

**COMPARING PUBLIC SECONDARY TEACHERS IN ONTARIO**

**COMPARING PUBLIC SECONDARY TEACHERS IN ONTARIO WITH DIFFERENT  
LABOUR CONTRACTS IN A TIME OF CRISIS**

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## **Lay Abstract**

This project explored the differences between public secondary teachers with different contracts in Ontario before and during the COVID pandemic. It involved an online survey to help recruit participants and interviews with 36 teachers who were recruited from the online survey. Of the 36 teachers, 13 had permanent contracts, 16 had long term occasional (LTO) contracts, and 7 had occasional teaching (OT) contracts. The interviews and analysis revealed three points of interest: that precarious labour contracts in a tiered relationship with secure contracts can function as a disciplinary device, that larger contexts outside the contract shaped how the contract was experienced, and that teachers' unions can act as a source of solidarity and security during a crisis and when there are certain associations with its purpose. Teachers with different contracts had uniquely different experiences with their work, their union, and their individual health and household wellbeing before and during COVID.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation compares the work and life of secondary public-school teachers in Ontario with different labour contracts during a time of crisis. The COVID public health crisis along with neoliberalism, the defunding of public education, and a climate crisis have all influenced governmental policies and the labour process of public secondary teachers in Ontario. The influences that different contracts can have on the labour process of teachers, how they feel towards their union, and the impacts on their individual health and household wellbeing before and during the first year of the COVID pandemic is the focus of this dissertation.

To help explore these contexts and the influences on the life and labour of public secondary teachers in Ontario with different contracts, I have used research from studies in Labour Process Theory, precarious work, and educational labour to inform my analysis. Along with those areas of discourse, I have also used insights from research into Critical Realism and Thematic Analysis to think through and discuss the differences between the teachers I interviewed and connect their experiences with work, their union, and their individual health and household well-being to larger systems, structures, and histories.

The interviews conducted revealed three points of interest: that precarious labour contracts can function as a disciplinary device, that larger contexts outside the contract shaped how the contract was experienced, and that teachers' unions can act as a source of solidarity and security during a crisis and when there are certain associations with its purpose. This exploratory research aims to open up future areas of research into educational labour and differences between the experiences of educators with different contracts.

## Acknowledgments

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Of course, I could not have even begun a PhD program if it was not available, so I would like to thank McMaster University's School of Labour Studies for offering such an important program and providing an excellent research community. The School of Labour Studies encourages an essential lens of analysis for understanding the lives of all workers that then leads to advocacy for improving those lives. This is an ongoing contribution that greatly benefits current and future researchers.

I would also like to thank the participants of this study: without their willingness to discuss difficult issues during the difficult time of the COVID pandemic and its aftermath, I would not have been able to pursue this research. Additionally, I would also like to say a big thank-you to all secondary teachers in Ontario, specifically, and to all kindergarten to higher learning educators, in general. During the neoliberal era and the increase of privatization policies, public educational sectors have often become challenging places in regard to workloads, changing levels of job security, and a private media sector that can often question the legitimacy of their work. Thank-you to all educators who are advocating and working towards a more equitable, just, and democratic world in this challenging landscape.

Finally, I would like to thank those closest to me. First, my partner, Cindy Gangaram. I cannot thank Cindy enough for her unwavering support during my studies and the example she lives by in her own life, where she works towards a more equitable and democratic public educational labour sector. She is a model for any unionist educator. I would like to thank my parents, Heather Brans-Wilkin, and Bob Wilkin, for their support, but especially my mom, who often heard the very rough versions of the ideas that I would eventually research and write about. I would also like to thank my parent-in-laws, Norma and Rolland Gangaram who likewise heard some of my very rough ideas and exemplified a mode of thinking and being that was critical and skeptical of exploitative power structures yet also joyful amidst such awareness.

# Table of Contents

Title page .....	i
Descriptive note.....	ii
Lay abstract.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Table of contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	x
<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 - The problem.....	1
1.2 - Summary and breakdown of hiring and teaching contracts in Ontario public systems.....	2
1.3 - What is the purpose of this study?.....	7
1.4 - Research questions.....	11
1.5 - Significance of this study.....	12
1.6 - Delimitations of this study.....	13
1.7 - Organization of this study.....	14
<b>Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 - Introduction.....	16
2.2 - Precarious work and public secondary teaching in Ontario.....	17
2.3 - Labour process theory (LPT) and educational labour processes.....	30
2.4 - Teacher professionalism, teacher identity, and teachers' unions.....	36
2.5 - Summary.....	53
<b>Chapter 3 - Research Methods.....</b>	<b>55</b>
3.1 - Introduction.....	55
3.2.1 - Theoretical Framework: Critical Realism (CR) and Labour Process Theory (LPT).....	56
3.2.2 - Theoretical Framework: Historicizing identities, hierarchies, and inequities within Ontario educational labour.....	61
3.3 - Positionality.....	64
3.4:1 - Gathering data: Ontario educational labour.....	65
3.4.2 - Gathering data: Using social media for research.....	67
3.4.3 - Gathering data: The survey and the Employment Precarity Index (EPI).....	69
3.4.4 - Gathering data: Selecting interview participants and the interviews.....	78
3.4.5 - Gathering data: Using Zoom for online interviews.....	84
3.5.1 - Reading and reporting the data: Using Thematic Analysis (TA).....	86
3.5.2 - Reading and reporting the data: Creating themes of 'positive, mixed, and negative experiences/expressions/responses.....	90
3.5.3 - Why I used Thematic Analysis and visual graphs to display my readings of participant feelings.....	95
3.6 - Researching precarious educational work during COVID.....	97
3.7 - Summary.....	99

<b>Chapter 4 - History and Identity</b> .....	<b>101</b>
4.1 - Introduction.....	101
4.2 - 1840s - 1940s - Precarious teaching in Ontario.....	103
4.3 - 1940s - 2000s - Secure teaching increasing.....	113
4.4 - 2000s - 2020s - Precarious teaching increasing.....	129
4.5 - Summary.....	134
<b>Chapter 5 – Work</b> .....	<b>136</b>
5.1 - Introduction.....	136
5.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts Describe their Working Conditions.....	137
5.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>positive</i> view of working conditions.....	137
5.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>mixed</i> view of working conditions.....	142
5.2.3 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>negative</i> view of working conditions.....	153
5.3 - Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and Views of Work.....	165
<b>Chapter 6 - The Union</b> .....	<b>169</b>
6.1 - Introduction.....	169
6.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Views on Their Union.....	170
6.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>positive</i> view of their union.....	170
6.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>mixed</i> view of their union.....	180
6.2.3 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>negative</i> view of their union.....	192
6.3 - Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and How They Viewed Their Union.....	203
<b>Chapter 7 - Individual Health and Household Well-being</b> .....	<b>205</b>
7.1 - Introduction.....	205
7.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Individual Health and Household Well-being.....	206
7.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with <i>positive</i> expressions towards their individual health and household well-being.....	206
7.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with <i>mixed</i> expressions towards individual health and household well-being.....	211
7.2.3 - Teachers under different contracts with <i>negative</i> expressions towards individual health and household well-being.....	226
7.3 - Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and Expressions About Individual Health and Household Well-being.....	243
<b>Chapter 8 - Influences from COVID</b> .....	<b>246</b>
8.1 - Introduction.....	246
8.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts Describe their <i>Working Conditions</i> During COVID.....	247
8.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>positive</i> view of working conditions during COVID.....	249
8.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>mixed</i> view of working conditions during COVID.....	251
8.2.3 - Teachers with a <i>negative</i> view of working conditions during COVID.....	260
8.2.4 - Summary of the different expressions about <i>work</i> during COVID.....	271



8.3 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and <i>Their Union</i> during COVID.....	272
8.3.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>positive</i> view of their union during COVID.....	273
8.3.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>mixed</i> view of their union during COVID...278	
8.3.3 - Teachers under different contracts with a <i>negative</i> view of their union during COVID.....	283
8.3.4 - Summary of the different expressions by teachers under different contracts about <i>their union</i> during COVID.....	289
8.4 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their <i>Individual Health and Household Well-being</i> During COVID.....	290
8.4.1 – Teachers under different contracts with <i>positive</i> expressions about individual health and household well-being during COVID.....	292
8.4.2 - Teachers under different contracts with <i>mixed</i> expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID.....	295
8.4.3 - Teachers under different contracts with <i>negative</i> expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID.....	301
8.4.4 - Summary of <i>individual health and household well-being</i> during COVID.....	310
<b>Chapter 9 - Key Findings, Policies, and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>312</b>
9.1 - Introduction.....	312
9.2 - Summary of key findings.....	312
9.3 - Limitations of this study.....	316
9.4 - Theoretical implications.....	318
9.5 - Policy recommendations.....	320
9.6 - Recommendations for research.....	331
9.7 - Conclusion.....	332
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>386</b>

