform (before Zoom was made popular during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020).

autoethnographic accounts, I am certain that City College has a teaching and learning centre and I am certain that they offer many college-wide PD seminars for faculty and staff; I was never informed of any of them. The only PD-style events I was invited to were the ones that randomly showed up in my personal email address. These were the brown-bag style events that the department sponsored (mostly during the day). And, like my experience at both the Teaching University and the Private Online University, I simply didn't have the time to attend any department-sponsored events.

Finally, the outlier here: the Institute. The Institute was the only institution that required that I engage in a PD activity. My employment appointment stipulated that I register for the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) with the institutional teaching and learning centre. To this day, I am not clear on whether or not I was paid for the 20 hours that I spent in that course. According to my own breakdown of my working hours, the ISW was done during hours that were over and above the 35 hour work week that the faculty association at the Institute advertises as the "standard work week." Now, that being said, at least the Institute offered me, as a precarious "temporary" faculty member, a PD opportunity. This was the first institution that required me to engage in PD activities, and this was also the first institution that cared enough about my professional development to make sure I attended this workshop. It's a bit of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, fitting in the ISW workshop into an already overloaded schedule nearly killed me. But, on the other hand, making the workshop mandatory made me feel as though the Institute cared about my professional development. This was my first indication that the Institute cared about me and my position within the organization. This made me *want* to be engaged with the organization. Much later on, long after I had successfully completed the ISW, I got my second indication that the Institute cared about me and my professional development.

When I ran into my boss, the Associate Dean, at the photocopier and she encouraged me to apply for funding to cover the cost of my doctoral program, I was shocked. Obviously, the associate dean valued education and professional development (evidenced by the fact that she completed the same doctoral degree as me a few years earlier). Her act of kindness in recommending that I use PD funds from the Institute was a huge gesture to me. To me, her recommendation that I apply to use the Institute's PD funds was really her saying: we care about you and your professional development and we're ready to back that up by investing in you. As I mention in my account, you don't invest thousands of dollars in an employee if you're not planning on keeping them around. To me, this gesture meant that the Institute wanted to keep me. And, they were willing to show this financially.

In a *University Affairs* article, Trevor Tucker, a long-time English sessional instructor at the University of Ottawa stressed the disconnect between precarious faculty and the department or university and argued that sessional faculty need to feel like valued members of the university community. Tucker went on record saying, "the need for connection to the university [...] may be a bigger issue than the pay issue" (MacDonald, 2013). Based on my experiences with all four institutions, I agree with Tucker's statement here and I would even re-phrase it: the need for connection to the university *is* a bigger issue than the pay issue. As you can infer from my autoethnographic accounts, the quest for professional development funds at all four institutions was motivated both out of financial need (I was taking a very expensive doctoral program) and out of a need to feel connected to the institution. This is also represented rather explicitly in the literature, particularly from Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf's (2013) study. Yes, the PD funds were important because they helped me afford my tuition payments, but they were also important to me because if the institution was investing in me, that meant that they valued me. By putting

their ‘money where their mouths were’, they were telling me that I had value within the organization. This meant a great deal to me since I considered myself to be professionally homeless.

7.4 Summary

The literature on office space and resources for precarious faculty in higher education is clear and consistent: give all faculty (including precarious faculty) office space close to the departments in which they work. This is particularly important for early-career faculty who are eager to participate in departmental activities, foster relationships with colleagues, and want to grow with the department. The research about professional development funds and precarious faculty is also very clear: “unless and until institutions change the conditions of contingency to support the full engagement of contingent instructors in [scholarship of teaching and learning], we cannot recommend contingent instructors devote time and energy in this unpaid capacity” (Vander Kloet et al., 2017, p. 12). My autoethnographic accounts are consistent with the literature here. My accounts illuminate the ways in which power is engrained in office space and resource allocation. They also illustrate how professional development is a two-way street. It would be helpful if faculty associations posted information about contract faculty member’s rights when it comes to professional development (if this is not already built into the collective agreement) so that precarious faculty have somewhere to turn to for information on what they are entitled to. As a precarious faculty member, when an institution invests in my professional development, they are telling me that my position in the organization is not as precarious as I might think.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Rajagopal (2002) initiated the national conversation about precarious faculty in the Canadian higher education system. At the time, Rajagopal called precarious faculty “hidden academics”; I think it’s safe to say that these academic workers are no longer “hidden”. Precarious workers are in plain sight and it’s time to stop ignoring them and pretending that they are invisible. We live in a different world than the one Rajagopal lived in when they published their initiating book on Canada’s “hidden academics”. This is evidenced by the many books, documentaries, articles, the ‘fair employment week’ mandate from CAUT, and the many news and media that have illuminated the issues surrounding precarious faculty. This final chapter will start by summarizing the research presented in this dissertation. In the “Postface” section, I conclude by summarizing the ways in which this research has impacted my personal career and the ways in which my experiences and the research presented in this dissertation have transformed me into an advocate for precarious faculty at my home institution. Then, I will outline the implications that result from this study—implications for precarious faculty, students, tenure-stream faculty and staff, faculty associations, and senior leadership. Finally, I review possibilities for future research, based on the research conducted in this study.

