March 2017

Conditions for Contingent Instructors Engaged in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

An increasingly large number of courses in Canadian postsecondary institutions are taught by contingent instructors who hold full- or part-time positions for contractually limited time periods. Despite strong commitments to advancing teaching and learning, the labour and employment conditions for contingent instructors affect the incentives and possibilities for them to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Through a collaborative writing inquiry, the 9 authors examine the influences of three key conditions of contingency: institutional knowledge, status, and role; invisibility and isolation; and precarity. Four composite stories demonstrate the ways varied conditions of contingency may play out in contingent instructors' lives and typically undermine the possibilities for them to pursue SoTL. Institutions present contingent instructors with a mixed message: research and SoTL are desirable and frequently encouraged, yet contingent instructors are often ineligible or hindered from engagement.

Dans les établissements d'enseignement post-secondaires canadiens, un nombre de plus en plus élevé de cours sont enseignés par des instructeurs occasionnels ayant des contrats à temps plein ou à temps partiel pour des périodes contractuelles limitées. Malgré les solides engagements pour l'avancement de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage, les conditions de travail et d'emploi des instructeurs occasionnels affectent les motivations et les possibilités qui pourraient leur permettre de s'engager dans l'avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage (ACEA). Grâce à une enquête menée en collaboration, les 9 auteurs examinent les influences de trois conditions clés de ces emplois occasionnels : connaissance institutionnelle, statut et rôle; invisibilité et isolement; et précarité. Quatre témoignages composés montrent les manières dont les conditions variées de ces emplois occasionnels peuvent jouer un rôle dans la vie des instructeurs occasionnels et comment cela affaiblit les possibilités auxquelles ils ont accès afin de poursuivre des activités en ACEA. Les établissements présentent la situation des instructeurs occasionnels avec un message mixte : la recherche et l'ACEA sont des activités désirables et fréquemment encouragées, toutefois les instructeurs occasionnels sont souvent empêchés de s'y engager ou inéligibles.

Cover Page Footnote
All authors contributed equally to this work; author order was selected randomly.

Contingent instructors in Canada constitute a diverse, growing sector of postsecondary educators (Brownlee, 2015; Dobbie & Robinson, 2008). As the number of courses taught by contingent instructors has expanded, questions have been raised about the teaching experience for these instructors (May, Peetz, & Strachan, 2013) and the learning experience for their students (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Mueller, Mandernach, & Sanderson, 2013). These queries have prompted attention to academic development for contingent instructors (Anderson, 2007; Dailey-Hebert, Mandernach, Donnelli-Sailee, & Norris, 2014). We use the term *academic development* in its broadest sense to include personal, professional, and identity development for all aspects of an academic career (Leibowitz, 2014). One facet of academic development is the potential to improve teaching, classroom skills, and student learning through the scholarship of teaching and learning or SoTL (Elton, 2009; Fanghanel, 2013). With SoTL as an increasingly important part of academic development (Schram & Allendoerfer, 2012; Smith & Schwartz, 2015) and contingent instructors teaching increasingly higher proportions of Canadian postsecondary courses (Brownlee, 2015; Field, Jones, Stephenson, & Khoyetsyan, 2014), we consider possibilities for contingent instructors to engage in SoTL.

We use the broad label *contingent instructors* to address instructors in Canadian postsecondary institutions who hold full- or part-time teaching positions for contractually limited time periods. In Canadian postsecondary institutions, job titles and responsibilities of contingent instructors are institutionally dependent and largely determined by collective agreements (Field et al., 2014). Beaton and Sims (2016) identify the following common job titles across Canada and the United Kingdom: sessional, casual, non-career teacher, graduate assistant, graduate teaching assistant, contract or contract-limited faculty, tutor, visiting or associate lecturer, adjunct or contingent faculty, and non-standard academic. Typologies within this sector have been defined in various ways, including percentage of workload (Dobbie & Robinson, 2008; Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2013), career stage or type (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Rajagopal, 2002), other positions within the postsecondary institution in which the individual is employed as a contingent instructor (e.g., graduate students, semi-retired academics, current employees in other institutional roles; Bryson, 2006), and employment outside the postsecondary sector (e.g., practitioners in relevant professional fields; Rajagopal, 2002). A clear division is found between *classic* contingent instructors and *precarious* or *contemporary* contingent instructors (Field & Jones, 2016; Rajagopal, 2002). Classic contingent instructors come from professional classes (e.g., lawyer, accountant), teach for enjoyment or to contribute to the community, and do not rely on the income (Field & Jones, 2016; Rajagopal, 2002). In contrast, recent findings from Ontario universities show that precarious or contemporary contingent instructors rely on contracts for income, are predominantly women, have been teaching contingently an average of four to five years, and are probably seeking full-time employment (Field & Jones, 2016).