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1</b> – Contract status hierarchy pyramid.....	15
<b>Figure 2</b> - Breakdown of number of <i>survey participants</i> who started and finished the survey...75	75
<b>Figure 3</b> - Breakdown of interview participants: Contract type, race, and gender identities.....76	76
<b>Figure 4</b> - Interview participants: Contract type, race, gender identity, and EPI scores.....77	77
<b>Figure 5</b> - Demographic breakdown of <i>interview participants</i> organized by contract type.....83	83
<b>Figure 6</b> - <i>Interview participants</i> with pseudonyms and EPI scores.....100	100
<b>Figure 7</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards <i>work</i> before COVID from the teachers under different contracts.....136	136
<b>Figure 8</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards <i>the union</i> before COVID from the teachers under different contracts.....169	169
<b>Figure 9</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions regarding the <i>individual health and household well-being</i> of teachers under different contracts before COVID.....205	205
<b>Figure 10</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards <i>work</i> before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.....247	247
<b>Figure 10a</b> - Changes in permanent teacher responses about work.....248	248
<b>Figure 10b</b> - Changes in LTO teacher responses about work.....248	248
<b>Figure 10c</b> - Changes in OT responses about work.....249	249
<b>Figure 11</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards <i>their union</i> before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.....272	272
<b>Figure 11a</b> - Changes in permanent teacher responses about their union.....272	272
<b>Figure 11b</b> - Changes in LTO teacher responses about their union.....273	273
<b>Figure 11c</b> - Changes in OT responses about their union.....273	273
<b>Figure 12</b> - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions about their <i>individual health and household well-being</i> before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.....290	290
<b>Figure 12a</b> - Changes in permanent teacher responses about their individual health and household well-being.....291	291
<b>Figure 12b</b> - Changes in LTO teacher responses about their individual health and household well-being.....291	291
<b>Figure 12c</b> - Changes in OT responses about their individual health and household well-being.....292	292

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

CR	Critical Realism
CTA	Critical Thematic Analysis
EPI	Employment Precarity Index
ETFO	Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
LPT	Labour Process Theory
LTO	Long Term Occasional
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECTA	Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association
OCT	Ontario College of Teachers
OSSTF Ontario	Ontario Secondary Schools Teacher Federation
OT	Occasional Teacher
PEPSO	Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario
PERM	Permanent
PREP	Preparation time/period
QUAD	Quadmester
Reg.274	Regulation 274
SOP	Standards of Practice
STO	Short Term Occasional
TA	Thematic Analysis

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 - The problem

This thesis explores the experiences of secondary teachers in Ontario with different labour contracts before and during COVID<sup>1</sup>. It discusses the experiences of the different teachers and how those were shaped and influenced by their type of labour contract before and during a pandemic. Contemporary research has highlighted several issues of relevance to a study of teachers in different labour contracts. These include issues of inequity involving teacher hiring practices (Abawia & Eizadirad, 2020), inequities and hierarchies between contracts (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021), professionalism in teaching (Pennycooke, 2014; Rogers, 2018), and the influence of precarity on a unionized workspace within the Ontario secondary educational labour sector (Ross, 2017). Research into occasional teaching in Ontario shows that many teachers are working with precarious occasional labour contracts (Abawia & Eizadirad, 2020; Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021). Research into precarious work (Kalleberg, 2011; Lewchuk et al., 2011; 2014a; 2014b; Standing, 2014; 2021) is interested in examples involving professional workers, like teachers, and precarious employment. Studies in labour process theory (LPT) and educational labour processes (Connell & Crawford, 2007; Grugulis & Lloyd, 2010; Jaros, 2010; Reid, 2003;

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis you will see the term COVID as short for COVID-19. At one point during the research, I had thought to use the terms SARS2, or SARS-CoV-2 which is the medical term often used in academic literature whereas COVID-19 or COVID are more so public relations terms. COVID-19 or COVID, were primarily used for public relations purposes (World Health Organization, 2020) and are the terms many people are familiar with. To help with readability, I have used the popular term COVID that people are familiar with. It might also be misguided to use SARS2 in that some researchers are suggesting that there are possibly multiple variations of SARS circulating (John Snow Project Editorial, 2023).

Ross & Savage, 2022; Smith, 2010; Smyth et al., 2000) can be built upon with examples of the labour processes of different types of public sector workers, like teachers with different contracts.

Teachers' unions are seeing a changing prevalence in the number of occasional teachers and changing structures within their unions resulting in a contract status hierarchy<sup>2</sup> (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Pollock, 2010; Yearwood, 2021). For teachers, these changes involve differences in material security and rankings in contract status hierarchies between fellow union members and they have implications for how teachers with different contracts feel about notions of professionalism, as well as their relationships with their union and their employer. Reports by the Canadian Education Association (Leithwood & Mcadie, 2010), research coming from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) (Livingstone, 2018) and studies involving the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018), all point to a need for more research into specific issues related to the educational labour process of teaching within specific localities. The focus of this study on the different experiences of secondary teachers with different labour contracts in Ontario, aims to add to the various discourses around precarious employment, educational labour processes, teacher professionalism, and teacher unionism. The teachers with different labour contracts that were interviewed for this study had different experiences and feelings relating to those areas of discourse and the pandemic also influenced those differences.

## **1.2 - Summary and breakdown of hiring and teaching contracts in Ontario public systems**

Beginning a career as a teacher in Ontario has not been easy for many aspiring teachers. Accusations of nepotism, favoritism, and a lack of transparency have been

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Figure 1 at the end of this chapter for a breakdown of the hierarchy

common. Regulation 274 (Reg.274) was implemented in 2012 to help add a transparent hiring structure and regulatory system that would ideally transition teachers from an occasional teacher (OT) contract, where they worked day to day supply teaching as OTs, to regular long term occasional (LTO) contracts and then to a permanent contract<sup>3</sup>. By the Spring of 2021 Reg.274 was no longer in use because it was removed by the conservative government in Fall 2020. The government argued that principals were saying Reg.274 “complicated the hiring process” and prevented them from hiring “the best fit for the job” (Rushowy, 2019). With the removal of Reg.274 school board hiring went back to what it was in the pre-Reg.274 era, which was like an open market to all those with a qualified license. With Reg.274 there was a formal even if flawed process and regulatory system. Since the removal of Reg.274 there is no longer a regulated hiring and transitioning process from being an OT to working with an LTO or gaining a permanent contract. The primary formal process that remains is the educational credentialing process a teacher goes through prior to becoming a teacher.

To begin the path to a teaching career, an aspiring teacher needs to first obtain an undergraduate degree. In addition to an undergraduate degree, teachers’ college is the next step and is two years long. In 2015 it was raised from the previous one-year requirement. Prior to COVID-19, teachers’ college graduates could spend up to a year or more volunteering time in schools. This was done with the hope of getting an interview and being successful so they could get on a school board supply teaching list, also known as the OT roster. The lengthy volunteer times have since changed during the pandemic and teachers can now get on an OT roster with a local school board right out of teacher’s college without volunteering. However, with possibly six years’ worth of student debt and no guarantee of paid secure permanent contract employment,

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<sup>3</sup> Each of these contracts is described in detail on p.5 in this chapter.

for socio-economically marginalized groups this hiring model could prevent them from pursuing a career in teaching.

Once a person can pursue a teaching career and they graduate teachers' college they usually apply to a school board with the hopes of getting on the OT roster. If they get an interview and are successful, they are then placed on the supply teacher/occasional teaching (OT) roster. To remain on this roster year after year, an OT needs to work a minimum number of days, which could vary by school board from as little as a couple of days to a couple of dozen days per year. If the minimum days are not worked, the OT can be removed from the OT roster and would no longer be employed with that school board<sup>4</sup>. When on the OT roster, in addition to day-to-day supply teaching, OTs can usually apply for LTO work. LTO work is any job that is longer than 10 days. When in an LTO a teacher is still an OT, but not a day-to-day OT. However, if their LTO is less than full-time they can then be an OT for day-to-day work during the time of the day they are not working. Sometimes the end date of an LTO is known in advance and sometimes it is not. When the LTO ends, the teacher becomes a regular OT again and can apply to further LTO jobs if they come up, or they can day-to-day supply teach. An OT could work as a part time LTO during half of the day and as a supply OT in the other half of the day. An LTO could be one course, or a full course timetable. Depending on the language in the local collective agreement (CA), an LTO could end abruptly when the permanent contract teacher decides to return or the LTO could be given advance notice when the LTO ends. If the LTO assignment is 90 calendar days or longer, teachers in an LTO contract are entitled to the

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<sup>4</sup> Additionally, occasional teachers can lose their job if they forget to renew their Ontario college of teachers (OCT) teaching certificate. Occasional teachers (OTs and LTOs) must pay for this on their own, whereas permanent contract teachers have this renewed for them and the fees are taken from their pay. The most recent annual fees as of 2023 are \$200.00, approximately one day worth of pay for an occasional teacher.

same benefits that teachers with permanent contracts have. When the LTO ends, the benefits end.

