



Affective Investment

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*“When I’m wondering if my contract will be renewed,
when I’m feeling left out and alone in my department,
all I have to do is enter the classroom and interact
with my students, and I forget my frustrations.
Somehow, it’s worth it.”*
(Study Participant)

As the opening epigram laments, teaching writing as a contingent faculty member is rife with contradictions, and this quote encapsulates the experiences and feelings of many participants in the study. While the majority of contingent faculty reported feeling highly satisfied in their jobs, they also expressed a sense of unevenness and frustration with unfair working conditions. When asked, “Are you happy working as a contingent faculty member?” 29% reported “yes,” and 48% reported “mostly” (see “Results and Findings” article in this special issue). Even though 77% of faculty are happy and satisfied for the most part, we could not escape the contradiction, as seen in the opening epigram, nor could it be resolved. We realized we needed to perform theory building work because “without an inventive approach to theory, we lose our ability to notice different things in familiar phenomena and sites, and to make sense of happenings in less familiar sites” (Scott & Melonçon 12). Instead of merely acknowledging this contradiction, we knew we needed a way to understand it.

In this essay, we provide an extended definition of affective investment and then move to discussions from the data and interviews that reflect the material dimensions of how affective investment impacts contingent faculty in three critical areas: salary and contract; workload and autonomy; and value.

Defining Affective Investment

Several scholars in composition have discussed the emotions and emotional labor involved in teaching, administration, and writing (e.g., Jacobs and Micicche; Jackson et al.; Langdon). For instance, the emphasis in the following definition was more on the labor than the types of emotion:

Emotional labor was work our participants had to do—and often wanted to do and enjoyed doing—in order to accomplish (smoothly, swiftly, or at all) the other tasks on their to-do lists. Emotional labor included tasks such as mentoring, advising, making small talk, putting on a friendly face, resolving conflicts, and making connections; it also included delegating tasks and following up on progress, working in teams, disciplining or redirecting employees, gaining trust, and creating a positive workplace (Jackson et al).

Even though this work has been valuable, it has not gone far enough in helping scholars understand the different types of emotion. Miller, Considine, and Garner, organizational communication scholars, provide nuance to the different types of emotion and emotional labors that can be present at any given time by arguing “for five types of organizational emotion: emotional labor (inauthentic emotion in interaction with customers and clients), emotional work (authentic emotion in interaction with customers and clients), emotion with work (emotion stemming from interaction with coworkers), emotion at work (emotion from nonwork sources experienced in the work-place), and emotion toward work (emotions in which work is the target of the feeling)” (Miller et al). This perspective offered us the ability to understand that some of the existing discussions within writing studies are too narrow when considering emotion and emotional labor. Thinking in terms of the many types of emotion that are connected to emotional labor helped us to recognize that while “emotions may be a primary means of collective action as they are always already shaping our allegiances and ways of being,” contingent faculty were experiencing more than emotions and doing more than emotional labor (Doe, Maisto, & Adsit 221). It wasn’t just their emotional work that was being slighted; it was their very presence and participation in departments and in their institutions that took a continual toll on how contingent faculty experienced their material work conditions. However, current definitions in scholarship only ever discussed different forms and definitions of emotional labor. While emotional labor is a useful term, the concept does not fully capture the contradictions we found in the overall high satisfaction level of working as contingent faculty versus the lengthy survey and interview responses that spoke of the toll of precarious work conditions. Therefore, we became focused on how we could capture the full scope of contingent faculty experiences. We needed a new definition that would acknowledge the range of emotions, including emotional labor, and would also include the structural dimensions that create and impact emotional responses.

After talking through a number of terms and possibilities, we settled on the term, “affective investment,” to help us to make sense of how we might adequately theorize the experiences of contingent faculty as they relate to their material work conditions. We define material work conditions as “the day-to-day working conditions of faculty, such as teaching loads and institutional support” (Melonçon, England and Ilyasova 209). This terminology builds on and extends recent work on emotional labor and contingency by Sue Doe, Maria Maisto, and Janelle Adsit.

We chose affective investment because it expands emotional labor in three significant ways. First, “affective” encapsulates more than emotion and has a specific embodied component that we felt was necessary, and “investment” captures the labor and work that is involved,

but, more importantly, includes the personal orientation to what it takes to invest in the work of teaching. Second, although it is true that “emotion is part of what makes ideas adhere,” we wanted to expand our thinking beyond emotion and labor because an expansion allows us to make room for the weight and burden of the multiple aspects of contingent faculty jobs (Micciche 6). This expansion includes the third component of affective investment: the contexts and structures in which the affective investment takes place. Adding an explicit and direct material dimension means that affective investment is tied to, and portable between, a variety of domains such as different types of institutions and locations of work.

We will now turn to defining affective investment in more detail by breaking down the term into its two parts—“affective” and “investment”—and then discussing how affective investment is experienced.

Affect

We use affect as a distinctly human and embodied theoretical orientation. Unlike some theorists who have invoked affect in a more material way that de-humanizes the human, we cannot and will not make that move because the embodied person, full of emotion and agency, cannot be discounted when discussing contingent faculty. Too often contingent faculty are referred to in ways that erase their human-ness or their embodiment. It is easier to make painful decisions about labor and staffing rather than the people attached to those descriptions. Using interviews with contingent faculty members as a method for data collection for this project, we added a layer of meaning that could come only from their specific voices included below while still maintaining the position that “human affect is inextricably linked with meaning-making” (Wetherell 20). The need to listen to contingent voices and understand their material work lives meant that we had to grapple with the people, which is often absent in discussions of contingency because it is often easier to consider sections of courses that need to be staffed than the people behind those sections.

Turning to affect theory allows us to provide a much-needed embodied component to emotion. In the recent “affective turn,” scholars (see e.g., Anderson; Seigworth and Gregg; Leys; Wetherell) have emphasized different affective dimensions as a way to think through the co-creation of meaning that is embodied and material. Affect moves into writing studies from cultural studies, who define affect as something almost mystical such as an intensity (Massumi) or vital force (Seigworth and Gregg). The *movement* of intensity and force, as Katherine Stewart eloquently points out in her work, calls to mind the relational aspect of affect advanced by Ian Burkitt, a professor of social identity, as “a material process of its own kind created by body-selves acting in relational concert” (1). Thinking of affect as an intensity and force that is relational is key when considering the role of affect in the lives of contingent faculty. In other words, if emotion is how we feel, affect is how we’re made to feel.