In this paper, we examine the complex relationships between contingent instructors' labour and employment conditions and their potential to enact Felten's (2013) five principles of good practice in SoTL. We address the following research question: How do the conditions of contingency affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL? Drawing on relevant literature, we theorize the characteristics and qualities, or "conditions of contingency," that shape the working lives and personal experiences of contingent instructors and affect their engagement in SoTL. We offer a critical reading and analysis of the literature (both scholarly and popular) about contingent instructors as potential SoTL contributors. Additionally, we present four composite stories of contingent instructors at colleges and universities in Canada. These composites are

grounded in scholarship, as well as in reference sources such as collective agreements and institutional policies to provide an illustrative set of examples of the ways conditions of contingency may play out in the working lives of contingent instructors. Finally, we draw together the conditions and the composites to respond to our central research question. To set the framework, we first discuss the influence of our methodological approach in shaping this work.

Methodology and Writing Collaboration

We adopted writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) to answer our research question: How do the conditions of contingency affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL?

The Collaborators

Our group included nine women employed at Canadian postsecondary institutions participating in a collaborative writing group as outlined in the introduction to this special issue (Simmons & Marquis, 2017). We have been or currently are graduate students, teaching and learning staff members, consultants, educational developers, full- or part-time contingent instructors, faculty members, or associate deans. We have diverse disciplinary backgrounds and areas of research. Importantly, all collaborators have worked or currently work as contingent instructors and all have been engaged in SoTL (although not necessarily as contingent instructors).

Conditions of Contingency

Our analysis of the literature prompted us to theorize the conditions of contingency that affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL, focusing in particular upon institutional knowledge, status, and role; invisibility and isolation; and precarity. We overlay research on contingent instructors with the demands and imperatives of good SoTL practice (Felten, 2013).

Composite Stories

Informed by multiple bodies of literature and our knowledge of contingent instructors' experiences, we wrote four composite stories anchored within specific institutional documents to demonstrate relationships between labour and employment conditions for contingent instructors and the necessary demands that quality work in SoTL poses. These stories are not derived from the authors' experience, or any one individual or institutional context. Our focus on stories is a crucial link to scholarly and popular literature about contingent instructors, which routinely includes personal narratives (e.g., Cubberley, 2007; Dobbins, 2011; Fulwiler & Marlow, 2014; Mullens, 2001) and attracts comments from contingent instructors who have found themselves (or not) in various texts.

At first glance, our methodological approach resembles collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) or collective biography (Davies & Gannon, 2006). Consistent with these approaches, our work includes a rich commitment to writing and rewriting, critical reading and discussion, critical questioning, and perhaps most importantly, using regular iterative writing processes to allow analyses to emerge. Our work is distinct from these

approaches due to the distance we have intentionally created between personal experiences (our own and those in our communities) and the composite stories we present in this paper. The risks of exposure from revealing personal stories through collaborative autoethnographic writing (Humphreys, 2005) influenced our decisions about how to author this paper using composite stories rather than personal narratives.

Analysis Embedded in Collaborative Writing

We co-wrote five draft texts (the conditions of contingency section and the four composite stories), which we subsequently refined through team-based qualitative analysis (MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Bartholow, & Milstein, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). We started with a set of 15 a priori codes based upon our initial theorizations about conditions of contingency (institutional knowledge, departmental knowledge, institutional status and role, teaching contracts, stability and time, research skills, access to resources related to teaching and SoTL, rewards and recognition, invisibility and isolation, precarity) and Felten's (2013) principles of good SoTL practice (partnering with students, grounding in scholarly and local contexts, inquiring into student learning, ensuring methodological soundness, and disseminating publicly). We expanded this initial code list with emergent codes as we reviewed the five texts. At that point, our approach shifted from qualitative coding to return to our overall focus on writing as a method of inquiry.