When Reg.274 was in use it created an LTO list<sup>5</sup>. OTs could interview to get on the LTO list. The OTs on the LTO list could often work consecutive LTO jobs as they became available and could then apply to permanent contract jobs if they became available. An OT not on the LTO list could still apply to LTO jobs that teachers on the LTO list passed over, but the OT could generally not be hired permanently until they went through the LTO list. With Reg.274 gone, teachers can be hired into permanent jobs without having to work as an OT or LTO teacher. There is currently no formal and transparent system that helps transition teachers from a day-to-day supply teacher with an OT contract to then reliable LTO contracts and then to a probable permanent contract that a teacher can reasonably anticipate.

### **A breakdown of the different teacher labour contracts in Ontario**

- People with Occasional Teacher (OT)/Short Term Occasional (STO) contracts are usually referred to as ‘OTs’ in day-to-day operations. Teachers with these contracts work any job they pick up that is less than 10 days, usually through a call out or online system. OTs are only paid for the days they work, and they do pay into a pension but generally do not have access to benefits. A teacher often starts as an OT and is an OT/supply teacher for a time, sometimes for a very brief time, before they apply for or are offered an LTO. However, some teachers with OT contracts choose to work with them because they are retired teachers or it fits their lifestyle, but it seems that many teachers with OT and LTO contracts would prefer permanent employment.
- People with OT/Long Term Occasional (LTO) contracts are usually referred to as ‘LTOs’ in day-to-day operations, but they are also technically OTs when in the LTO

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<sup>5</sup> The LTO list was carried out differently in different boards. In some boards most of the occasional teachers could be on the list if they passed some type of interview. The types of interviews varied by board between group interviews where most people were successful to highly competitive LTO list interview days where all candidates would wait and sit in a room to be interviewed individually by a panel of administrators and only a few would be successful. In some boards there could be a minority of occasional teachers on the list. Opportunities to ask to be interviewed to be on the list could happen on an annual basis, but this differed by board (Saldaris, 2014). The variation in how the LTO list was handled was one of the criticisms about Regulation 274, the Reg. that mandated school boards to have an LTO list.



and when not in the LTO. An LTO is any job 10 days or longer, when the LTO is over, unless the teachers get another LTO, they then become an OT/STO again. LTOs are paid the same rate as a similarly qualified teacher with a permanent contract when they are in the LTO and generally only have access to benefits when working with an LTO contract. Many teachers with LTO contracts would prefer a permanent contract. However, in some situations teachers might prefer a fulltime LTO contract over a part time permanent contract because they could make more money as a fulltime LTO than as a part time permanent contract teacher.

- People with permanent contracts are referred to just as ‘teachers’ more often than teachers who work with OT and LTO contracts, who are often referred to in relation to their contract type. Teachers with permanent contracts pay into a pension and always have access to benefits. A permanent contract is not necessarily fulltime for a full school year. A high school teacher in Ontario typically teaches six courses a year, or three a semester. A teacher could have anywhere between 1 course that is a permanent contract up to a full course load of six courses that are a part of their permanent contract. There can also be combinations where a teacher has some permanent contract courses and is an OT or LTO for the remainder of their course load.
- For this thesis teachers were classified as they identified, which could admittedly be inaccurate in some cases. For example, someone who mostly works as an OT could say they are in an LTO, however, there was no way to verify either way and the participants were taken at their word.

Day-to-day teachers with OT contracts and teachers with LTO contracts technically both have OT contracts. In a local union the teachers with LTO contracts are grouped with the OTs. A local union can have two separate bargaining units with teachers that have permanent contracts in one and teachers with OT contracts in the other. Or the locals can be combined with OTs and permanent contract teachers together in the same bargaining unit. Which of these two scenarios a local has depends on if there has been a vote by the membership to combine the two, and if not, they are separate. When separate, teachers with LTO and/or OT contracts are in the same unit. Generally, in day-to-day school operations, the term ‘OT’ is used for teachers with STO contracts instead of the term STO, so an STO is often just called an OT or a substitute/supply teacher. Teachers with LTO contracts are referred to as ‘LTOs’ if they are in an LTO.

Prior to the introduction of Reg.274 in 2012, teachers could be hired out of teachers' college into a permanent contract while other teachers could end up working for years or an indefinite amount of time with OT or LTO contracts. There were no rules that said a school board had to hire a teacher into a permanent contract once they were with the board as an occasional teacher. A teacher could teach in LTO assignments indefinitely, there was not a process that ensured them a route to a permanent contract. Pre-Reg.274 school board hiring structures resembled and even functioned as internally segmented labour markets that resembled a status hierarchy pyramid based on contract type<sup>6</sup>. Reg.274 was created to navigate the process through the segmentation, reduce nepotism, and create transparency and was debatably successful. Since the removal of Reg.274 transparency has been reduced and the segmentation reinforced. How this labour dynamic between the teachers that work with the three different contract types of OT, LTO, and permanent is shaped by the type of contract the teachers have, and how those contracts also influence the experiences of the teachers involving their work, their union, their individual health, and household well-being, before and during the first year of COVID is the focus of this thesis.

### **1.3 - What is the purpose of this study?**

In June 2011, I completed teachers' college. In September 2011, I began volunteering a few days a week in a high school. A couple of months later I was offered an interview for a position on the occasional teacher (OT) roster with a local school board. I was successful in the interview and shortly after began occasional day-to-day supply teaching and soon after that worked as a long term occasional (LTO) teacher. In 2012 Regulation 274 (Reg. 274) was

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<sup>6</sup> See Figure 1 at the end of this chapter for an image of the contract status hierarchy pyramid.

implemented to address claims of unfair hiring practices and to create a transparent hiring process (Mancini, 2019) for occasional teachers trying to find secure work in the Ontario educational labour market. The primary change that Reg.274 created was the requirement that school boards have an ‘LTO list’. The LTO list would supposedly provide a more transparent and equitable hiring process. One way of looking at the LTO list is that it formalized the contract status hierarchy pyramid with teachers that have permanent contracts at the top and teachers with LTO contracts below them and teachers with OT contracts, at the bottom (Pollock, 2008; Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016). Only people on the LTO list could apply for and be interviewed for permanent contracts. When a permanent job became available, the five people on the LTO list with the most seniority and the needed qualifications were interviewed. Prior to Reg.274, there was no reason school boards had to interview five teachers with the most seniority for a job. Reg.274 and the LTO list will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

When I was hired by a school board as an OT in 2011, all that I needed to do to maintain my contract from year to year was to work the minimum number of days per year that was established in the local collective agreement (CA). If I wanted to pursue permanent contract employment, I would generally first need to find work as a long term occasional (LTO) teacher. After one school year as an occasional teacher (OT), I was offered my first LTO assignment for a full semester. A couple of years later, after a few successful LTOs but being unsuccessful in my attempts to get on the LTO list I started asking questions about the secondary educational labour system in Ontario. Some of my initial questions included, why are teachers allowed to continually work LTOs - some for 10 years or longer - but not work with a secure contract? How are the experiences of work and the influences on homelife different and alike for the teachers with OT and LTO contracts and teachers with permanent contracts who often do similar work,

but have very different levels of job security? Were the experiences that others and I were having the result of the neoliberal policies, cultural shifts, and structural changes that I learned about as an MA student studying cultural studies and critical theory? I also heard many of my colleagues asking like-minded questions which made me think that my experiences were not isolated and that others were also experiencing a precarious pathway into the teaching profession. I could not help but wonder, was it always like this? If not, why now? And if so, to what degree?

I wanted answers for these questions and to help get some ideas into this situation that others and I were experiencing, I began searching Google Scholar (Guesenbauer, 2019). I looked for articles on precarious work, precarious education work, and educational labour history in Ontario, in general. One of the first sources I came across was a dissertation by Mindzak (2016). Mindzak's (2016) research involved studying the working lives of un(der)employed teachers in Ontario and it spoke to the experiences that others and I were having. Through Mindzak's (2016) work I came across research by Pollock (2007; 2008; 2010; 2012) and Chalikakis (2012) whose work also discussed issues of precarious teachers, inequity in teacher labour, and teacher labour contract hierarchies in Ontario educational labour. This research primarily focused on precarious teachers whereas my aims are to extend from their work and compare the two groups of precarious teachers, the teachers with OT contracts and the teachers with LTO contracts with each other, as well as with teachers who have permanent contracts.

During my early research I also came across a tool for measuring levels of precarity called the Employment Precarity Index (EPI). I thought that applying the EPI to responses from teachers with different contracts would allow me to gauge at what level were teachers who had occasional contracts considered precarious, according to the EPI (PEPSO, 2013; 2015). For my

searches into precarious work, I came across Lewchuk et al., (2011; 2014a; 2014b), Standing (2011), Vosko (2000), and the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) studies (2013; 2015). The PEPSO studies used the EPI to measure levels of precarity amongst workers in Southern Ontario and I thought applying this tool for measuring levels of precarity amongst occasional teachers would help add to the discourses of both precarious work and educational labour.