8.1 Study Summary

The research presented in this dissertation explores the experience of precarious faculty in higher education. Using my own experiences, organizational culture theory, and autoethnographic methods, I was able to deeply explore what it’s like to be in a precarious faculty position and investigate the ways in which I was socialized (or not) into the various departments in which I worked. The scope of this dissertation falls within a two-year period while I was employed at

four different higher education institutions in British Columbia—the Teaching University, City College, the Private Online University, and the Institute.

The research in this dissertation has attempted to illuminate the experience of precarious faculty in higher education; this was my primary guiding research question for this study: *In what ways have I been socialized, as a precarious faculty member, into the organizational cultures of the four institutions—a private university, a teaching university, a college, and an institute—that I worked within between 2016 and 2018?* The autoethnographic accounts presented in Chapter 5, 6, and 7 offer the reader insights into the nuance of what it’s like to be a precarious faculty member working across multiple institutions. My detailed accounts focus on three of the major themes that emerged from a review of the literature: interviewing for positions, performance evaluations (or lack thereof), and being provided with resources (or not). In keeping with autoethnographic methods, I present the reader with full autoethnographic accounts from all four of the institutions. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that this ‘thick’, rich description is a critical part to the validity of a qualitative study.

In an attempt to situate my experiences within the broader research on precarious faculty, my second research question seeks to address the ways in which my experience as a precarious faculty member illustrates and extends the current literature about precarious faculty in Canadian higher education institutions. This second research question also asks about the ways in which my experience diverges from the current literature and offers new insights. Because I wanted to compare and contrast my experiences with the wider body of literature published on the subject, all three of my findings and discussion chapters (Chapter 5, 6, and 7) started with a review of the literature on the three major themes: being interviewed, being evaluated, and being given resources, followed by my autoethnographic account, and then finished with a discussion of the

major themes that emerged and whether or not my experiences converged or diverged from the literature.

The research conducted in this dissertation is personal—these were my professional experiences of being socialized (or not) within new higher education organizations and their respective organizational departmental cultures. When people apply for a job, in addition to their skills, they are also considered based on how well they’ll “fit” with the existing team in the organization—this is the organizational culture. The autoethnographic accounts presented on being interviewed, being evaluated, and being given resources are all true and written, of course, from my perspective. After comparing my autoethnographic accounts with the research published, my findings include the following:

1. There exists a lack of standard processes and practices when it comes to interviewing precarious faculty for faculty positions.
2. Career-stage has an impact on one’s career, and specifically the socialization of new precarious faculty within a department.
3. Reappointment to teach the next term is often heavily dependent on one’s ability to garner positive student evaluations of teaching.
4. Communication and transparency from program heads about the performance evaluation process is critical for precarious faculty in the department.
5. Precarious faculty performance is evaluated both formally and informally.
6. Office space is a representation of power.
7. Professional development with precarious faculty is a two-way street.

While these seven findings are specific to my own experience, they are all situated within a larger body of research. My experience as a precarious faculty member validates the research

and the literature reviewed. However, three of the seven points listed above offer extensions of the current research:

1. There exists a lack of standard processes and practices when it comes to interviewing precarious faculty for faculty positions.
2. Communication and transparency from program heads about the performance evaluation process is critical for precarious faculty in the department.
3. Precarious faculty performance is evaluated both formally and informally.

The three points listed above are consistent with the literature and also extend the literature. Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) explain that precarious faculty are frequently hired for short term positions when they applied for positions that were posted as permanent or semi-permanent. My experience verifies this and, after analysis, it's clear that more standardized processes and practices are needed when it comes to hiring precarious faculty.

Secondly, departments create and re-create their organizational culture through communication (Tierney, 1988). This means that it is up to the departments to ensure that they are communicating effectively with new faculty. My autoethnographic accounts illustrate the ways in which the departments in which I worked communicated. My analysis verifies the importance of communication and adds that communication and transparency is critical for the precarious faculty member to be successfully socialized into the department.