We used our understandings from the team-based coding to refine the five texts to enhance analytic strength, demonstrate clear continua for the various conditions, and cue possibilities and limitations for contingent instructors to engage in SoTL. For example, we realized we could set up a clearer continuum of institutional familiarity by explicitly placing one contingent instructor as a recent doctoral graduate from the institution where she is employed, which would give her a moderate level of institutional familiarity, but from the vantage point of a former graduate student, a consideration we had mentioned in the conditions of contingency text. As well, emergent coding prompted us to consider the value of supporters as a potential means to facilitate contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL and to circumvent the sense of isolation and invisibility that many contingent instructors face. With the revised conditions of contingency and composite stories completed, we clustered codes and identified themes as an interim step before writing the Contingency and the Potential for SoTL section.

Considering Consequences to our Research Question

We are cognizant of, and have struggled with, the possible outcomes of this work and the different possible ways our paper might be read. We recognize that published work has weight and influence that can be unpredictable and unintended. We struggled with questions about methods *and* ethics and accountability. We repeatedly engaged in ethical examinations of potential risks of our work and subsequent discussions of what, if any, accountability we have to contingent instructors. Therefore, our methodological decisions have been simultaneously about writing a paper, undertaking duly attentive and rich analyses, and considering carefully how scholarly work can shape probable futures for contingent instructors. It is not our intention to add SoTL to the list of job expectations for contingent instructors without adequate support and compensation.

Conditions of Contingency

Contingent work is precarious, uncertain, conditional, and typically beyond the control of individual instructors. From our literature review, we identified three key conditions of contingency that likely affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL: (a) institutional knowledge, status, and role; (b) invisibility and isolation; and (c) precarity. Although we note a few exceptions where the conditions enable SoTL engagement, we find the conditions of contingency often discourage and limit contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL.

Institutional Knowledge, Status, and Role

Institutional knowledge, status, and role refer to contingent instructors' relationships to their institutions and their relative familiarity with institutional policies related to course instruction (e.g., academic integrity, late policies), the environment of the institution (e.g., physical location, institutional positioning within provincial and national contexts), and the culture around teaching and learning (e.g., supports and rewards for SoTL). Contingent instructors' precise roles within their institutions influence their familiarity, such that instructors who hold ongoing positions (e.g., staff members, graduate students) may be more familiar with the institutional culture and practices than contingent instructors who hold precarious and temporary positions.

There are several consequences of a lack of institutional knowledge with respect to contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL, including a lack of awareness about campus support services related to teaching and learning even when these services are open to contingent instructor participation (Anderson, 2007; Beaton & Sims, 2016; Brown, Kelder, Freeman, & Carr, 2013), and inadequate time to gain confidence with institutional policies and practices that may affect the potential to enact best practices in SoTL (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2013). The corollary idea that institutional experience lends itself to engagement in SoTL for contingent instructors with ongoing relationships with their institutions may be true, but only if the other conditions of contingency (isolation and invisibility, precarity) are similarly absent or mitigated.

A further dimension of institutional knowledge, status, and role relates to awareness of departmental culture and priorities related to teaching and learning. Contingent instructors are frequently excluded from departmental meetings and curriculum discussions (Kezar, Maxey, & Eaton, 2014) and hence are unfamiliar with program learning outcomes and, in many instances, the role of their courses in supporting programmatic goals (Anderson, 2007; Bradley, 2008; Brown et al., 2013). One purported advantage of contingent instructors' involvement in curriculum design—the "real-world" expertise classic contingent instructors bring—is routinely overlooked because these instructors are excluded from curriculum discussions and decisions (Anderson, 2007). One possibility for encouraging contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL is by framing SoTL as an institutional, rather than an individual, activity (Williams et al., 2013). Curricular or programmatic forms of SoTL require institutions to plan consciously and explicitly for the meaningful integration of contingent instructors.

Invisibility and Isolation

Institutions have purposefully made it difficult to obtain or report reliable quantitative data on the prevalence, proportion, and activities of contingent instructors (Brownlee, 2015; Dobbie & Robinson, 2008). Hence, policymakers, institutional and departmental administrators, and teaching support professionals make support decisions without adequate evidence. Even with critical consensus on the radical increase in the number of courses taught by contingent instructors (Field et al., 2014; Rajagopal, 2002), some institutions do not provide differentiated support due to budget constraints or a perception that these instructors are transient and therefore not a priority for investment in professional development (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). Contingent instructors are thus often rendered invisible in institutional data and in professional development for teaching and learning.