Labour Process Theory (LPT) in education was another area of research that overlapped into studies of precarious education work and stood out in my early research. Therefore, I wanted to better understand the role of the teachers in the larger political economy and how issues of state power, teacher professional autonomy (or lack of), and union solidarity, interact and create tensions within educational labour spaces between management and teachers with different contracts and between the teachers themselves (Connell & Crawford, 2007; Reid, 2003; Smith, 2010; Smyth et al., 2000). I discuss my use of LPT and ways that it informed my analysis of the contract status hierarchy and the research data in Chapters 2 and 3. Smyth et al. (2000) sum up their belief that LPT is an important tool for analyzing educational labour processes, “In our view, labour process theory in education offers a potentially powerful lens through which to understand what is happening to the work of educators today” (p.31). The overlaps of precarious work, educational labour, and my own experiences encouraged me to apply to McMaster’s School of Labour Studies so that I could study how working with different labour contracts influenced the workspace, health, and household well-being of different teachers.

When I was beginning my doctoral studies at McMaster, I felt I lacked a way to discuss what I would learn about in an engaging way. My goal was to directly connect what I

experienced during fieldwork interviews with the events discussed in the interviews, the data from an online survey, and what the theories guiding me suggested in relation to larger structures and systemic features. To help with this, my advisor, Dr. Wayne Lewchuk recommended I investigate research that had used critical realism (CR) and thematic analysis (TA).

Both CR and TA, which I discuss in Chapter 3, became the tools that guided my LPT analysis into precarious work and educational labour amongst secondary teachers in Ontario. TA helped structure my fieldwork analysis and encouraged me to add a level of emotional comparison between the teachers with different contracts while CR forced me to build my analysis from what was expressed in the interviews while connecting that experience to larger events and structures. TA and CR work well together for producing causal explanations (Fryer, 2022) and CR and LPT have “potential synergies” (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p. 47). The purpose of this study is to fill in the research gaps within Ontario educational labour and precarious work while also adding to the increasing number of studies that are using different blends of TA and CR in their analysis. Overall, this project hopes to provide a voice for occasional secondary teachers in Ontario who can feel marginalized from their work or profession, their union, and their personal networks.

#### **1.4 - Research questions**

*1. How do teachers with different labour contracts feel towards their work and their union? How do these differ?*

*2. When comparing teachers with different labour contracts, how do their experiences and feelings towards work and their contract influence their homelife, and health. How do these differ?*

*3. How have these feelings changed since COVID-19?*

To answer the research questions, I used a mixed methods approach and combined an online survey with a variety of different questions asked during one-on-one interviews with teachers selected from the survey. The interview questions were intended to draw out in depth responses and a variety of experiences that I eventually, with the help of TA as a guide, classified into positive, mixed, and negative expressions or experiences for each participant towards each of the research questions<sup>7</sup>. I then used these themes to guide the findings and discussions in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. I discuss this process in Chapter 3 Research Methods.

### **1.5 - Significance of this study**

This study is the first study to compare secondary teachers with occasional teaching (OT) contracts, long term occasional (LTO) contracts, and permanent contracts in Ontario and the influences that their labour contract has on their experiences of their work, their union, and their individual health and household well-being. It is also the first study that compares the experiences of secondary teachers within the three contract types before and during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. This project adds to studies into precarious work and educational labour processes, contains historical and comparative examples of different teachers with different labour contracts in a specific Canadian province before and during COVID-19, while also emphasizing issues of social and workplace inequity that is enabled through a contract status hierarchy.

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<sup>7</sup> I have used the terms 'positive' as a synonym for 'favorable' and 'negative' as a synonym for 'unfavorable'. The term 'mixed' represents a mixture of favorable/positive and unfavorable/negative experiences/expressions/responses.

## **1.6 - Delimitations of this study**

This study aims to broaden the discourse in the areas of precarious work and educational labour processes as well as teacher professionalism and unionism. Through these aims I hope to highlight issues of inequity in the workplace and how levels of material security in the homelife are influenced and shaped through working with a certain type of labour contract. This thesis will not focus on issues of teacher pedagogy and best practices, although they will be discussed. My thesis will show how significant aspects about being a teacher such as the level of job security, notions of professionalism, and relationships with colleagues, employers, and the union, are influenced and significantly shaped by the type of labour contract the teacher has and that most of these issues stayed somewhat the same and a few became somewhat more significant during COVID-19. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, which are the findings and discussions' chapters are structured in a way that allows for the positive, mixed, and negative expressions/experiences of the teachers with different contracts regarding the topics of the research questions to be compared.

My first research question was designed to focus on the differences between the relationships that stem from work, like those with colleagues, the union, and the employer. The second research question was intended to help teachers talk about how their experiences regarding their household, individual health, and relationships outside of work were influenced by the type of labour contract they had. The third question was created to consider the before and during COVID-19 differences around these same issues.

These questions were created to allow teachers to talk about themselves and their feelings and to avoid the discussions overlapping too much into issues about their students. This is not to say that comments about students and connections relating to them could not add value to my



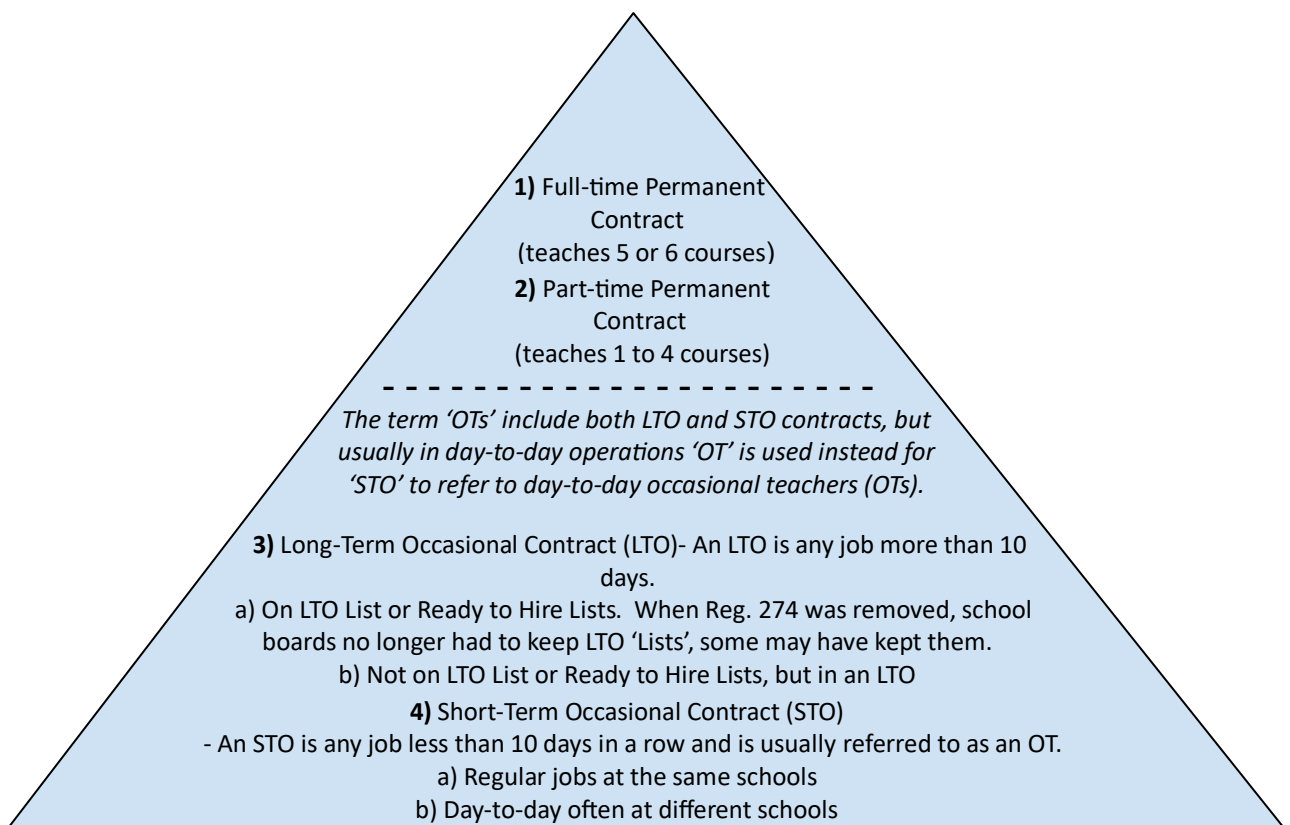
research, they did, and I include some of this in the discussion chapters. However, I did not want the students to be the primary focus. Additionally, aside from some areas in Chapter 4 History and Identity that discuss the general pre-college and pre-university education system in Ontario as a whole, this study focuses on public secondary level teachers in the province of Ontario, so elementary levels, private schools, and comparison with other provinces will be mentioned at times but not focused on.