Finally, my autoethnographic accounts verified the inconsistency in the ways that precarious faculty are evaluated on their teaching performance. Despite Farr (2018) explaining that student evaluations of teaching should not be used as a tool to measure teaching effectiveness, my experience illustrates that student evaluations of teaching are used to evaluate a precarious faculty member's performance in the classroom. Additionally, my autoethnographic accounts

extend the current literature and I suggest that precarious faculty are evaluated informally in addition to whatever “formal” modes of evaluation that the institution has in place.

8.2 Postface

I’ve presented my autoethnographic accounts and reflections as a precarious faculty member at four different institutions throughout a two-year period in this dissertation. So, where did I end up post-2018? Am I still working across four different institutions in an attempt to cobble together a full-time position?

I am no longer a precarious faculty member; in the fall of 2020, I accepted a full-time permanent faculty position at the Institute. Unlike the other institutions, I hardly ever felt like an outsider at the Institute. Most of the time I truly felt like the people at the Institute cared about me—professionally and personally. They did little things, like send welcome emails to me; they cared about my office area; they cared about my professional development and encouraged me to apply for professional development funds—even though I was on a contract with an end date. Ultimately, the people at the Institute made me feel valued and respected through their actions. And, it was little things, like including me on emails—even announcing to the department when I was hired that I was joining the team—these little things are what made me feel appreciated and part of their work community. I enjoyed going to work at the Institute; it was the way that they made me feel that lead me to choosing to accept the full-time permanent position in their department. In September 2020, I became a full-time permanent faculty member at the Institute, and I haven’t for one minute regretted accepting that offer. My professional home is now with the institution that, I feel, treated me with respect and fairness when I was a precarious faculty member with the institution.

Additionally, shortly after I received my permanent position at the Institute, they granted me a fully-paid study leave to complete this very dissertation that you're reading right now. After working for five years on contract with very little job security, I suddenly find myself on the other side—academic freedom, benefits, vacation, job security—all of it.

This Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy degree has given me the credibility and confidence (having engaged with the research on precarious faculty for the past few years) to advocate for precarious faculty as a regular faculty member. I now occupy a seat at the table for a number of committees and working groups at the Institute, some of which focus exclusively on integrating precarious faculty at the Institute. Also, I am involved in the faculty and staff association at the Institute and continue to be an outspoken advocate for better practices and procedures around precarious faculty and staff. My personal agenda, as I move forward in my career as a faculty member, is to advocate for better practices around precarious faculty, provide more spaces for precarious faculty to tell their own stories, and to amplify precarious voices within the Institute.

8.3 Study Implications

Because higher education institutions in British Columbia are dependent on precarious faculty to operate, Macdonald (2013) asks if we can afford to have precarious instructors leaving the profession because they find their work situation untenable and are unable to manage their working conditions. In our current higher education system, the processes and procedures that we have in place to hire and socialize precarious faculty into our departments needs *major* improvement. The seven points identified in the previous section of this chapter are situated within a larger body of research; these points are written about (extensively, in some cases) in the literature. For example, Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) offer some suggestions for

“reducing harm” for precarious faculty until we can come up with a better set of policies and practices that treat precarious faculty with the respect and consideration that any professional deserves, such as increasing salaries, better hiring practices, and portable benefit systems. As these suggestions from Kezar, DePaola, and Scott (2019) illustrate, much of my findings are consistent with current recommendations that are being suggested by other academics and researchers. This section of this chapter will now explore the implications from the research presented in this dissertation for precarious faculty, students, tenure and tenure-stream faculty and staff, faculty associations, and senior leadership.

8.3.1 Implications for Precarious Faculty

For other precarious faculty, the key takeaway from my autoethnographic study is that the higher education system doesn’t integrate precarious faculty very well into it. When I refer to precarious faculty here, I am including all forms of precarious faculty: Teaching Assistants, Contract or Contingent Faculty, Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Temporary Lecturers, and then some. This means that all the anguish and the emotional labour that comes with the territory of being a precarious faculty member is a result of a system that, currently, doesn’t properly value precarious faculty.

My experience reinforces the notion that precarious faculty cannot rely on consistent hiring and interview practices, they cannot rely on a fair performance review process once they are employed by an institution, nor can they even rely on having the resources they need to properly do their job. I do hope that any precarious faculty readers of this dissertation will find solace in my autoethnographic accounts and, maybe, find the courage to share their own experiences. More detailed experiences like the ones presented in this dissertation need to be told

and heard. Without these detailed accounts, how will we know what it's like for more than half of the faculty working in our higher education institutions in British Columbia?