Some exceptions are worth noting. Some institutions have developed and offer customized support for contingent instructors in the form of guidebooks, teaching awards, orientation sessions, grant funding and workshops, including those related to SoTL participation. However, the majority of contingent instructors surveyed in Ontario indicate a need for greater support from teaching and learning centres (Field & Jones, 2016). Teaching and learning centres include programming described as open to all instructors; however, poor communication of these supports, lack of remuneration for participation, conflict with other priorities, and scheduling challenges limit contingent instructors' access (Anderson, 2007; Bryson, 2013; Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010).

More significantly for SoTL engagement, contingent instructors are invisible within their own departments. The utility of networks and collaborations in SoTL is well documented (Boyer, 1990; Cassidy & Poole, 2008; Chick & Poole, 2013; Elton, 2009; Kreber, 2007); contingent instructors are "left out of the tacit 'web of relationships'" (Anderson, 2007, p. 117) that form departmental life. Just as contingent instructors may lack confidence about whom to approach for teaching support, they are often isolated from SoTL engagement networks. Contingent instructors may, however, receive research, teaching, or personal support from colleagues. There is variability within institutions and across individuals in access, familiarity, and involvement with such networks.

The lack of a network or community is related to the isolation and devaluing experienced by contingent instructors within their departments and institutions (Austen, 2011; Green, 2007). Contingent instructors may not receive institutional communications, including those specific to teaching professional development (Beaton & Sims, 2016), may have limited access to office space within their departments (Cubberley, 2007), may not receive orientation or mentoring (Kezar et al., 2014), may complete service work without recognition (Doe et al., 2011), or may be unable to access sufficient resources to attend conferences or other professional development activities (Brown et al., 2013). Despite consistent reports of high enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to teaching (Brown et al., 2013), the isolation and devaluing of contingent instructors within their departments and institutions have negative effects on morale (Jensen & Morgan, 2009), teaching performance (Umbach, 2007), and engagement in professional development (Coughlan, 2015). All of these considerations affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL.

Precarity

As described, contingent instructors represent a wide range of experiences and labour relationships with institutions. All contingent instructors experience the tentative quality of contingent work; however, the precariousness of contingency does not carry the same connotations or consequences for classic contingent instructors employed in professional fields (Field & Jones, 2016; Rajagopal, 2002). For contemporary contingent instructors, precarity has social, economic, and personal consequences because the lack of stable employment affects their financial resources and self-esteem (Birdsell Bauer, 2011; Field & Jones, 2016). Moreover, labour precarity cannot be isolated from the intersectional identities of contingent instructors: a disproportionate number of contemporary contingent instructors are women, which compounds and complicates their experiences of labour precarity (Bauder, 2006; Field & Jones, 2016; Muzzin & Limoges, 2008; Rajagopal, 2002).

Precarity also begets consequences for the engagement of contingent instructors in SoTL. With unpredictable hiring timelines (Kezar et al., 2014) and limited paid time for course preparation (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2013), the ability to craft a SoTL research design and secure research ethics clearance (where needed) is hampered. Many institutions restrict the role of principal investigator to faculty or permanent staff, meaning contingent instructors must find willing collaborators, argue for their status with a research ethics board, or rework the focus of their projects to exclude human participants. Similar restrictions may apply in terms of eligibility to hold research funds.

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Composite Stories of Contingent Instructors

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The following four composite stories are designed to show how the varied conditions for contingent instructors in Canadian postsecondary institutions could affect their ability to engage meaningfully in SoTL. One story (Colin) is set in a college; three stories (Su, Dhara, and Anne) occur in diverse universities. We focus largely on the experiences of contemporary contingents with one reference to a classic contingent, albeit one employed in a university not an outside profession (Anne). Each contingent instructor faces different challenges attempting to engage in SoTL, and the layered complexity of these stories complicates matters, yet mirrors typical situations.