### **1.7 - Organization of this study**

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Following this Chapter 1 Introduction, Chapter 2 Literature Review looks at some of the research into precarious work, precarious teaching in Ontario, LPT, educational labour processes, teacher professionalism and teacher unionism. Chapter 3 Research Methods discusses using CR and TA with LPT, adapting the EPI, the benefits of historical context, the importance of identity, the processes involved in my fieldwork, how I went about creating the positive, mixed, and negative charts to go along with my TA, and doing research during COVID-19. Chapter 4 History and Identity explores the evolving relationship between teachers in Ontario, their union, and the state from the mid 1800s until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are my findings and discussion chapters. Chapter 5 Work discusses the responses by teachers from each contract type to the interview questions that relate to the first research question as does Chapter 6, the Union. Chapter 7 Individual Health and Household well-being focuses on the responses from the teachers towards the interview questions that corresponded with research question number two. Chapter 8 Influences from COVID-19 compares differences between the teachers' experiences from what they remembered before the pandemic began and what their experiences were like one year into the pandemic. Lastly, Chapter 9 Policies and Conclusion recommends policies that

could be adopted by governments and school boards so that they provide income security, secure work for teachers, and greater consistency for students. There are also policy recommendations for unions to help address issues that are preventing greater levels of solidarity, communication, and mobilization. The chapter ends with some final reflections. Following Chapters 1-9 are the appendices and bibliography.

**Figure 1 - Ontario Public Education System: Teacher labour contract pyramid and contract status hierarchy**



Adapted from: Pollock (2008); Chalikakis (2012); Mindzak (2016).

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

### **2.1 - Introduction**

This chapter surveys the relevant literature for the three primary areas of discourse that informed this study: precarious work and precarious teaching contracts, labour process theory and its influence on educational labour process literature, as well as teacher professionalism and teacher unionism. Section 2.1 looks at how the literature on precarious work is important for contemporary studies into educational labour by discussing similarities between the literature on precarious work outside of education labour sectors with the literature on precarious work inside of them. Section 2.2 highlights research into educational labour processes and their theoretical origins in the field of Labour Process Theory (LPT). Section 2.3 discusses research that connects ideas around teacher professionalism to teacher unionism, some of which minimizes issues of precarious work in Ontario secondary teaching. Issues involving teacher professionalism overlap with issues of teacher unionism and vice versa. Certain notions of teacher professionalism and unionism have had reinforcing roles in the capitalist labour process of teachers while also providing openings to challenge those exploitative processes. The literature into precarious work, labour process theory, teacher professionalism and public-school teachers' unions, all have evolving historical lenses and multiple angles of analysis ranging from the micro to the macro that provide critical insights for researchers of educational systems in general and of educational labour contracts, specifically. They all provide rich reference points and research openings for analyzing and discussing differences in the work and life of teachers with different labour contracts and within larger contexts.

These lenses helped focus my reading, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of the findings with an ethos that is supportive of labour, public education, and other equity seeking

movements. In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, I discuss the findings for this project. I connect the findings to issues related to LPT, precarious work, teacher professionalism, and teacher unionism while highlighting the positive, mixed, and negative feelings towards work, the union, individual health, and household well-being that were expressed by the teachers who were interviewed. Using the insights from critical realism (CR) via thematic analysis (TA) allows me to discuss the initial surface readings and interpretation of the interviews (the empirical) through the perspective that the interviewee expressed a positive, mixed, or negative feeling towards the topic of one of the research questions and to then connect that reading to larger topics. CR guided by the discourses of LPT, precarious work, teacher unionism, and teacher professionalism allowed for deeper analysis and making connections with events and regularities shared by the teachers about their life and work (the actual). Research into LPT, precarious work, teacher professionalism, and teacher unionism can also connect to larger structures like governments, transnational organizations, union bureaucracies, private interests, and public policies (the real). The ideas I have taken from these areas of discourse have allowed me to connect my direct readings of the interviews with the ideas expressed in them and then to my own structural and theoretical understandings.

## **2.2 – Precarious work and public secondary teaching in Ontario**

Research into precarious labour has focused on the inequitable divisions between precarious work and access to secure work, largely based on identity (Premji et al., 2014; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Senthanaar et al., 2021; Vosko, 2000), its change in size and form (Green, 2007; Kalleberg, 2011; Lewchuk et al., 2014b; Standing, 2021; Weil, 2017), and its negative influences on the social outcomes of workers, households, and communities (Ciulla, 2000; Cooper, 2019; Crompton, 2006; Lewchuk et al., 2011; Sennett, 1998). Research by critical scholars is also

pointing to the historical aspects of precarity, its contrast with SER jobs, and its relationship with capitalist political economies (Betti, 2018; Lewchuk & Lafleche, 2014a; Quinlin, 2012; Van Arsdale, 2016). Ontario educational labour research is beginning to point to the issue of increasing precarity in unionized, public sector educational labour (Abawia & Eizadirad, 2020; Mindzak, 2016; Ross, 2017; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021). The different identities of teachers who experience precarious work, the historical changes in levels of precarity, and the importance of equity and inclusion within educational spaces make the literature around precarious educational work important for research into educational systems, equitable public sector hiring practices, conceptions of teacher professionalism, and the roles of public education teachers' unions within neoliberal capitalism.

### **A short history of precarious work and the identities of workers with precarious contracts**

Vosko's (2000) research raised awareness into the inequitable, racialized, and gendered nature of precarious employment in the neoliberal period. Vosko (2000) argues that precarious work does not impact all communities the same. In some literature, precarious work can be referred to as 'part-time' or 'flexible' work (Lever-Tracy, 1988), however, the benefits from these work arrangements appear to be primarily available to privileged groups of workers. There are even some labour sectors where the privileged and the precarious can co-exist within the same types of work but with different contracts (Kalleberg, 2011). For those working under the more favorable conditions of flexible work options, their experiences might be positive. In contrast to longer workdays and a set 40-hour work week or longer, precarious work that is flexible, part-time, or 'casual', might be more conducive to respecting people's individual lives and enabling them greater personal freedom (Vosko, 2000, p.166). Yet, "for most workers, the elusive promise of flexibility generates neither 'new' nor improved conditions of employment" (p.167).

Research into the health influences of precarious work suggests that many of the positive connotations stemming from the word ‘flexibility’, at best, apply to small groups of privileged and/or supported workers who can manage economic uncertainty between contracts that are often higher paying. At worst, they reveal the term to be a euphemism for precarious work that is experienced by a greater number of workers, many of whom are already made-marginalized via racialized, gendered, ableist, and lower socioeconomic identities, within the larger political-economy. There were examples of both types of experiences from the teachers with occasional (OT) and long term occasional (LTO) contracts who were interviewed for this project.

Kalleberg (2011), Lewchuk et al., (2011), Lewchuk et al., (2017a; 2017b) Standing (2011; 2014; 2021) and Vosko’s (2000) work provide data that points to neoliberal policies resulting in increases in flexible or precarious labour. Their work shows that it is increasing in prevalence and shifting into sectors which in recent times, were generally known for secure work. Despite some benefits for a few often already privileged workers, overall, precarious labour contracts are negatively influencing the social outcomes for many workers, households, and communities. These changes to job security in communities influence public schools directly by teachers working with insecure contracts who are in those schools more often, or indirectly, through less secure work being offered in other forms of employment for the surrounding community that the school is in (Wilson, 2015).

Interestingly, Lewchuk et al., (2011), point to Wallulis’s (1998) suggestion that the end of the standard employment relationship (SER) may also be the end of the nuclear family household and of stable marriages “as the basis for social reproduction” (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.121). In contrast to this view, Cooper’s (2017) work has shown that the decline of the SER has revived older forms of conservative family values and that reduced levels of SERs might

reinforce people’s reliance on family and relationship networks as opposed to eliminating them as forms of social reproduction. Because this reliance has largely been brought about by structural changes and not the agency of the individuals influenced by the changes, the older forms of systemic inequity such as racism, classism, and misogyny that the capitalist state structure has historically helped to shape, might also be reinforced. For many workers, most of whom are feminized and/or racialized and who have often been left out of SER work arrangements, ‘flexible’ work is precarious work and literature has shown that it has had detrimental influences on their personal health, their relationships, their general well-being, their households, and their communities (Ciulla, 2001; Crompton, 2006; Lewchuk et al., 2011; Lewchuk et al., 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; Mindzak, 2016; Ross, 2016; Sennett, 1998; Walkland, 2017).

Research into precarious work that uses the terminology ‘precarious work’, began to expand in the early 2000s (Betti, 2018; Vosko, 2000). The etymology of the word ‘precarious’ is said to date back to the Middle Ages or Early Modern era and was possibly used to describe workers' lives as early 1840 (Betti, 2018; Van Der Linden, 2016). Betti (2018), referencing Lorey’s (2015) use of Butler’s arguments, says that “the allegedly new neoliberal precarity has a long tradition in industrial capitalism, which has excluded women and migrants from social security provisions...” (Betti, 2018, p.290). However, what seems to be new is that recent research connects an increase in contemporary precarious work with the decrease in SER jobs and an increase in neoliberal pro-management policies. The connection between older forms of precarious work and the top-down structured influences on the labour market is something that Van Arsdale (2018) has written about. Van Arsdale (2018) has shown that there were entrepreneurial and management influences which helped to structure forms of precarity through

employment agencies beginning in the 17th century, well before the neoliberal era. Despite its long history within capitalist systems, recent literature discussing precarious work often associates its connection with the neoliberal preferences for privatization, deregulation, and commodification (Giroux, 2005; Mavelli, 2022).

