

# FROM THE VOICES OF CONTRACT FACULTY

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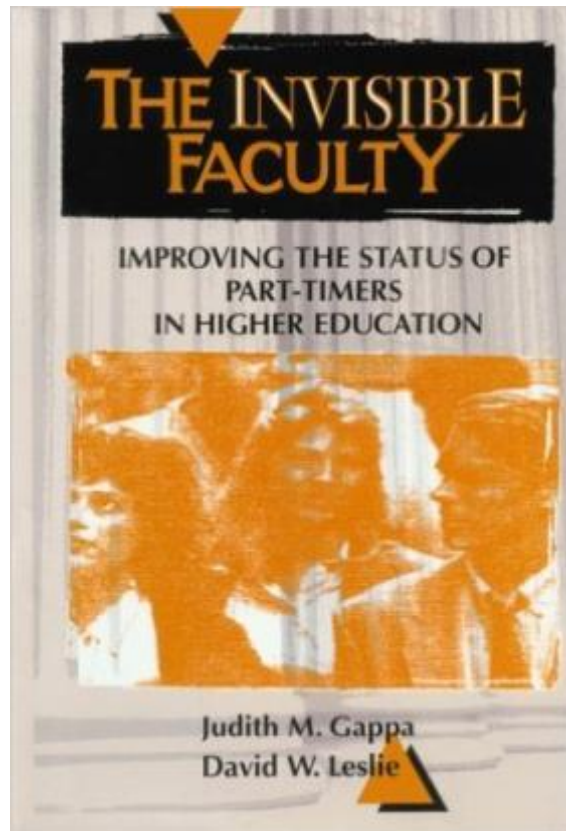
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Confronting Precarious Academic Work Conference  
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# From



From

  
**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STAY  
QUIET**



# My research

- 60 interviews with tenure-track faculty (TTF) and non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF) at UofT, academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.
- Humanities; Engineering and Science Disciplines
  - Testing for differences in impact on contract faculty; attitudes
  - Based on literature (Donoghue 2008; Rampure 2005; Baldwin & Chronister 2005)
  - About 40 interviews with NTTF who work across Ontario
- Semi-structured interviews including themes
  - Work history; professional identity, views on teaching and research; faculty unionization

# Impact on Contract Faculty

- Financial and economic security
- Impact on career
  - Trapped in precarious employment (Fuller 2011)
- Professional identity (Levin & Shaker; Levin & Hernandez)
  - A dual or hybrid professional identity
  - ‘Figured worlds’ of the classroom and department
- Emotional, mental and physical health
  - Ability and skills constantly under evaluation and question
  - Lack of financial security an emotional and mental stressor
  - Additional physical stressors (E.g. commuting)

# Financial and Economic Security

“...the worst part was when I had no work at all and I had a better stronger research profile than most of the people who were interviewing me. and I couldn't get a job... I do have a very strong profile and my work's internationally known and I get invited to speak at all sorts of places and I have this amazing career but I couldn't get a job, like just couldn't get a job to pay the bills and it was a real disconnect and a real rude awakening.”

Valerie

# Impact on Career

“I know it's not seen very favorably on applications when you've been out of a PhD for more than three or four years and all you have in terms of work experience is sessional positions, because people start to wonder how you've been maintaining an active research portfolio during that time, has your PhD research become stale after three or four years you know a lot of hiring committees now like to pick up people who've just finished PhDs because their research is still very current. so I have that sense that if I were to try and apply for a tenure-track positions in the next year or two, I'm starting to become borderline 'stale' in that sense.”

Brenda

# Impact on Emotional and Mental Health

“The money you earn teaching is enough to stay afloat, but barely. and so you just get the sensation that you're treading water. cause you are. so the hardest part for me is like, how can I do this and keep up with the relentless weekly grind of it, cause it is constant, and still kind of separate a part of my mental space and emotional space to think about my own future.”

Elizabeth



# Impact on University Community

- Two-tiered education system
  - Impact on quality of education through cuts
  - What kind of message are universities sending about employment and society by maintaining precarious work arrangements?
- Disjointed relationships
  - Undergraduate seminar: *all* students identified impacts to their education
- A sense of disconnection; quiet campuses
  - Not good for education, community building or solidarity building

# Quality of Education

“another challenge is the fact that because I'm only there every other semester, I don't have - and I don't teach a lot of courses, I don't have a sense of knowing the students and if you're coming into this and teaching a new class, it's really difficult to have a sense of where the students are in their own development; what they may have read or studied beforehand; how heterogeneous the class might be, given the different programs students are involved in; that's the kind of basic information that nobody gives you directly but you kind of have to figure out yourself and that takes a while and it takes away from - I guess the ability to start the course right away where ideally I would like to start it, simply because it takes me a while to just figure out who these people are and where they're at.”

Samantha

# Disjointed relationships

“the one place where the evaluations were kind of lower - they were on the low end of the department was in my - the question was 'how available and accessible is the professor outside of class hours?' and I had to take the train in and out and students were honest 'he's not available. he doesn't have an office and we doesn't show up at barbecues' and you know he's not around, he's not part of the social scene... and so when I was discussing the evaluations with the head of the department and I said 'they're saying something here - they're saying they'd like to have

a professor who they have access to.' and I talked about my experience sort of as an undergraduate university - where the profs were around and sometimes you would just see them in the hallways or the student union building and you'd have a chat with them and there was a sense that they were part of a bigger community.”

Nelson



# A Common Belief

- Most participants believed there were insufficient resources dedicated to teaching and expressed this belief without being prompted
- This includes faculty who were research-heavy and said they strongly valued research and said it should be #1 priority
- Common ground across department, age, gender, discipline, and position

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