The term relational is important because it matches Celeste Condit's view that communication (and rhetoric) are relational. She suggests, "Using the term relationality will help remind us that a relationship is not a discrete, state entity but rather a process of the interaction of forces" (Condit 6). Relationships and their interactions are all dependent on social roles and behaviors, and most particularly on how an individual interacts with others. There are a multitude of forces that interact and push against the structures and people in higher education: the relationship with the institution, the students, the work, and other factors specific to each individual instructor. Understanding affective investment as relational is key to taking into account or, at the very least, thinking of all of the different forces that press on and through and with and between the literal bodies and lives of contingent faculty. This relational aspect is crucial in tying together the idea that contingent work lives are both beautiful and brutal, depending entirely on the institution, the leadership, and the community. When trying to justify the high percentages of those contingent faculty who reported overall satisfaction with their positions, while in the same space listing myriad ways they were limited and ignored, we could see from the language they used that they were willing to suffer the brutality because the work brought them a sense of meaningfulness and worth. Consistently, even after lack of support, protection, compensation, and autonomy were detailed, the participants would often mention "*if it weren't for the students...*" "*I know the work I'm doing is valuable...*" "*I'm changing lives....*" These examples of affective investment are echoed time and again through the survey responses and in the interviews. Affective investment is the application of "the ends justify the means" when looking at contingent faculty material work conditions.

Relational also emphasizes the embodied aspect of affective investment and one of the key reasons we moved toward affect and away from emotion. Affect encapsulates the material body in ways that we thought emotion alone did not. "Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body...in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and world" (Seigworth & Gregg 1). The "intensities that pass body to body" and the "variations between those intensities" emphasize the importance of the relationship between affect, bodies, and the material world; thus, affect takes into account both the material and the forces within the material world that move or impact a person. One of the reasons this project was framed around the material work conditions of faculty is because of the connection between the material (the personal and the embodied), and it also allowed us to bring to the forefront the impact of the relationship between contingent faculty's work lives, their belief and feelings and emotions connected to those lives, and how their institutions impact both.

However, relying on affect alone did not fully answer or explain the contradictions found in the data from contingent faculty. How could we expand affect—the affective—to provide insights into the reasons and

rationale between two areas that don't seem to add up: contingent faculty's material work conditions (often poor) and their own "investment" (often high) within the system that definitely takes advantage of them? Why are contingent faculty working so hard for institutions that don't support them? We argue that the investment precedes the affective stance. Investment requires a conscious decision because it is an "act of devoting time, effort, or energy to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result" ("Investment"). The act is conscious and deliberate. For contingent faculty, there is an investment through the act of accepting the position. Even though scholars and trade publications in higher education have tried to analyze the decision to take a job that is considered exploitive, the decisions to do contingent work are highly personal and highly diverse. However, across the board, both in our quantitative and qualitative data, contingent faculty do expect to make a difference (their worthwhile result) in the lives of their students and, more broadly, to their field of scholarship.

An integral part of "investment" rests on an acceptance—conscious or unconscious—of the precarious nature of contingency. In this case, precarity is both a descriptor and a condition. It describes the feeling of the unknown: will there be a place for them next term? It also describes the condition of this employment that many take because there is literally no other option. In order to do the work they love, contingent faculty knowingly lean into the unknown. And not knowing if you have a job, if you've done enough, if you *are* enough, takes a certain toll on the body. "Precarious employment traumatizes the people who bear it, disrupting their foundational narratives" in an affective way that then unseats the investment (Doe, Maisto, and Adsit 230). Precarity as part of affective investment can play out in unsavory ways: teaching to ensure positive evaluations, becoming complacent in your defense of your own worth, even failing to report grievances because your livelihood is on the line. Without meaning to, perhaps even without realizing it, institutions who refuse to hire contingent faculty on longer contracts (not just annual, but often term to term) are often creating a situation that breeds "us" versus "them" mentalities and silences the voices of those who should be most valuable: the teachers standing at the front of the majority of our nation's classrooms. Thus, affective investment shrouded with precarity is fundamentally political as a descriptor because it highlights a specific type of worker and work and directly connects affective investment with the politics of service (which is discussed in the "Politics of Service" article in this special issue).

Recognizing this seemingly endless circular paradox exposes the power and impact of affect, and the role it plays in the continuing situation of contingent labor. Through this exposition, through the voices and responses from our survey and interviews, we hope to provide insight and strategies to better understand this cycle. Thus, we can come to a definition of affective investment:

A highly contextualized (depending on time and place) personal commitment to and participation in the relational configuration and interaction between material bodies, imbued with various emotions and physical and physiological characteristics; institutional and organizational infrastructures, embedded with their own cultural orientations; and the political and social aspects of decision making.

For contingent faculty, affective investment resonances are not ideological but reactive to the material situations in which they work. What does this reactive stance mean for contingent faculty? The interview data provided the depth of histories of affect and what that means to the labor issues each field faces. But what happens when the voices of those bodies and actors go unheard? The bodies continue moving, continue acting, because they must (investment), but the consequences of their teaching on student learning, and to departmental and institutional community, are impacted (affective). As Wetherell suggests, “Often what is more interesting is the rapid, implicit and explicit, negotiation process through which we jointly begin to figure the affective moment we are in, and what should happen next” (141). The subject of contingent faculty and their worth is not a new problem. But it is a growing problem, one that is not going away. In order to ensure that contingent faculty are a part of their own embodiment, it is our hope that their stories will prompt a much-needed change in the process of how they are hired, treated, promoted, and valued.

In their own voices, as seen in the many quotes throughout this special issue, contingent faculty shed light on this pattern of affective investment. We believe the pattern will continue because contingent faculty *want* to make the investment— that’s a conscious decision on their part. They understand the precarity of the job but will do it anyway because it *makes a difference* not only in their lives but in the lives of their students and their fields. We ask, however: What would the pattern look like if we changed the outcome of this conscious investment? What would our classrooms and departments and field look like if we changed that pattern and improved contingent faculty material work conditions, agency, and embodiment, and thus their physical and emotional contributions? To be able to answer these questions, we must first understand what the actual material dimensions of affective investment look like.