Su

Su is married with two young children. She moved to British Columbia after completing her PhD when her partner secured stable, long-term employment. As the primary caregiver, Su must balance her employment with childcare responsibilities. For the past eight years, she has taught one or two courses per term, dividing her time between the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Victoria (UVic). She is a member of the University of British Columbia Faculty Association (Collective Agreement Between the University of British Columbia and the Faculty Association of the University of British Columbia, 2016; herein referenced as UBCFA) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (Agreement Between University of Victoria and Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4163 Component 3, 2013; herein referenced as CUPE 4163-3). Su does not teach full time at either institution, and therefore is not eligible for continuing appointments (CUPE 4163-3 article 24.01; UBCFA article

7:5.01), but does have the right to reappointment at UBC (UBCFA article 7:3.01). She is not involved in scheduling her courses and receives short notice about course approvals and cancellations, which frustratingly affects her childcare and transportation arrangements (including a three-hour commute to UBC). She receives no professional development funding at UVic (CUPE4163-3 article 16.03) and $25 per course at UBC (UBCFA article 2:7.09b).

Su does not want a tenure-track position; however, she would like more stability and clearer expectations of potential future promotion at either institution because she hopes to shift to full-time employment when her children are older. She enjoys teaching and strives to remain current in her specialty, but has been unable to conduct SoTL or other forms of research due to her unpredictable schedule and lack of funding. Su sees SoTL as important to improve her classroom teaching, gain credibility as a scholar, and demonstrate her familiarity with developments in the field, which is considered in her performance evaluations at UBC (*UBCFA* article 7:8.02). Both institutions offer workshops and other initiatives to support SoTL, but participation is difficult with her time and travel constraints. At UVic, she is eligible to apply for a teaching award for contingent instructors (University of Victoria Learning and Teaching Centre, n.d.) and a SoTL grant (University of Victoria Learning and Teaching Centre, 2016). She can apply directly to the research ethics board at UVic (University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, n.d.), but would require a continuing faculty member to sponsor an application at UBC (UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board, n.d.).

The conditions of contingency affect Su's ability to learn about and practice SoTL. The precarity of her teaching means she cannot form long-term partnerships with students. Her teaching schedule inhibits her ability to attend workshops and her lack of funding makes attending conferences or conducting research prohibitive.

Dhara

For the past four years, Dhara has taught across two campuses of the University of Toronto (UofT) with multiple contingent instructor contracts under the Canadian Union of Public Employees (Collective Agreement Between the Governing Council of the University of Toronto and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3902 Unit 3, 2015; herein referenced as CUPE 3902-3). Prior to this, she completed her doctorate at UofT and worked as a graduate student course instructor and research assistant. She published from her dissertation and is trying to develop new research to maintain a publication record, but being a contingent instructor provides inadequate access to resources for fieldwork or laboratory space. She is eligible for up to $500 annually under the transitional professional expense program (CUPE 3902-3 Letter of Intent), but she cannot be the principal investigator on a research ethics application or research grant (University of Toronto Office of Research and Innovation, 2013), and UofT characterizes research by contingent instructors as private scholarship unaffiliated with the institution (CUPE 3902-3 article 7.04). Between course preparation, trying to publish, and applying for continuing faculty positions, she feels burnt-out and unsure of her future.

Dhara has taught five or six semester-long courses in each of the last four years, so she is eligible to apply for advancement to Sessional Lecturer II (CUPE 3902-3 Appendix A). She has not initiated the application because the department chair was on her dissertation committee and writes references for her tenure-track applications. In this dual role as former supervisor and current employer, he has mentioned that being childless and single gives her mobility for tenure-track positions, which has made her hesitant to discuss other options. If she advances to

Sessional Lecturer II, she could apply in three years for advancement to Sessional Lecturer III, but she is struggling to understand how the institution assesses "mastery of subject matter and . . . continued superior classroom teaching" (CUPE 3902-3 Appendix A-2, p. 53). No long-term instructors in her department have advanced to Sessional Lecturer III, so she has no one local to consult for advice.

Dhara's department is posting two teaching-stream positions, which could lead to continuing status (University of Toronto Governing Council, 2015, article VII.30.x), and she wonders if engaging in SoTL could enhance her profile. She has read listserv postings about SoTL and possible funding sources, but does not know where to begin.

The conditions of Dhara's contingency affect her access and ability to learn and engage in SoTL due to her high teaching load. The dual role of her department chair has made it difficult for her to approach him about seeking advancement and she does not have adequate institutional knowledge about the promotion process. She thinks engaging in SoTL may provide leverage in her application for a teaching-stream position or advancement as a Sessional Lecturer, and possibly even for tenure-track positions.