8.3.2 Implications for Students

Perhaps the largest group affected by the dominance of precarious faculty are the students that they teach. As Pasma and Shaker (2018) state, more than half of faculty teaching in the Vancouver mainland area are working in precarious roles. Therefore, conservatively, we can assume that almost half of all courses being offered by post-secondary institutions are being taught by faculty in precarious roles.

Webber (2008) explains, that “in the case of contingent academics, there is heightened nervousness around ‘rocking the boat,’ not just around student interests but also around what are perceived as the conservative interests of the department” (p. 41). Contingent faculty don't enjoy the same academic freedoms as their tenure-stream colleagues. In my case, in particular, at some of the institutions in which I worked, my performance was tied exclusively to student evaluations of teaching. Are students aware that, at some institutions, the comments they anonymously leave on the evaluation of their instructor could have life-changing consequences for that faculty member? Are students aware of the working conditions that many of their instructors are living with? Since the working conditions of precarious faculty are the same learning conditions for students, the growth and dominance of precarious faculty in the higher education system directly impacts students.

Therefore, the overreliance of precarious faculty in departments has a direct impact, not only on the department and the people that work in that department, but the overreliance also has a serious impact on the students who take courses within that department.

8.3.3 Implications for Tenure and Tenure-Stream Faculty and Staff

For “regular” faculty, or faculty that hold tenure and tenure-track style positions at institutions, the key takeaway from my autoethnographic study is that it is in the best interest of both permanent and temporary faculty to both advocate for better practices around precarious faculty on campus. Permanent faculty are often dealing with their own set of challenges in a higher education system that continues to challenge them with higher instruction loads, demands for publication, and departmental administrative tasks. Working to include precarious faculty more into the department would help to spread out the administrative workload as well as other tasks.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, tenure-stream faculty are responsible for much of the hiring and review processes for precarious faculty in their respective departments. Permanent faculty are the ones that compose the hiring committees. They’re also the ones who conduct peer evaluations of teaching. In a formal way, tenure-stream faculty are upholding the current systems in place that hinder the socialization of their precarious colleagues by simply participating in the governance of their departments. Additionally, tenure-stream faculty uphold the departmental organizational culture through mentorship. Tenure-stream faculty should be aware that their precarious colleagues rely on permanent and long-standing colleagues in the department for their socialization into the department. Therefore, this places additional responsibility on tenure-stream faculty; their mentorship is essential to successful socialization in a department.

For management and professional staff on campus, having more best practices and processes in place for precarious faculty (e.g. a documented process for precarious faculty performance reviews) would give staff greater clarity in the roles and responsibilities in their own positions.

8.3.4 Implications for Faculty Associations

Institutional faculty associations are doing the work required to include more provisions specifically pertaining to precarious faculty in their mandates and collective agreements.

However, these faculty associations still have a long way to go when it comes to advocating for the institutional rights of precarious faculty members²⁶. Institutional faculty associations should follow the leadership and direction of CAUT, especially during ‘fair employment week’ every October where CAUT aims to illuminate the stories of precarious faculty and raise awareness about the issues that precarious faculty face in Canadian higher education institutions. CAUT’s tagline during the “fair employment week” annual campaign, is: “make it fair.”

For faculty associations, the key takeaway from my autoethnographic study is that the work that many faculty associations are doing right now to include precarious faculty in their advocacy and include rights specific to precarious faculty into collective agreements has never been more important. Rhoades (2020) suggests, “that we need to adopt a labour-based framing of quality when it comes to student engagement and experience in higher education” (p. 345). Faculty associations, representing their members, are perfectly positioned to take a labour-based stance around the precarious faculty at their respective institutions.

More specifically, recognizing that many higher education institutions have large populations of precarious faculty on campus, faculty associations could provide tailored information directly to precarious faculty at their respective institutions. While working as a precarious faculty member, as my autoethnographic accounts attest to, I would have benefitted

²⁶ An interesting future study might review institutional faculty association collective agreements to compare and analyze the ways in which precarious faculty are included or excluded from the institution.

from a localized website with information that clarified what was available (and not) for me as a precarious instructor. Additionally, navigating processes, like the performance evaluation process, the hiring process, probationary reviews, what kinds of resources were available to me and where I could find them... All of this information in a central location (like a secure website) would have saved me a great deal of anguish and stress.

Therefore, faculty associations could provide more information to precarious faculty, in particular, to help the precarious faculty members navigate the confusing and bureaucratic institutional environment.