Material Dimensions of Affective Investment

When discussing issues of affective investment, we found specific data points that illustrated what affective investment looks like in practice; that is, how it affects contingent faculty in specific and material ways. In this section we look at several of these dimensions:

- Salary and Contract
- Workload and Autonomy

Salary and Contract

Here we share information about salary and contract/reappointment since these two factors are intimately connected. Figure 1 shows the responses to the “salary” component of the “satisfaction” question, “Thinking of your current position, please rate your satisfaction with the following:” (for more information on salary, see the “Results and Findings from the Survey” article in this special issue).

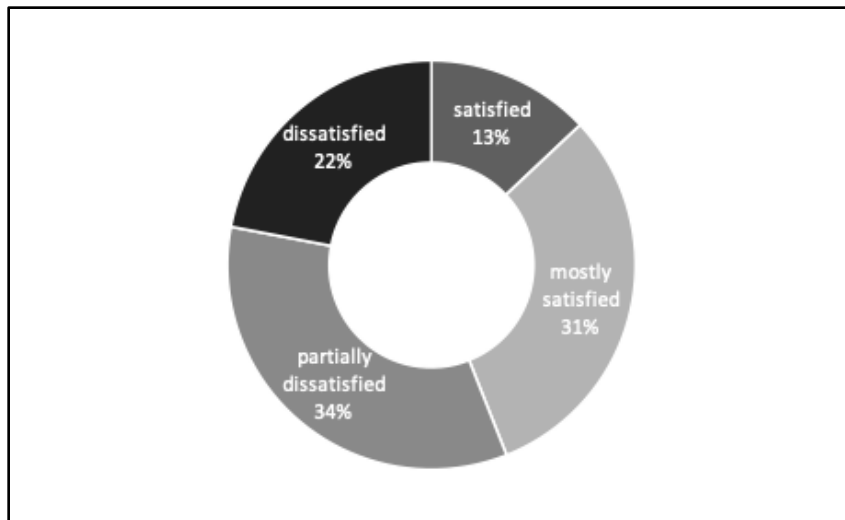


Figure 1: Satisfaction with Current Salary (n = 297)

The qualitative responses support our theory of affective investment, often citing frustration with their compensation or by the precarity of their roles, but they still showed up to the job because of the value it brought, both intrinsic and extrinsic. This is particularly demonstrated in the 65% ($n = 191$) of respondents who selected mostly satisfied or partially dissatisfied. We were somewhat surprised by the dissatisfied response, 22% ($n = 66$) because we had anticipated a larger percentage would select they were unhappy with their salary. However, as noted in the “Introduction” article of this issue, a limitation of this study is that a majority of respondents were FT NTT, which typically receive higher compensation than part-time and term adjuncts.

We share a series of quotes from faculty that express a range of views and provide insights into the contradictions contingent faculty feel about their salary. Many of the responses are what motivated us to think about affective investment to begin with: “If only I made more, I’d be happy” (we’re paraphrasing here) is a common theme from the participants. These responses show that salary is tied up in issues of guilt,

performance, and equality. These emotions all affect the material work lives of contingent faculty.

I am satisfied with my job but frustrated because we don't make enough money. I even feel guilty saying that because I make so much more than I did when I was PT. Disconnect with what we value in this society (football coach vs teacher). No raises – at the whim of the board of trustees (no union). That's why I teach summer, and if those don't make, I will have to find a PT job.

It is important to note the mention of guilt that this participant talks about; what kind of precarity must be weighing on this body to make them feel guilt about wanting to be compensated fairly? Continuously, we see participants justifying themselves, repeating the theme that they're happy, that they're not one to complain, that they value their work, but...but...but... *"The only real issue is salary. I work with a great department and have quite a bit of freedom and support. However, even when teaching full time or overloading, I don't make enough money to really plan for the future. If pay and workload were more fairly balanced, I think I would be fairly happy."* And again and again, people ask "why are they staying in these roles?" And again and again, we are presented with the love they have for their work. *"I love the work but make very little money and have no benefits. I have a PhD and a decade of practitioner background in this area yet feel my salary in no way reflects this."*

In addition to guilt, salary also impacts performance, both from the perspective of working too hard for too little compensation or altering their work, often involuntarily, in response to the precarity of their livelihoods. Many have to compensate for low salaries/contracts by teaching at multiple institutions, which increases course load, and, in turn, decreases the amount of time and energy that can be invested into each course. *"My department chair has continued her predecessor's very hard work to support contingent faculty. Until recently, positions like mine didn't exist--the work was done by adjuncts, not full-time faculty with benefits... If I were paid better, I'd be happy to stay here. I'd also be able to concentrate more effectively on my work."* The idea that one has to limit their ability, their performance, their investment, because they don't make enough to justify the energy (physical and emotional) is played out time and again. *"Ideally, getting paid better and having more time would make me a better teacher, which I want to be. I have to balance my desire against my pay. We can all spend our entire lives working on our classes, but I've forced myself to cut back on how long I work because it just doesn't make sense economically or emotionally."*

Issues of guilt, performance, and equality build a resounding echo as we hear their stories. It is clear contingent faculty are aware of the abuse they are suffering, yet they remain in their roles. As one participant pointed out, there is a stark difference in compensation and workload dependent

on contingent roles. The issue of equality is hard to fight when the precarity of your job precludes you from having a voice. *“I have been in a contingent role for 23 years and been promoted to the rank of Adjunct Associate Professor (this is a full-time, non-tenured position on multi-year contract), but I still make less than new [tenured] faculty teaching half the number of students.”* The difference between contingent and tenured faculty is generally expected (though it shouldn’t be accepted), but another difference is the inequality across institutions. Although some participants have the ability to go up for promotion or have access to consistent raise structures (due mostly in part to union representation), many still report how their salaries are affected when that representation is missing: *“No raises or opportunities for promotion. We very occasionally get across-the-board raises. The last raise I got was several years ago and it was based on the number of courses you teach. Only raise I recall. Ironically, the parking has gone up four times, so it’s like I got a pay decrease.”* This is an accurate representation of the material work conditions, and how they affect the investment of contingent faculty across the nation. If contingent faculty have to continue paying for so much out of their own pockets (parking, healthcare, professional development), we will continue to see undervalued and exhausted faculty members who still show up. For example, *“Part-time employees have to work twice as hard for about half as much money. We do not receive benefits such as health insurance. Consequently, I am employed at 2 different colleges, and I know other adjuncts who are, too. I love teaching, but part-time work does not pay enough.”* We could copy and paste an entire bulleted list where each response is just a shade different from the last, all presenting the same story in the end: *“I’m burned-out for the amount of hours I put in vs. what I get paid.”* Is it enough to have the teachers show up, even when their voices and stories show how clearly they desire to be compensated for the work they love to do? Eventually, we must see how these stories affect the bodies of those speaking and the bodies of our students and institutions where their performance is so negatively affected.