Colin

After many years as an outdoor educator and guide, Colin decided to pursue a master's degree in education at the University of Ottawa. He was excited at the potential to teach part time in the leisure studies program during his studies. However, the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies' (2016) resolution that limits full-time students to 10 hours of work per week made it difficult to cover his expenses (see article 31.1b in Collective Agreement Between the University of Ottawa and the Canadian Union of Public Employees and its Local 2626, 2015). Following the suggestion of a classmate, he applied and was hired to teach an additional six hours per week at Algonquin College. The next term, the college offered him more hours and different courses, resulting in a shift in his employee classification to become a partial-load employee and a member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (College Faculty CAAT–A Collective Agreement, 2014, article 26). This shift made him eligible for progression through established salary grids (article 26.04), pay in lieu of vacation (article 26.02A), payment for work on statutory holidays (article 26.09), insured group benefits (article 26.06), and sick leave (article 26.08B). These improvements prompted him to switch to part-time studies at the university so he could devote time to teaching. He has discovered, however, that the college offers him different numbers of courses each term, which means he moves in and out of membership in the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (Algonquin College, 2016a, 2016b).

Over the three years, Colin has built relationships with other Algonquin instructors who are focused on improving their teaching practices, especially three instructors who were also pursuing graduate studies. They formed a peer support network, supporting each other with teaching ideas and issues, and with their graduate programs. He credits this network and his master's supervisor with helping him complete a SoTL project that he used to fulfill his master's degree requirements.

Now that his degree is complete, Colin is seeking full-time employment. A main challenge at the college is that there is no guarantee across terms about which courses are offered; his employee classification, salary, and union membership shift depending on the number of hours he teaches per week. Colin loves teaching college students, but the uncertainty

is difficult and he does not see strong potential for greater employment stability. He is contemplating another career change.

The complex teaching job classifications at Ontario colleges lead to instability and uncertainty about upcoming teaching, and the protections built into the collective agreement apply some terms only (depending upon his teaching load). Colin's concomitant graduate studies and peer support network provided the context and incentive for him to engage in SoTL despite these challenges, but his situation has now changed.

Anne

Anne is a full-time educational developer at the University of Prince Edward Island. Personal experience has led her toward a specialization in enhancing accessibility for students and instructors with disabilities. She is a member of the university's accessibility and accommodation committee. For the past 10 years, she has taught a course on accessibility in e-learning as a contingent instructor in the Faculty of Education. Anne's director allows her to combine her teaching hours with her full-time work so that she does not exceed 48 hours per week, which is the provincial limit that would trigger overtime pay (Government of Prince Edward Island Legislative Counsel Office, 2015, articles 15[1], 15.1[1]).

Anne's rights and responsibilities as a contingent instructor are enshrined in the Collective Agreement Between the University of Prince Edward Island Board of Governors and the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty Association Bargaining Unit #1 (2012; herein referenced as UPEIFA). After teaching for three years, she gained the right of recall, meaning she could be reappointed to teach the course without a job posting or application (UPEIFA article G1.7.2). Her teaching performance is assessed every third year (UPEIFA article E1.2.1), but professional development is not factored into these assessments. After her initial assessment, she secured a three-year appointment, which has been renewed twice (UPEIFA article G1.5a).

As a staff member in the teaching and learning centre, Anne is familiar with workshops to support her teaching and has formed inter- and intra-institutional networks. She worked with the department curriculum committee to develop an online version of her course, and is planning her next SoTL project to compare outcomes across course delivery formats. She is able to engage in university-funded SoTL research because contingent instructors at her institution have the right to do research (UPEIFA article G1.11b), serve as principal investigators on applications to the research ethics board, and apply for research funding (UPEIFA article G1.11c). In addition to funding through her full-time position, she has access as a contingent instructor to $300 annually for professional development to present SoTL at conferences (UPEIFA article G1.11c.iii).

Anne is an exception to the usual story of contingent instructors. Her full-time position provides financial security, status, institutional and departmental knowledge, and SoTL-specific skills and support not commonly experienced by other contingent instructors. Her director allows her to count the extra time associated with SoTL as working hours. Her one barrier is that teaching one course per year provides a limited participant pool for which she has direct instructional responsibility.