Some researchers are looking into ways that jobs in unionized public sector work which were thought to be SER jobs, are being impacted by the neoliberal policy preferences for austerity and increased precarious work (Ball, 2012; Davies, 2014, 2016; Hill, 2005, 2006, 2010; McBride & Evans (eds.), 2017; McBride & Whiteside, 2011; Navarro, 2020; Peters, 2011; Prendergrast et al., 2017; Ross, 2017; Whiteside et al., 2021). Research since the early 2000s into the lives of precarious teachers in Canada has helped to highlight the connection between neoliberalism and ‘flexible’ or precarious public educational labour (Abawia & Eizadirad, 2020, Bocking, 2017; Chalikakis, 2012; Lin, 2005; Offori, 2022; Pollack, 2008, 2010; Ross, 2017; Mindzak, 2016; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021). Despite the growing literature into precarious educational work, there is still research into Ontario educational labour and teachers’ unions that does not overly identify teachers with different contracts (Pyne, 2017) or tends to conflate teachers with different contracts into a monolithic group of union members (Savage & Mancini, 2022). This thesis will help to fill this gap in the educational labour literature.

### **Precarious educational labour, occasional teachers in Ontario, and teacher well-being**

Lin’s (2005) research using data from Statistics Canada shows that part-time and non-permanent work by elementary and secondary teachers across Canada increased from approximately 14% in 1999 to almost 18% in 2005. Provincial government data from Ontario shows that between the early 2010s until 2020, the percentage of teachers with LTO contracts increased and that the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers decreased (Government of



Ontario, Ministry of Education). Pollack's (2008) research into the work of teachers with OT contracts and their identities, helped to bring awareness to issues around OT work in the early 2000s. Later, Pollock's (2010) research highlighted that OTs can be seen as a marginalized group in the broader teacher profession and that some of the identities of teachers with OT contracts can reflect identities that are marginalized in the larger Canadian political economy, such as new immigrants (Pollack, 2010, p.2).

Mindzak's (2016) dissertation into the working lives of unemployed and underemployed teachers in Ontario helped broaden the lens on the rise of public sector, unionized, precarious teacher contracts. Yearwood's (2021) thesis also shed light on teachers with precarious contracts who are seeking permanent employment. One limitation to Mindzak (2016) and Yearwood's (2021) dissertations is that, unlike Cleeland's (2007) study, which compared casual contract teachers with permanent contract teachers in Australia, the research from Ontario does not compare teachers with OT contracts to teachers with permanent contracts. However, Mindzak's (2016) and Yearwood's (2021) research was heavily based on interviews and one limitation to Cleeland's (2007) comparative study is that it was based on survey data only. Cleeland (2007) did reference some other qualitative studies that compared 'casual' teachers to teachers with permanent contracts and noted that there have been "few systematic attempts... to compare the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of casual relief teachers (CRTs) with permanent teachers" (p.1).

Cleeland (2007) did not combine their survey data with qualitative data taken from one-on-one interviews with the survey participants. Whereas Mindzak (2016) used primarily qualitative data from interviews to assess the experiences of 'un(der)employed' teachers in Ontario. Although Mindzak (2016) did not focus on comparing teachers with occasional

contracts to teachers with permanent contracts, Mindzak (2016) did draw attention to a hierarchy within teacher labour contracts in Ontario. Mindzak's (2016) detailed analysis of precarious education work in Ontario specifically referenced a labour contract status hierarchy (Pollock, 2008; Chalikakis, 2012) between teachers with OT contracts (who are on the bottom), teachers with LTO contracts (who are in the middle), and teachers with secure permanent contracts (who are on top) (Mindzak, 2016, p.20).

Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), Bocking (2017), Brock and Ryan (2016), Ross (2017), Walkland (2017), and Yearwood (2021) also draw attention to the issue of insecure teacher work in Ontario public education. In OSSTF's tri-annual publication *Forum*, Ross (2017) called attention to rising precarity in Ontario educational labour sectors. Ross (2017) highlights that increasing worker precarity benefits management over any gains from flexibility and freedoms for workers, it has "everything to do with employers' power to get the labour of well-educated workers without committing to a long-term employment relationship" (Ross, 2017). Not all research on educational labour discusses the inequity underlying precarious teaching. Other studies emphasize the influences of occasional teaching on a teacher's professional practice. An example of the latter can be found in Brock and Ryan's (2016) work.

Brock and Ryan (2016) investigated whether a teacher with an OT contract would be professionally prepared to teach with a permanent contract after "several years" working with an OT contract. The words, "precarious" and "precarity" do not appear in their article but the word, "flexibility" does. Using the word 'flexible' without mentioning the word 'precarious' could suggest a preference for a more euphemistic view of insecure teaching work. Brock and Ryan (2016) show that the "flexibility" in classroom skills is more demanding for teachers with OT contracts than permanent contracts. Brock and Ryan's (2016) work is representative of

educational labour research that focuses on professional aspects while minimizing or ignoring certain other workplace aspects, like the labour conditions and contracts for teachers. For example, the role of precarious work within capitalist political economies, equity in hiring, critical pedagogical practices, worker health and wellness, or teacher labour rights, which are all areas that have theoretical and research overlaps with issues around teacher professionalism, are largely absent. However, even when some educational labour literature does include insights into precarious teaching, it can be framed as being less of an issue in Ontario educational labour when compared to other educational systems.

Bocking's (2017) comparative work investigated the influences of neoliberalism on the autonomy of teachers in Mexico City, New York City, and Toronto. Bocking (2017) specifically mentions 'precarious' work and 'precariousness' in his Table of Contents for New York City and Mexico but does not include any mention of it for the entry about Toronto (p.4-5). Bocking (2017) suggests that precarious employment in Toronto schools is a result of "declining student enrolment and budget cuts" (p.57). Bocking's (2017) study focuses on what he argues is a loss of autonomy for teachers under neoliberalism and does not focus on the racial identities of the teachers in Ontario experiencing precarious work or compare them with teachers who have permanent contracts. On the other hand, the work of Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), Pollack (2010), Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), and Yearwood (2021) all add layers to the racial, gender, and socio-economic identities of teachers who are struggling to find secure work in Toronto and other Ontario school boards.

Walkland's (2017) thesis mentions that precarious teaching is a significant issue for certain identities in Ontario (p.95). Walkland's (2017) qualitative study of six occasional teachers in Ontario, including themselves, taught a mixture of grade ranges from K-12, and it

was based on monthly meetings over a five-month period. Walkland's (2017) "ethnography of a community of teachers" (p.16) helped shed light on the "tolls of precariousness" (p.51) that teachers in Ontario are experiencing. Walkland (2017) does focus on the influence that the "tolls of precariousness have on teaching and learning" (p.51). They also connect those "tolls" to larger systemic issues as well as making connections to the individual health and well-being of the teacher (p.81). In one instance, Walkland (2017) highlights the "toll" on a precarious teacher's well-being from teaching a course they felt unqualified for and pressured to teach because they had an insecure contract, specifically grade 10 Drama. One of Walkland's (2017) participants, "Amanda", expressed that teaching courses she felt pressured to teach because she was precarious was influencing her well-being, "it was affecting my mental health...my fiancé said: 'You're never teaching drama ever again!'". When teachers are insecure and trying to get hired, they may take on courses that they are not qualified to teach because they think an administrator will be appreciative and it may help them to get a secure contract. Or they may take an additional qualification (AQ) in an area they might not be interested in or feel competent in with the hope of getting hired because they feel it looks good to have more qualifications. However, in either case they may not feel good about teaching some of those courses and as a result, they might feel like Amanda did, where their "mental health" is 'affected' and members of their household, like Amanda's fiancé, seem to be 'affected' as well.

Mindzak (2016) also makes the connections between precarious teaching and the mental health and well-being of teachers and provides further details. Mindzak (2016) states that "In the Canadian context, there has emerged a strong body of literature surrounding the health effects of precarious employment" and he references Lewchuk et al., (2013), Lewchuk et al., (2011), Lewchuk et al., (2006), Law Commission of Ontario, (2012), and Scott-Marshall & Tompa,

(2011). Mindzak (2016) conducted a qualitative study of 24 occasional teachers to help learn more about how their states of “un(der)employment” were influencing their “working lives”. Although the focus is on their “working lives”, Mindzak (2016) also makes the connection to the “health effects of precarious employment” and one of the participants in his study connects their own precarity to influences on their well-being and “mental health” (p.151). ‘Sylvia’ states:

I’m frustrated every day. It’s emotional. When you want to talk about mental health and wellness, this plays at it, too, for a lot of teachers. It’s emotionally stressful and it drives me crazy, too, when they say ‘oh, we need to focus on mental health and support people with their mental health and young people (ibid).