We assumed that satisfaction with salary and satisfaction with reappointment/contract would be similar, but we found that in many of the responses, it was one or the other they weren’t satisfied with. If they made more money, they seemed to better accept the precarity of their job. Contrarily, if they had more stable work, they seemed to worry less about the salary. This part of affective investment shines light on the relational issues with contingent faculty material work lives: it is vastly dependent on the institution and leadership; there is no consistency across the board, which, unfortunately, makes this issue even harder to narrow down and improve. Figure 2 represents the responses to the contract and reappointment component of the “satisfaction” question.

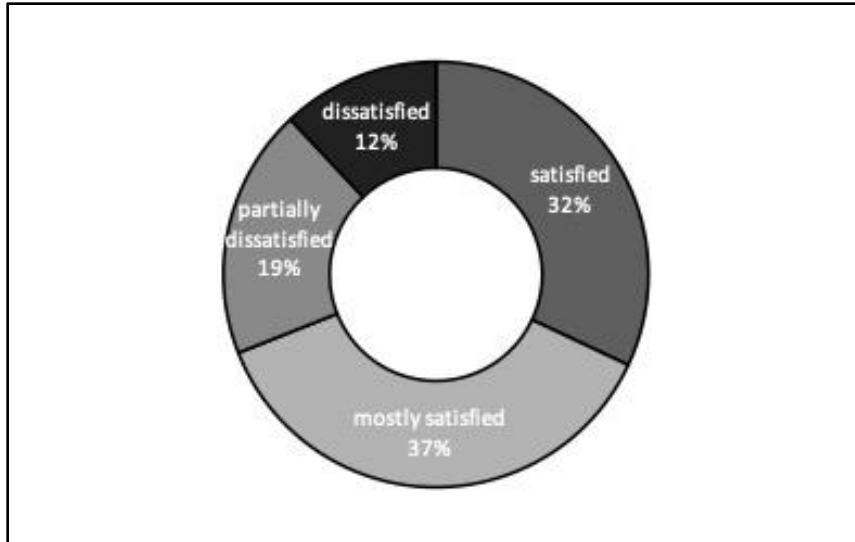


Figure 2: Satisfaction with Current Reappointment (n = 298)

In all of the satisfaction questions, reappointment possibility was the area that contingent faculty responded to with the highest satisfaction numbers (32%, $n = 94$), and when considered alongside the “mostly satisfied” responses (37%, $n = 110$), indicate the majority (69%, $n = 204$) of contingent faculty find reappointment a positive aspect of their job. We’ve already acknowledged how the majority of our respondents were FT NTTs (versus term or annual adjuncts), and we believe these numbers reflect the satisfaction of FT NTT contingent faculty. However, we cannot look at these numbers and be satisfied that a majority have a sense of security. We’d be ignoring the 31% ($n = 94$) who face precarity in their roles, precarity that affects their job performance, value and worth, and overall livelihood. Qualitative responses to this question express a range of views and provide insights into the contradictions contingent faculty feel about their contracts/reappointment opportunities.

“If I had to choose...” is also a common start to many of the qualitative comments. This theme suggests that contingent faculty clearly feel that their happiness comes down to a choice: higher salary or security. Even in their responses, they see the dichotomy. *“I wish I had job security. Even more than a higher salary, this would be most beneficial to me right now.”* This sense of precarity bridges many issues beyond just stability, including value, community, and professional development opportunities.

The worst part is the lack of stability, which forces me to put everyone at arm's length because each year I don't know if my contract is being renewed. It always has been--and will be again--but I have seen the effect on others who weren't so fortunate. Also, there is a five-year limit on visiting positions, with virtually

no possibility of being brought on in a full-time capacity, so my time is up soon. This means I spend about as much time EVERY YEAR thinking about what I'm going to do next if I don't get renewed as I do about the job at hand--except in terms of how what I do might make me employable somewhere else inside or outside academia. It puts a person's life in limbo and is best suited for people with no personal or geographic attachments who can put all their belongings in the trunk of a car or the back of a U-haul. I'm not sure too many people are happy being contingent if they have to work for a living. I also don't think too many people who are contingent and already making much less than tenure-line faculty are too happy about having to use so much of their limited income to pay for their own professional development.

It is a long-held belief that if you work hard enough, you can do anything, change anything. With contingent faculty, this is an unreachable ideal. They can be a fully committed department member, serve their field and community, and provide high-quality instruction, but none of that matters because their job security is not in their control. *“Job security is [a] very difficult thing. I understand there is little chance of full-time renewal after my 3-year contract is up, regardless of service to the department and excellent evaluations.”* Like the discussion with salary above, this precarity starts to affect performance and forces these bodies to alter the way they work: *“Every year I would be worried I wouldn't get another contract. Only year to year, always a worry. You always worry about saying no or willing to be part of the team.”* When reading these responses, it is hard not to recoil at someone stating they feel they cannot say “no.” That they must do whatever is expected of them, because their job is on the line. This kind of exploitation is one we aim to expose and eliminate.

These voices support the concept of affective investment since many of them show the contradiction between the conflicting affectations of salary and contract versus the investment they feel in their jobs and their students.

Workload and Autonomy

Without doubt, this research project has confirmed what we already knew—contingent faculty bear large teaching loads. As seen in Figure 3, 41% ($n = 122$) of our respondents reported 4/4 loads, which require extensive prep time and intensive, heavy grading periods within the term (see “Results and Findings from the Survey” article in this special issue.)