Contingency and the Potential for SoTL

To consider the ways the conditions of contingency affect contingent instructors' engagement in SoTL, we considered possibilities for contingent instructors to attain Felten's

(2013) principles of good SoTL practice: partnering with students, grounding in scholarly and local contexts, inquiring into student learning, ensuring methodological soundness, and disseminating publicly.

For the most part, we found little mention of research, scholarship, or creative activity in the collective agreements and other documents that shape the working conditions of contingent instructors. We were nonetheless struck by the variation we uncovered. For example, collective agreements at UPEI (Anne) and UofT (Dhara) acknowledge contingent instructors' rights to engage in all forms of scholarship; however, UPEI grants contingent instructors the right to apply for research funding and serve as principal investigators, whereas UofT denies such rights to contingent instructors (with the possible exception of those holding the rank of Sessional Lecturer III who may be granted rights on a case-by-case basis; see University of Toronto Office of Research and Innovation, 2013) and deems their non-teaching work to be private scholarship not under the jurisdiction of the institution (CUPE 3902-3 article 7.04). Despite the absence of any requirements in collective agreements for contingent instructors to engage in SoTL or other forms of research, some individuals perceive SoTL as a natural extension of teaching that ought to be open and expected from all postsecondary instructors (Pecorino & Kincaid, 2007).

Freedom to engage in SoTL fits with the overall trend toward "more shared responsibility for learning among students and teachers, a more democratic intellectual community, and more authentic co-inquiry" (Hutchings & Huber, 2010, p. xii; see also Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). For contingent instructors who are relative outsiders in an institution and lack long-term reappointment stability (Colin, Dhara, Su), it is difficult to form long-term *partnerships with students* as part of their teaching and SoTL practice. In addition, collective agreements generally specify pay for teaching-related activities only (e.g., teaching, office hours, grading, etc.), leaving few contingent instructors with financial incentive or support to mentor or hire student research assistants.

The conditions of contingency also challenge the possibilities for SoTL work *grounded in local contexts*. With the expansion of contingent instructors as "permanent temps" (Rajagopal, 2002), there are instances of contingent instructors who have long-term grounding in their local contexts (e.g., Su has been teaching at the two institutions for eight years, Dhara has been a contingent instructor for four years in addition to time as a graduate student course instructor), yet without the stability and stature of a full-time continuing appointment (Anne), contingent instructors may remain isolated or excluded.

SoTL, as with all scholarship, must be *grounded in scholarly contexts* and build upon the work of others (Boyer, 1990). Contingent instructors must have access to library resources, a clear understanding of the policies surrounding teaching and learning, and solid grounding in SoTL work in order to build upon existing understandings. Restricted funding, limited time to attend workshops, and insecurity and unpredictability in course load act as barriers to SoTL engagement. Alternatively, holding different roles within or across institutions, such as in Anne's case, may positively affect contingent instructors' understandings of context, and their ability to bring multiple perspectives to teaching and SoTL.

The majority of contingent instructors in Ontario universities have doctoral degrees (Field & Jones, 2016). Contingent instructors like Su and Dhara have demonstrated their ability to undertake disciplinary research, but this experience and expertise do not necessarily extend to SoTL. Some contingent instructors may struggle to make the transition toward *inquiring into student learning* as their scholarly focus. The laboratory science methods that led to Dhara's success as a doctoral student may not provide suitable grounding to undertake SoTL. She may

need to learn new skills and perhaps unlearn some laboratory science research norms to make this transition. In contrast, Colin completed a master's degree in education where common research approaches and methods lend themselves well toward SoTL. His master's thesis was a SoTL project and he had the support of a graduate supervisor trained in educational research.

Meaningful engagement requires a solid grasp of SoTL-specific research methodology, literature, and lexicon. The principle of *methodological soundness* necessitates that SoTL include meticulous and purposeful methods and methodologies drawn from varied disciplines and perspectives (Chick, 2014). Although most teaching and learning centres provide SoTL workshops open to contingent instructors, the precarity of their employment and lack of institutional and departmental knowledge often prohibit attendance and disrupt support networks for SoTL. Collective agreements may provide some resources for professional development, but this amount varies widely across institutions, depending on the teaching load or appointment type, from $25 per course for Su to $500 per year for Dhara.