8.3.5 Implications for Senior Leadership

Up until this point, and as precarious faculty have been continually used as a band-aid for a system that is not functioning properly, it's time for senior leaders—specifically those who have the power in their institutions to initiate change—to step up to the plate and start responding to the grassroots efforts of the many who have been shining a light on this growing issue. It's time to start amending the system to reflect much of the research that's been conducted around precarious faculty in higher education.

Bauer (2011) suggests that it is the job of university administration to acknowledge the scale of what the university does on a day-to-day basis and the implications of these day-to-day activities. Because many of the issues that surround precarious faculty are structural, much of what needs to change in these systems has implications for those who are in control of departmental budgets and policy shaping within the institution. In higher education, that falls to those in senior leadership positions (Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019).

Webber (2008) argues that strong university units and departments require continuity and stability in faculty. Findings of her interviews with academics suggest that often, in smaller

departments, like Women's Studies Departments, precarious faculty are hired last-minute, and this has a major impact on both the faculty member and the curriculum and organization of the course that the faculty member is hired to teach. My autoethnographic accounts confirm this, having been hired as an 'emergency instructor' at City College days before the course was scheduled to begin. Precarious faculty are often thrown into a course with little time to prepare. Without a doubt, this has a significant impact on the instructional aspect of the precarious faculty's role in the university and therefore has a significant impact on their experiences as a faculty member.

Fleming et al. (2016) claims that those in leadership positions: VPs, Deans, and Department Heads should focus on facilitating newcomer networking when designing policy and implementing practices and procedures in their departments on campus. This means looking at the office space that's allocated to precarious faculty, the resources that precarious faculty are provided, the hiring process, and the performance evaluation process. New faculty benefit when they are able to be socialized into the departments that they are hired into and can work with mentors within the department. According to Fleming et al. (2016), job dissatisfaction and the greatest potential for turnover comes from the lack of formal and informal mechanisms for supporting new faculty and their socialization into the departments in which they are hired.

Senior leaders in higher education need to take a close look at the organizational cultures of their institutions (Tierney, 1997), and specifically the policies and procedures that relate to the hiring and socializing of precarious faculty in their organizations: "A cultural analysis empowers managers with information previously unavailable or implicit about their organization which in turn can help solve critical organizational dilemmas" (Tierney, 1988, p. 17-18).

8.4 Future Research

The design of this study was, in large part, influenced by Field and Jones (2016) large-scale study of contingent faculty across many higher education institutions in Ontario. At the end of their study, they called for more in-depth research around the contingent faculty experience. My study was designed as an intimate research project that delved deep into the experience of one contingent faculty member. Future research from individuals—the need for more detailed experiences that describe what it’s like to be a precarious faculty member—is apparent. We need more accounts from precarious faculty; these accounts are important because they provide insight into the working conditions of the largest population of faculty on many campuses.

In addition to a need for more accounts and studies from precarious faculty members themselves, future research should take the organization’s culture into account. Tierney (1988) argues that a cultural analysis provides insights that can help managers solve critical organizational dilemmas. A possible avenue for future research might be to investigate departmental cultures across a specific institution. In doing so, a researcher could take an appreciate inquiry into an organization to identify best practices across departments. Additionally, another avenue for future research might be to investigate sub-cultures that exist within the same department. In any case, future research from precarious faculty about their specific experiences is rich data that individual institutions can use to evaluate gaps in their systems and implement policies that are respectful and transparent for all.

8.5 Concluding Comments

These personal experiences outlined throughout this dissertation represent two years of my life. These two years were a transitional time for me as I moved from my career as a staff member in a university to a faculty member. It’s not often that one gets the opportunity to analyze their

professional transitions in such a formal way as I have had the opportunity to do here in this dissertation. In fact, I am privileged to have the opportunity to conduct a study like the one that you've read here in this dissertation. Reflecting on my tumultuous experiences over the past few years has allowed me—almost phenomenologically—to deeply inquire and reflect on my career transition.

Now, as a regularized, full-time, permanent faculty member at the Institute, it's important for me to continue this important work of “making it fair” for all faculty on campus. To me, this means that it's my duty, as a faculty member with a secure job, to advocate for policies and procedures for precarious faculty and to create spaces and encourage participation from precarious faculty.

My work, advocating for better policies and practices around precarious faculty, is only just beginning. As a newly minted permanent faculty member at the Institute, I will be advocating for better and more transparent practices that concern precarious faculty.

Additionally, as a soon-to-be-Doctor of Education, my objective is to continue my precarious faculty advocacy efforts beyond the Institute, on both the provincial and national levels. This terminal Ed.D. degree provides me with the credibility and experience to spread awareness and demand better policies around precarious faculty.

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