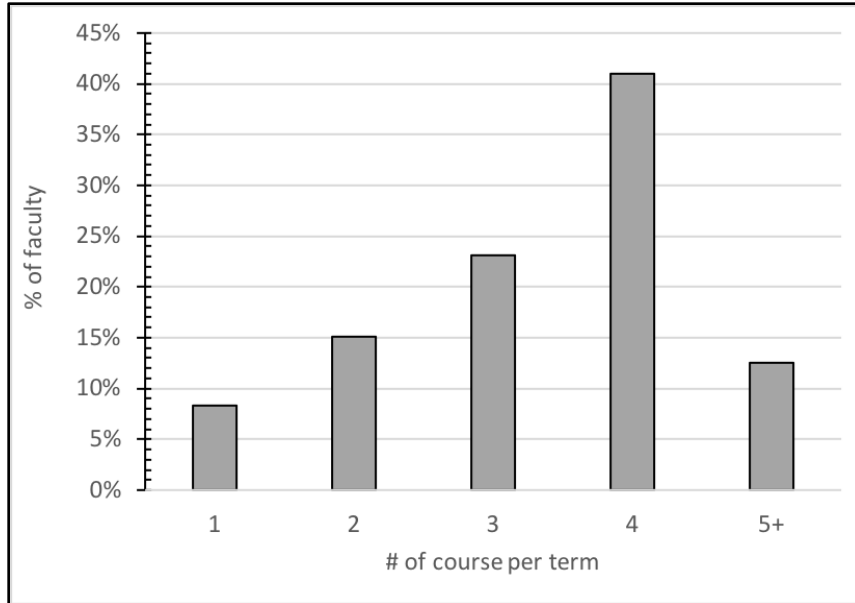


Figure 3: How Many Courses Do You Typically Teach per Term? (n = 312)

However, what we didn't know is how this impacts the day-to-day life of contingent faculty and how they feel about these loads. We have chosen to present the data on satisfaction about workloads alongside information about course autonomy because we feel that the two are inextricably linked. This link was echoed by several participants: the amount of autonomy contingent faculty have over their courses has direct impact on how those same faculty feel about their workloads. Figure 4 represents the answer to the question, "Thinking of your current position, please rate your satisfaction with workload."

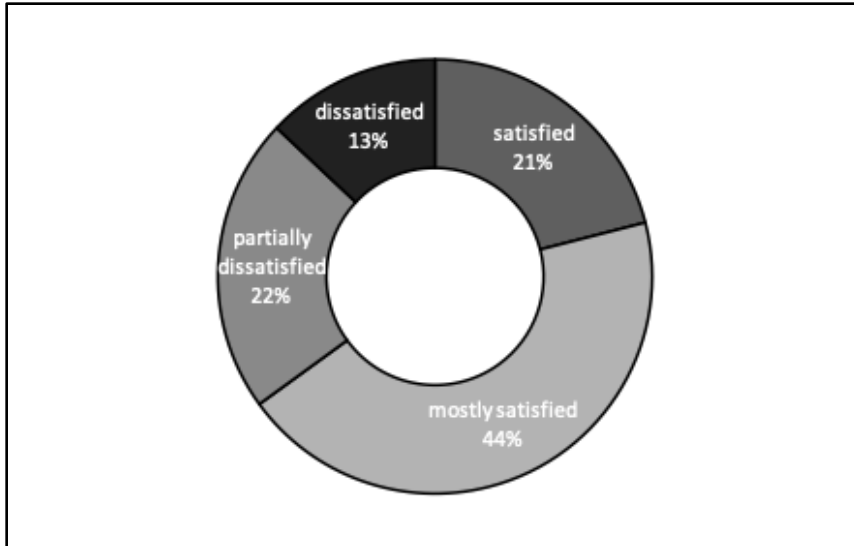


Figure 4: Satisfaction with Current Workload (n = 296)

Again, based on the responses shown in Figure 4, a majority (65%) felt either mostly or totally satisfied by their workload, and yet the qualitative responses paint a different picture. Ideally, this data and discussion are making it clear that all these issues are tied up together. When forced to rate satisfaction piece by piece, contingent faculty seemed satisfied overall. But through written responses, we see that salary, contract, load, value, etc. all tie into a larger issue that speaks more loudly about the overall disparity that contingent faculty feel in their roles and see in their departments.

My only complaint about my job is that I feel overwhelmed by the grading load of teaching four or five writing-intensive courses per semester. I still pursue professional learning when I can, but I would have more time and energy to commit if I didn't have 96-120 students each semester. I need to get all of my grading and planning done during business hours so that I can spend evenings and weekends with my family. It's a constant juggling act.

So many respondents feel lucky to be doing what they love that they also experience guilt or, perhaps, fear to speak ill of their positions. In the same breath, they will proclaim their happiness but end with an outcry of frustration. We believe affective investment explains this conundrum.

I very much enjoy my institution and colleagues. There is a lot of support for contingent faculty here compared to many other institutions, it seems. But it is anxiety-inducing and stressful that my job security hinges almost exclusively on two annual class

observations from faculty members who are often not even in the English department. This type of anxiety, I am finding, is not conducive to comfortable, confident, effective teaching. Nor does my extremely high workload (5-5 teaching load) allow for the energy and time necessary for my own writing, research, and publishing, which I need to pursue so that I can someday compete for a tenure-track job.

For many of our respondents, autonomy was often described in the same sentence as their workload, showing that these two components work together to influence the affective investment of contingent faculty. Autonomy, defined in this instance as having control over syllabi, textbook adoption, and assignments, was a critical factor when weighing affective investment. Further, with such high teaching loads, the issue of autonomy becomes important in framing and understanding how much control they have over their teaching lives. It also became quite clear that autonomy needed to include the ability to request which courses they'd be teaching. When asked the question, "Do you have autonomy to design your own courses?" respondents were split equally with 49% ($n = 154$) saying they had full autonomy and 49% ($n = 154$) saying they had partial autonomy. Only 2% ($n = 6$) responded that they have no autonomy in their course prep.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the respondents' teaching loads are for the most part common types of service courses that contingent faculty teach: first-year composition and TPC service courses (see "Results and Findings from the Survey" article in this special issue, particularly Figure 5). In addition, specifically in TPC degree programs, they also teach introductory TPC courses or other courses in the TPC program.

For many participants, autonomy was intrinsically related to their job security, job satisfaction, and job performance. As stated by one participant:

Don't want to teach 9 classes a year. Don't want to be asked to teach TW [technical writing] (hate that people are asked/sometimes forced to teach outside of their comfort level because of needs). Want more freedom to design assignments that are relevant and important for 21st century (i.e., video essays). No faith in our program for new media. But mostly, money. But if money stayed the same and I had more autonomy, I'd be more satisfied. But not fully satisfied unless more money AND more autonomy.