Sylvia’s situation also draws attention to the unique experience faced by precarious teachers who work in an environment where there are at least rhetorical concerns about student mental health and teacher wellness. Indeed, Mindzak (2016) draws attention to a problematic dynamic when precarious work has negative influences on a worker’s mental health and that workers job involves helping ensure the health and well-being of students. Mindzak (2016) references Ashman and Gibson (2010) and writes that precarious teachers, “are not immune to mental health concerns and problems, and indeed their employment situations may make them even more likely to suffer from such problems” (p.152). Adding to this situation, Mindzak (2016) references Lewchuk et al., (2011) to show that for workers with precarious contracts their employment situation may actually be “worse” (Mindzak, 2016, p.152) for their health and well-being than having no job at all (ibid). For precarious teachers in LTOs like ‘Frances’, one of Mindzak’s participants, they reveal how even when a teacher with an LTO has a ‘long term’ contract their experience of work can often feel awkward and ‘stressful’:

I think the other thing is, the exhaustion. You’re tired constantly. You don’t eat properly. I lost about 10 pounds in September alone because I was so stressed. Part of that was of course getting an LTO and it being switched right before school started. I think the only other thing is as an LTO, when you’re walking into an established department, it’s hard....

But that's every LTO I guess, because you're just an LTO... you can't step on anyone's toes (p.117).

Importantly, Mindzak (2016) notes that teaching in general, regardless of contract type, “can be an extremely stressful job” (p.117) and referencing the work of Froese-Germain (2014) and Johnston-Gibbens (2014) indicates “many” teachers in Ontario experience stress, burnout, and challenges managing their personal health (Mindzak, 2016, p.117). However, Mindzak (2016) also argues that these challenges are made worse when they are “connected to the negative psycho-social effects of unemployment” (ibid.).

Yearwood (2021) too focuses on precarious teachers in their study. Yearwood (2021) collected data from 15 teachers who identified as LTOs, of which four identified as internationally educated teachers (IETs). All the participants sought full time permanent contract teaching work in Ontario. Yearwood's (2021) study found that LTOs and in particular the IETs she interviewed, “felt that they were required to continuously reinvent themselves to become marketable for the Ontario education system” (p.ii). Yearwood (2021) also found that the knowledge and expertise of LTOs and IETs “seems to be less appreciated than that of permanent contract teachers” and that “there are challenges achieving permanent employment” (ibid). Importantly, for matters about health, well-being, and equity and how they relate to precarious teaching in Ontario, Yearwood (2021) draws attention to the “insecurities and low self-esteem caused by extended periods of job search” that LTOs experience as well as the “different forms of discrimination on their ability to obtain full time employment” (p.ii). In order to be successful in LTO work and possibly obtain secure full-time employment, Yearwood (2021) mentions that LTO work “can only be accomplished successfully if a series of relationships are developed. This involves healthy relationships with other teachers, the administration and most importantly the students” (p.63). However, in order to have those healthy relationships it seems some

teachers would need to transcend the negative experiences shaped by the LTO contract.

Yearwood (2021) raises the issue that when a teacher is precarious their mental health suffers because of their insecurity which in turn influences and “weakens the interpersonal relationships on which successful teaching depends” (p.83). When teachers are in LTO contracts they may move between schools often and have challenges building a professional community that could help them when they are teaching new courses, trying to find resources, or trying new forms of pedagogy. The lack of professional relationships that can come from being an LTO had negative influences on the mental health of ‘Sindy’, one of the teachers in Yearwood’s (2021) study:

This is my only lively-hood and in terms of my mental health it’s really stressful! especially at the start of this year when I was not booking a lot of supply work and it makes paying my bills impossible. Additionally, being an LTO is the same amount of workload as the permanent teacher and so it’s difficult to find a balance between teaching and a personal life (p.83).

However, Sindy’s experience was not unique and in Yearwood’s (2021) study the majority of participants blamed working with LTO contracts for an “inability to plan the next stages of their lives” (p.84). They also questioned their career choice of becoming a teacher and “felt as if there was no hope” (ibid.). For another teacher in the study, being a younger teacher with an LTO was “livable” but as they started to have more “family responsibilities” they felt there was “this constant living in jeopardy” (ibid.). Like Mindzak (2016) and Walkland (2017), Yearwood (2021) connects their participants precarity that feels like “constant living in jeopardy” with larger systemic issues within “neoliberal times” (Yearwood, 2021, p.142).

Walkland (2017), Mindzak (2016), and Yearwood (2021) point to health issues related to precarious work and also to larger structural issues that are influencing the rise of precarious teaching in Ontario. Adding to this analysis is the work of Abawia and Eizadirad (2020) whose research also connects precarious teaching in Ontario and inequitable hiring processes to larger

systemic tendencies in the political economy, such as neoliberal policies and their influence on funding and hiring practices (Abawia and Eizadirad, 2020, p.19). Abawia and Eizadirad (2020) also make the connection between precarious work and the negative impacts on worker health, “The rise of precarity has increased rates of illness, injury, and mental health issues correlating with employment instability” (Abawia and Eizadirad, 2020, p.19). Their findings also reflect larger systemic issues, like systemic racism via the social determinants of health, they write, “these findings reflect a social determinacy in health perspective(s) where economic factors influence the embodied experiences of racialized identities via accessibility to opportunities and social services” (ibid.). Abawia and Eizadirad’s (2020) research shows that teachers with racialized identities are facing structural and systemic barriers that are limiting their access to secure permanent teaching contracts, increasing their work with precarious contracts, and having negative influences on their individual health and well-being. This supports Yearwood’s (2021) findings that showed, “Nepotism and discrimination... has infiltrated... administrations which have created an ethnocentric cult that influence the hiring process” (Yearwood, 2021, p.142). The issues of identity, equity, discrimination, and teaching contracts will be explored further in Chapter 4 when the history of precarious teaching in Ontario from the mid 1800s - until the start of the pandemic, is discussed.

Between the early 2000s and early 2020s, there has been an interest in studies about precarious work in Ontario along with an interest amongst some academics to study the lives, hiring practices, professional aspects, and labour processes of teachers with precarious contracts. This thesis builds from the literature covered in those areas of study by highlighting some of the ways that a tiered labour contract system in Ontario secondary public education influences the personal lives and labour processes of the teachers with different employment contracts.



### **2.3 - Labour process theory (LPT) and educational labour processes**

The LPT literature provides a unique lens to consider precarious educational labour contracts as forms of worker control that influences their labour process which then bleeds into their household and life outside of work. The literature around LPT helps researchers into precarious work consider other elements of workplace control in addition to the type of contract. Issues found in the original LPT debates around worker control, agency, antagonism, autonomy, deskilling/reskilling, compensation/pay, and surveillance (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1979; Thompson, 1989; Zuboff, 1988) also arose when LPT was applied, explicitly or implicitly, to educational labourers (teachers) and workspaces (schools) (Apple, 1987; Archer, 1979; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bocking, 2017; Connell, 2009; Giroux, 1981; Gough, 1979; 1988; Mindzak, 2016; Ozga & Lawn, 1981; Reid, 2003; Sears, 2003; Walkland, 2017). The LPT debates and analysis in educational labour began in the late 1970s and followed a similar trajectory as the more general LPT discourse.

#### **The LPT debates and connections to educational labour processes**

The general trajectory in LPT literature can be outlined as 1. A larger systematic, anti-capitalist and Marxist critique that emphasized the deskilling of workers (Braverman, 1979), 2. An emphasis on the subjectivity and agency of the worker, while still supporting capital (Burawoy, 1979), and lastly 3. An expansion of analysis into types of capital control through different systemic mechanisms such as, “systems of control” (Edwards, 1979), internal/external regulation through ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983), “structured antagonism” (Edwards, 1990; Edwards & Hodder, 2022, Thompson & Vincent, 2010) and surveillance (Zuboff, 1988, 2019). In education, we can find similar examples of larger systematic description and critique (Archer, 1979; Gough, 1979; Ozga & Lawn, 1981), of counter critique (Apple, 1987; Giroux,

1988; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991), an overemphasis on worker agency (Brock & Ryan, 2016; Lauder & Yee, 1987), and lastly, a holistic analysis that builds on systemic factors that interact with the subjectivities of workers (Blacker, 2013; Bocking, 2017; Bourke, 2013; Chomsky, 2012; Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2005; Mindzak, 2016; Pollack, 2008; 2010; Reid 2003; Rooks, 2017; Sears, 2003; Smyth et al., 2000; Walkland, 2017; Zinn & Macedo, 2004).

Early in the LP in education debates, researchers argued that teachers were being de-skilled and proletarianized within a larger capitalist system (Ozga & Lawn, 1981; Reid, 2003; Smyth et al., 2000). Ozga and Lawn (1981) highlight that an increased emphasis on state curriculum and testing within public education suggested to some that levels of autonomy traditionally associated with a professional job were being reduced to help meet the demands of the larger political economy. Smyth et al. (2000) reference Gough (1979) who makes the connection between the functions of the teacher and the larger political economy by arguing that state workers, including teachers, do perform surplus labour in their work (Smyth et al, 2000, p.23). Smyth et al., (2000) also highlight that Freeland (1986) feels teachers produce surplus value for the larger political economy via credentialing processes and developing skills and ideas that increase labour productivity (Smyth et al., 2000, p.23)<sup>8</sup>. These examples highlight that literature using a Marxist lens for non-dogmatic critical analysis and not as a teleological determinist thinking device, can be helpful for making connections between teachers' classroom work and influences from the larger capitalist political economy.