A further challenge to methodological soundness is the often-late notice about courses to be taught. The lack of reappointment status for Su and Colin means they do not have time or resources to design research for upcoming courses. Implementing sound research designs may also be constrained by the (in)ability to act as principal investigators and applicants for research support. Many researchers seek grant funding to offset the financial demands of conducting and disseminating SoTL projects and to demonstrate the prestige of their work. In many instances, contingent instructors are not eligible for institutional grants to conduct SoTL or present at conferences (Brown et al., 2013). As well, not all contingent instructors are eligible to apply to research ethics boards for research involving human participants. Status and access vary along a continuum and by institution, from Anne, who can be principal investigator and apply to the research ethics board; to Colin, who loses this ability now that he is no longer a student; to the others, who must have faculty sponsors or co-applicants (Su) or whose work is seen as private scholarship for which the university is not liable (Dhara).

To count as scholarship, knowledge generated through SoTL must be made public and available for scrutiny (Kreber, 2002; Shulman, 1998). *Disseminating publicly* is a component of good SoTL practice (Felten, 2013). The ultimate goal is that colleagues reflect, critique, learn from, and use the outcomes from SoTL. Publication in conferences, journals, or less traditional fora such as electronic course portfolios is difficult without a consistent institutional affiliation. In Dhara's case, she has professional development funding available to present at conferences, but no funding to support writing her research, and the private scholarship designation at UofT suggests it is probably inappropriate for her to claim institutional affiliation when publishing. The conditions of contingency seem to limit contingent instructors to scholarly teaching without dissemination opportunities, and therefore prevent them from engaging in good SoTL practice.

Concluding Thoughts

Institutions present contingent instructors with a mixed message: research and SoTL are desirable and frequently encouraged, but contingent instructors are often ineligible or presented with few opportunities to pursue it. Even if contingent instructors overcome these barriers to engagement, their ability to adhere to the principles of good SoTL practice is negatively affected by the conditions of contingency identified in this paper.

It is sufficient that one condition of contingency be present to limit or prevent contingent instructors from engaging in SoTL; taken together, the three conditions of contingency—

institutional knowledge, role and status; isolation and invisibility; and precarity—pose significant barriers. Just as there is variability within contingency, we recognize diversity in the experiences of contingent instructors. Although we laud those contingent instructors who find means and opportunity to overcome these barriers in ways that respect and reward their intellectual labour, we argue that for most contingent instructors, the conditions of contingency overwhelmingly discourage and limit engagement in SoTL.

Based upon our analysis, we are reluctant to encourage contingent instructors to take on SoTL projects beyond the scope of paid instructional responsibilities. We are concerned that such encouragement could add to the mounting expectations for securing permanent employment (Beardsworth & McKenzie, 2011; Doe et al., 2011). Furthermore, despite Smith and Schwartz's (2015) assurance, we do not see clear evidence there will be a payoff in terms of job stability. The reward and recognition structures for engaging in SoTL continue to be contentious, as institutions grapple with how to recognize this scholarship in tenure and promotion practices and teaching award frameworks (Chalmers, 2011). There is a hope that intrinsic motivation would spur all scholarly endeavours, but it is important to also think pragmatically of the extrinsic motivation driving SoTL work for contingent instructors. Some institutions, such as UofT, have created ranks of contingent instruction, allowing some predictability in course offerings and a measure of job promotion through these ranks, and it seems that SoTL activities could be one possible dimension or source of evidence to support promotion. For the vast majority of contingent instructors, however, the extrinsic motivation for SoTL engagement would seem to be a nebulously defined and improbable hope that the work will eventually lead to future job security.

Unless and until institutions change the conditions of contingency to support the full engagement of contingent instructors in SoTL, we cannot recommend contingent instructors devote time and energy in this unpaid capacity. Departments, programs, and institutions that embed SoTL into their institutional cultures (Williams et al., 2013) may find ways to support and engage contingent instructors in their collective efforts, but it will require concerted attention to the barriers and disincentives experienced by contingent instructors and major changes to the labour and employment practices that currently prevail. We encourage future researchers to consider whether and how these barriers and disincentives are overcome. Given the growing proportion of Canadian postsecondary courses taught by contingent instructors, the exclusion of contingent instructors from SoTL practice means there will be fewer opportunities for students' learning experiences to be informed by SoTL and fewer opportunities for other instructors to learn from the wealth of experience contingent instructors bring to their roles.

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