Other responses echoed this sentiment, further defining autonomy as the ability to teach in your subject area and to teach courses that interest you: "This feeling [being overworked] is exacerbated by the fact that, like most

contingent faculty in TPC and first-year writing, I am a human shield that protects tenured and tenure-line faculty from having to teach courses they don't want to teach."

When instructors had control over their syllabi, textbook adoption, and assignments, there was an increase in job satisfaction. This is linked closely with precarity because when instructors can embody their work, put their name on it and stand behind it, both satisfaction and performance improve. According to one participant, *"It's important to be able to create your own course so that it's yours, and you can teach and interact in the way that you feel comfortable as an instructor. It's stifling to have to use a course that isn't mine."*

Being given standardized syllabi and assignments and having little or no choice in what or how to teach diminishes a contingent faculty member's sense of worth and contribution. Contingent faculty who have educational and professional experience in their field have much to contribute, and not allowing them autonomy to design courses and assignments to reflect these experiences does a great disservice to not only the contingent faculty themselves but to the students. The significance of this is summed up by one respondent: *"I feel that it is extremely important for faculty to create their own courses. Otherwise, university becomes a template factory."*

It is possible to grant autonomy to contingent faculty and still ensure that the students are meeting learning objectives. Participating faculty talked about the use of curriculum meetings, grading norming sessions, and professional development opportunities as ways of guiding contingent faculty to the same end results without stripping them of their classroom autonomy that brings such satisfaction. Also, the term "autonomy" in itself was an issue within the survey, because, as one participant pointed out, *"I would suggest the term might be latitude instead of autonomy. As long as I can justify meeting the course objectives, I feel comfortable in adapting or changing assignments."* This was a common theme with outliers (complete autonomy of designing the course from scratch to complete structure of teaching from a common syllabus with a common textbook and common assignments). The majority of respondents reported the ability to "tweak" common materials, and even that level of autonomy was appreciated. *"We have autonomy over our syllabus and assignments, but they need to fit program learning outcomes."*

Lack of autonomy has further consequences than just the emotional toll on the instructor; it also affects their job performance. According to one respondent, *"The biggest problems on the course evaluations in the PTC courses are course requirements and readings, neither of which I am able to modify."* The fact is, for many contingent faculty their livelihood is dependent on positive student evaluations. Moreover, by stripping them of the autonomy to make choices that affect that livelihood, we are further destabilizing the important role of

contingent faculty. Additionally, while we argue for autonomy in course design, we realize that without simultaneously addressing teaching load and compensation, we find ourselves in a catch 22 where the contingent faculty must develop new materials for 4+ classes each term, perhaps at multiple institutions. The connection between compensation, salary, precarity, and autonomy is strong: one link cannot be fixed, for the chain would still be broken.

The inconsistency between institutions is problematic as well. There is no set approval process for onboarding new contingent faculty. Many are left to figure it out as they go along. Then, when they've been teaching a while and finally feel comfortable in their expertise, they feel stifled by the lack of autonomy. One participant described this common scenario at their institution:

The ironic point is that at a time where this particular instructor needed guidance—as a new instructor—she got none of the professional development opportunities or mentorship that she needed. But now as an experienced instructor, she feels nervous and constrained because she is required to teach using a pre-designed and rigid course. The only aspects of which she can change are her own lectures or additional explanatory materials for the course. Any other changes have to be approved—not by a committee of peers or experts in the area, but by a single instructor who has been self-authorized because no one else was willing (or able) to take the lead on the development of online courses.

Moving from the effect of autonomy to that of titles on contingent faculty, one participant raised a valid concern. “*Since I am only one of two people whose degree is in technical communication and rhetoric, I plan the introductory course and am designing an upper level document design course that I will never be asked to teach.*” It is outrageous that because of their degree, they can design the course, but because of their contingent status, they would be unable to teach it. We expected, going into this project, that salary and workload would be two major factors of contingent faculty’s affective investment, but we also found that value was an equally important factor in contingent faculty’s experiences.

Value

Value, in this sense, is based on the feeling that contingent faculty are considered important and beneficial to the mission and vision of the institution, the department, and the people who work in the department. So many respondents mentioned that what they were looking for above all else was a little bit of credit. “*Contingent faculty need to be valued more. Closer to what really takes place outside of academia, and I see a lot of students and I know more about them. TT faculty won’t see as many*

students. More things could and should count for contingent faculty. More on advising and scholarship and folks would do more of it if it were acknowledged or credited in some way.” So how do we define value? There are many ways contingent faculty talk about value, and we’ve focused our attention on data that illustrate the perceptions of value through satisfaction with:

- Departmental Status and Involvement
- Collegial Respect
- Happiness

Departmental Status and Involvement

Departmental status and involvement are key to how valued contingent faculty feel. Thinking of affective investment, the department is a key location and context within the lives of contingent faculty. Thus, we asked two questions specific to departmental cultures and the integration of contingent faculty. Answering the question, “Thinking of your current position, please rate your satisfaction with the following,” Figure 5 depicts satisfaction with departmental status, and Figure 6 highlights satisfaction with involvement within the department.

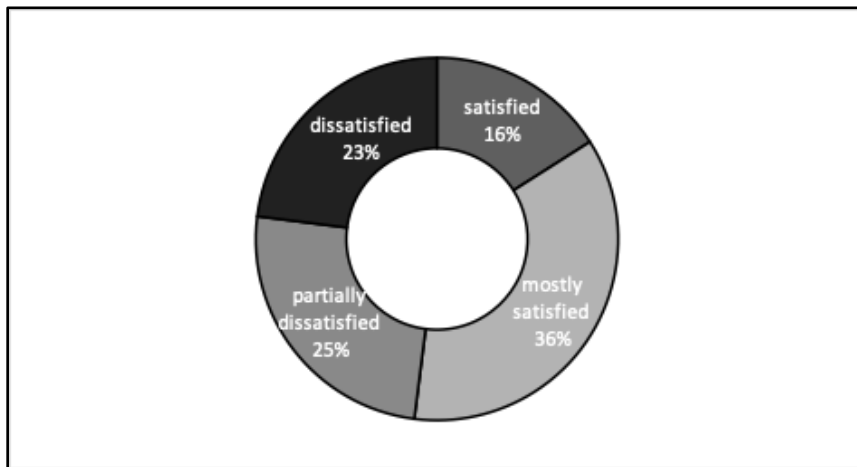


Figure 5: Satisfaction with Departmental Status (n = 297)

Departmental status is defined here in two ways: 1) how contingent faculty perceive their status within their department, and 2) how they interpret others’ perceptions of their status. The results from the survey show that almost half of our respondents are partially or totally dissatisfied with their departmental status, with only 16% (n = 48) being fully satisfied.

I would prefer to be considered as equal in the department. I believe that many tenure-track or tenured faculty members believe that contingent faculty simply arrive, teach from a syllabus, and

go home. I have spent a significant amount of time on research, writing and submitting articles, attending workshops, creating new coursework, and I find it's always a little like Animal Farm. Some people are always more equal than others.

Many faculty feel “unwanted” and are seen only as their title rather than for what they bring to the department. *“The NTT faculty in my department carry the bulk of the teaching load, but we receive the least amount of money and respect. My peers are treated as unwanted faculty, and younger, newly hired TT track faculty treat us without consideration for our contributions, knowledge, experience, and additions to the research and service mission of the university as a whole, and to our department in particular.”* For many, it really is as simple as being seen and treated as an equal. *“It would be a lot nicer if non-contingent faculty felt that we were professionally on ‘their level.’”*

Even when contingent faculty are granted the status to attend meetings and vote on important issues, the fact remains that not all department members see this as beneficial. *“Our department's climate has taken a hit this semester, as some tenure-track faculty are upset by the number of lecturers in the department and our right to vote.”* Regardless of how other faculty members perceive their status, our research shows that contingent faculty are showing up, when they’re permitted to do so; they’re attending faculty meetings, serving on committees, and striving to have their voices heard. Affective investment plays an important role in involvement because contingent faculty want to participate more. They want to contribute, have a voice, and be heard. Figure 6 represents their satisfaction level with their departmental involvement, but, as has been the case for many of the responses, the qualitative comments differed quite a bit from the quantitative results.

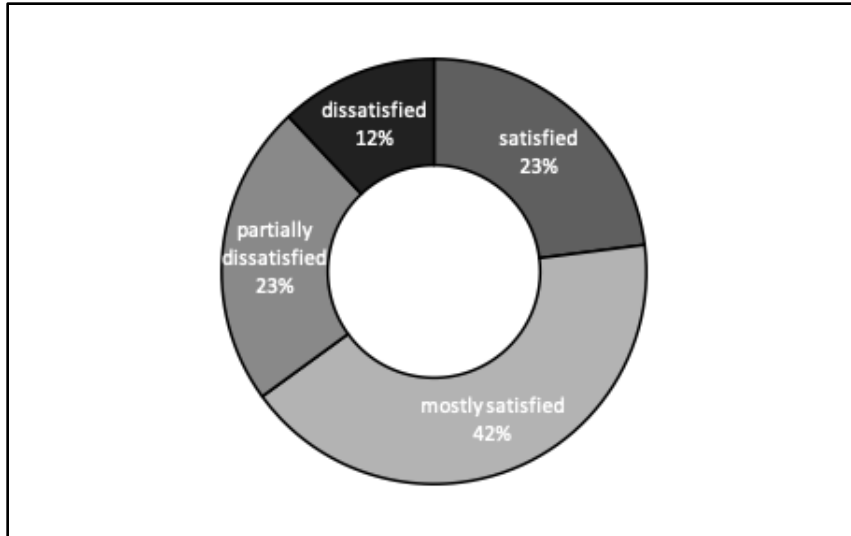


Figure 6: Satisfaction with Involvement within Department ($n = 298$)

While 65% ($n = 194$) were mostly or entirely satisfied with their level of involvement, the comments revealed they wanted more. We define involvement within the department as being included in departmental meetings and decisions. *“I have a terminal degree in my field, and I work full time for the department, teaching many more students per year than my tenure-track colleagues. And yet contingent faculty like me are not allowed to vote in most departmental and university matters. We are also paid around half of what tenure-track faculty are paid in our department.”* And try as we might to separate these issues out, it is clear time and again that value is defined in myriad ways: pay, course load, inclusion, autonomy, respect, and the list goes on. Because of this, many contingent faculty report a sense of “outsideness” when it comes to their positions within their departments. Feeling excluded or invisible is a major point of contention for a majority of our respondents: *“A lack of voice is one of the most disappointing and frustrating issues for me.”*

The sense of distance doesn’t necessarily always come from others in the department either. The precarity of contingent work often affects these faculty members who feel that they do not have a permanent home. *“I try not to think about being contingent. I don't think less of myself for being contingent; it's just that I need to work and this job will end. I just focus on what I need to do each day. I stay positive, but I do maintain an emotional distance.”* It is time we ask ourselves who else is suffering because of this “emotional distance?” And we have to be prepared for the answer: our students are paying the price, and our departments, with their lack of representation, are missing out on an opportunity to give voices to the very people who could enact change at the core of what we do: instruction.

Collegial Respect

One of the biggest challenges in teaching related to material work conditions is respect. Only a quarter of our respondents were satisfied with the amount of collegial respect they feel at their institutions. See Figure 7.

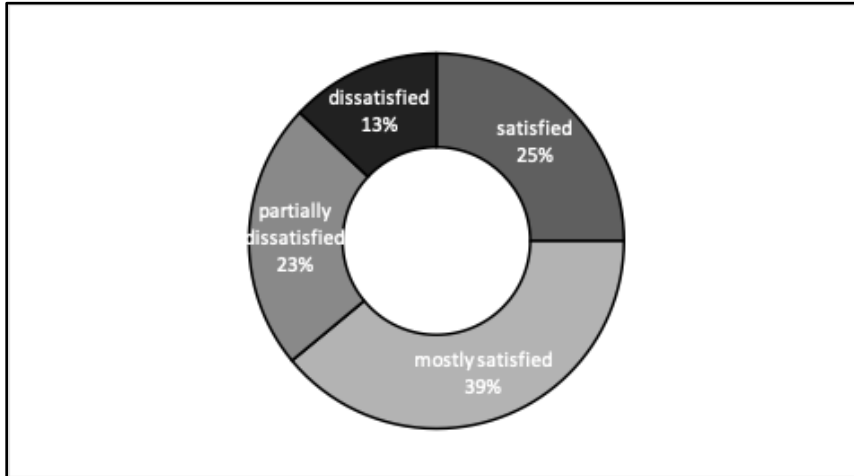


Figure 7: Satisfaction with Collegial Respect ($n = 297$)

We define collegial respect as being seen as an integral part of the institution, treated the same as any other faculty member. Unfortunately, this is not often the case. *“I am making less and working harder than I ever have before. I’d do it for free, that’s not the point, but what I’m saying is that pool faculty work harder for nothing. Results are important, people are important and that is not reflected in academia. You have to treat people with respect.”* The data shows that contingent faculty do what they do because they LOVE their work. As the above participant stated, many would do it for free. And yet, many of the grievances that contingent faculty report could be fixed for free. Salary and even workload aside, they want to be valued. One important form of value is showing them respect. *“I won a university-wide teaching award this year, the first adjunct ever to do so at this university and got absolutely no change in respect or attitude toward me. If anything, jealousy from my colleagues. I teach for the students, but it would be nice to get respect.”*

No matter how long they’ve held the position, no matter how excellent their student evaluations are, it always comes back to respect from colleagues and from the institution itself. *“It’s frustrating that after 20 years as adjunct I have no more respect or seniority than graduate students.”*

So how do we make this right? Administrators should model institutions who support contingent faculty and value their expertise and autonomy. *“In particular our program has always respected those of us with industry experience and has built a program around our talents. I’ve*

had the opportunity to develop new courses in the program. My work is very fulfilling because I'm doing more than just teach multiple sections of the service course.” This participant discusses her own job satisfaction because her program values her expertise and experiences, and it demonstrates how listening to contingent voices can enhance programs and departments.

Happiness

After breaking down contingent life into many separate issues, it was still important to get a sense of satisfaction overall. In this section, we provide the results to the question: “Are you happy working as a contingent faculty member?” See Figure 8.

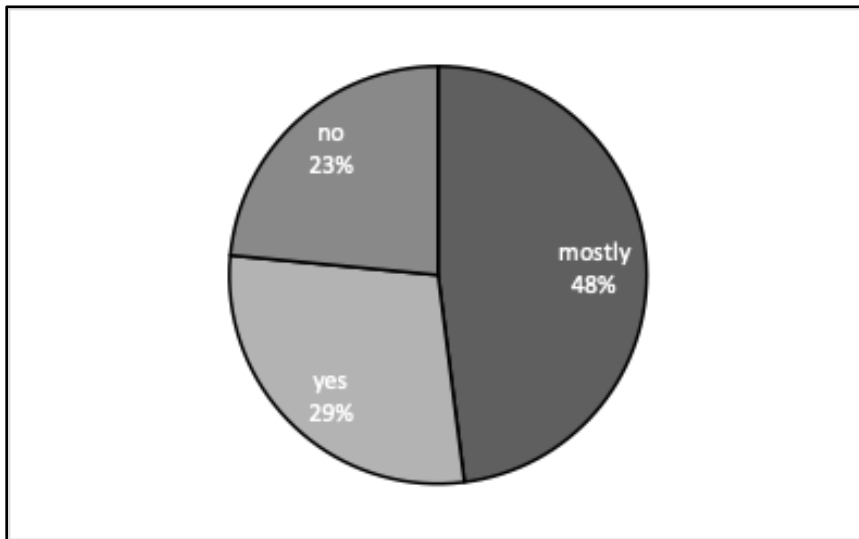


Figure 8: Are You Happy Working as a Contingent Faculty Member? (n = 298)

Figure 8 shows that almost half of respondents are mostly happy working as a contingent faculty member and went on to share their many, varied reasons for this. In the end, we understand that if people didn’t perceive “contingency” as a bad word, as a disease, and if contingent faculty were afforded the same securities and opportunities as their tenure-track peers, many would be happy to remain in their contingent positions.

I'm not sure how to answer this, to be honest. I came to this university 20 years ago this year ABD. I finished my dissertation, earned my doctorate, and intended to go on the market, but I had already fallen in love with the place, my colleagues, and my students. For many years, I felt very welcome in the department, and I was able to serve in a variety of administrative positions and on many committees. However, in recent years, the attitude

toward instructors on the university level -- but particularly on the college level, where we are now saddled with an ineffective, dictatorial dean who has stated many times that she "hates instructors" -- has changed dramatically. We are now referred to not as "faculty" but as "contingent hires." So much for collegiality. Whereas in the past I've felt committed and dedicated and appreciated, now I'm counting down the years until I can retire -- and I hope to make it that far (12 more years). In the past, I had a vocation; now I have a job.

It is also clear that one can be happy with their role as contingent faculty and still see and voice concerns about the position's overall value within the department.

I am happy working as a contingent faculty member because I enjoy the time teaching and the fact that I am not tied to my office all day every day. I am able to be involved with my family and my community more because I don't have any obligations outside of my teaching. I am not happy with the position of instructor at the university. I would say we are low on the "totem pole" in our departments and have no real voice.

Once again, our call to action can be summarized by a participant who is valued and afforded opportunities as a contingent faculty member: *"I like being able to focus on teaching and my department mostly supports our individual desire to pursue our own research."* Our goal is to create a way to model the institutions who understand the value of affective investment, the value of respect, and the value of contingent faculty.

Conclusion

Our discussion of affective investment continues Wetherell's commitment to "understand the odd, the eerie, and the genuinely weird examples of pulses of affect in concrete terms" (160). Affective investment is our concrete—as much as discussing emotion and human reaction can ever be concrete—example of the practice and circulation of affect and the impact affect has when it is imbued with an investment.

In light of identifying the affective investment of contingent faculty, we must now ask: where do we start in order to help alleviate the chasm between brutality and beauty? This question of *where* to invest is as important as *what* to invest. And a partial answer can be found in the discussion of the material dimensions we found from our participants. The material work conditions, and the material dimensions discussed above, breed a psychological and physiological state that frames and affects other aspects of life. Having a better vocabulary—the affective investment—and data can help program administrators and faculty allies "argue for any and all approaches, including emotional and affective efforts, that define

meaningful work in as capacious a way as possible, rather than singularly in service of market values” (Doe, Maisto, & Adsit 231-232). Since affective investment is connected to the always-in-motion and in-flux human dimensions of embodiment, affect, and people’s reactions to material conditions, we have offered some specific ways that program administrators and tenure-track faculty can help mitigate and improve work conditions.

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