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<sup>8</sup> I would also argue that progressive and critical forms of education can also model democratic communities to help set an example for human social relations. Conversely, authoritarian, and conservative forms of education can model an opposite example of human social relations.

Ozga and Lawn's (1981), *Teachers, Class, and Professionalism: A Study of Organized Teachers* was one of the first texts to consider the labour process of unionized public sector teachers. However, Ozga and Lawn (1981) were not as reductionist as some critics of Marxist analysis might argue. Ozga and Lawn (1981) write, "All education does not serve the purposes of the state all the time" (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p.84). Ozga and Lawn (1981) also argue for using E.P Thompson's historicized method for understanding class. They are critical of a solely structuralist critique, in that it reduces class to fixed states, limits a great degree of variability between work situations, and denies worker agency and empowered subjectivities (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p.84). Aside from some research that over-emphasizes worker/teacher agency, for example, Lauder and Lee (1987), the type of neo-Marxist theory that uses LPT, explicitly or implicitly, to deconstruct educational workspaces while acknowledging the multitude of worker subjectivities, would continue to grow amongst progressive and critical educational researchers from the 1970s onward (Apple, 1987; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Freire, 1974; Giroux, 1988, 2011; hooks, 2003, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008; Reid, 2003; Robinson, 2016).

Before I highlight the more reflexive research in educational LPT (ELPT), I will first draw attention to an example of research that places emphasis on the agency of the teacher. An example of this argument within the ELPT debates can be illustrated with the research of Lauder and Yee (1987). One could argue that Lauder and Yee (1987) effectively represent a neoliberal hyper individualist perspective, in that they minimize the larger contexts of capitalism and imply there is no impact on the work of teachers and that there is no deskilling or proletarianization. This contrasts with Giroux's (1988; 2011; 2012) view on teachers as public intellectuals that must be critical and subversive within their labour process to counter "deskilling" within neoliberal capitalism (Giroux, 2012).

Giroux (1988; 2011; 2012), along with Freire (1974), Zinn and Macedo (2008), argue that the role of teachers should be one of ‘public intellectuals’ that critique unjust and inequitable political-economic social conditions and bring that perspective into education. Giroux’s (1981; 1988; 2011; 2012) writings and critiques of modern capitalism in its neoliberal form and the subsequent influences on public educational policies provide a broad contextualized perspective that can influence ELPT work to build theory from, connect theories to, and construct research projects such as this one, that do not decontextualize, dehistoricize, or depoliticize, the educational labour space.

My own analysis aims to incorporate Giroux’s ideas on context, history, and politics into my use of LPT for ELPT. I will now outline some examples of the ways that the four principles of core LPT<sup>9</sup> (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48) can be applied to the topics in this thesis. First, because the labour process is central to social and political economic reproduction; it is an important point for social analysis. Three ways that school systems help with social and political economic reproductions are, a) Education systems help to socialize future workers into normalizing an inequitable political economy that does not provide full employment (Baker, 2016; Schwarz, 2023) and conflates democratic education with status quo schooling for an

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<sup>9</sup> The four principles are: 1. Because of the centrality of labour in human life, the function of labour and the labour-capital relationship are privileged in LPT, 2. The logic of capital accumulation “places constraints” on “the ability” of capital to let go of hierarchical relations and give workers more influence and say in the workplace, 3. There is a management control imperative because market mechanisms alone cannot regulate labour and the labour process and the imperative does not “preclude the influence of control mechanisms that originate from outside the workplace”, 4. Because of the dynamics of capital exploitation and control of labour, social relations “in the workplace are of structured antagonism”. This allows for some level of worker creativity and cooperation which results in “a continuum of possible situationally driven and overlapping worker responses – from resistance to accommodation, compliance and consent” (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48).

exploitative political economy (Giroux, 1980; Shujaa, 1993), b) With the increasing use of online student work, corporations with access to this data gain insights on not only educational markets but on consumers who they can market all forms of products to, and c) Teachers and other school officials who do not question these dynamics or critique them with students help to encourage acceptance, hegemony, and reproduction.

Second, the logic of accumulation encourages constant revolution of production methods between capitalists and between capital and labour. This has no determining effects on specific features of the labour process, but it does “place constraints on the willingness and ability of capital to dispense with hierarchical relations, empower employees and combine conception and execution” (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48). For example, in Ontario educational labour, despite language around ‘professionalism’ and language around ‘equity’ and ‘social justice’ within the school boards and teachers’ unions, there are hierarchies based on labour contract status (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Pollock, 2012) and hiring biases that do not encourage teacher “empowerment” (Yearwood, 2021, p.138).

Next, there is a management control imperative because the market alone cannot regulate the labour process. There is nothing specific about the level of control that this imperative influences, and it does not preclude the influence of control mechanisms that originate from outside the workplace” (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48). A precarious contract could be seen as a form of management control outside of the workplace by controlling access to paid work which could make the worker less apt to act in a way that prevents them from getting future work. Additionally, as will be talked about in Chapter 4, the flux of management control within educational labour can be seen in the examples of occasional teachers being taken out of the teachers unions in Ontario in the 1970s in what seems like an effort to limit the strike abilities of

the teachers unions and then in the 1990s the teachers with occasional contracts were put back in the union when bargaining became centralized. In both instances, how management influenced the level of union power and membership size was not predetermined but depended on the historical context and the larger political economy.

Finally, the issues of exploitation and control in the workplace create social relations that are ‘structured’ and ‘antagonistic’ between workers and between workers and management. “Structured antagonism” (Edwards, 1990; Edwards and Hodder, 2022; Thompson and Vincent, 2010) helps capital to gain some cooperation and creativity from labour which leads to “a continuum of possible situationally driven and overlapping worker responses – from resistance to accommodation, compliance, and consent” (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48). A contract status hierarchy in Ontario educational labour could be one example of ‘structured antagonism’ in that it allows for a carrot and stick method of contract attainment which could shape the professional identity of the teacher towards the interests of management. Taking into consideration that labour and education overlap into issues around children's rights, workers’ rights, and social justice, school boards working with labour would need to incorporate changes in social norms that arise and gain policy or legal acceptance while at the same time being cautious to not encourage justice battles amongst their workers that have not yet won a certain level of legitimacy within the broader society. A tiered contract system allows management to encourage workers to adapt to changes deemed acceptable by the state by offering ‘carrots’, or the contract sought after, for teachers who comply and a ‘stick’, which means being stuck with a contract that the teacher does not want, to those that cannot or will not comply.

## **2.4 - Teacher professionalism, teacher identity, and teachers' unions**

Research into the contemporary role of teaching and public education systems in capitalist political economies began to increase from the 1970s (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1981; Hill, 2005, 2006, 2010; Willis, 1984). Two important aspects that inform the labour process of teachers are differing and competing notions of teacher professionalism (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Chomsky, 2003a; Bocking, 2017; Giroux, 1981; 2011; hooks, 2003, 2010; Connell & Crawford, 2007; Connell, 2009; Mindzak, 2016; Pennycooke, 2014; Ontario College of Teachers, 2022; Ozga & Lawn, 1979; Trotman et al., 2018), *and* the roles and responsibilities of teachers unionism (Bascia. 2015; Blanc, 2019; Bocking, 2017; Goldstein, 2014; Hanson, 2009, 2013b; Shaker, 2019; Weiner, 2012). Notions of teacher professionalism, and unionism in Ontario educational labour have overlapping and related histories.

### **The idea of professionalism**

The idea of 'professionalism' stems from the Middle Ages (Trotman et al., 2018, p.206). Cook (2008) writes that professions began to develop with the rise of monarchs in need of medical services and then extended to other administrative service needs of the developing modern nation states. The growth of universities also helped with the development of medicine, law, and theology to be seen as the 'classical' professions (Cook, 2008). The idea of teaching as a profession in its current schooling form began to emerge in the early-mid 19th century with the expansion of public schooling (Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p.3). Teaching as a profession was formally recognized in Ontario with the passage of the Teaching Profession Act, in 1944 (Bennett, 2020, p.31). However, despite some arguments in the history of teaching as a profession and its classification as professional work (Smaller, 1997; 2015a), there are arguments that currently

teachers are being de-professionalized by losing certain levels of autonomy (Bocking, 2017, p.12; Trotman et al., 2018, p.207) and being “controlled” (Reid, 2003, p.570). Teacher professionalism and unionism are relevant lenses to analyze teachers with different labour contracts in that they both can function as worker controlling mechanisms while also operating as vehicles for greater worker agency and solidarity. That paradox can influence teachers with different contracts in different ways, something that will be explored in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.

Literature on teachers’ unions and teacher professionalism often overlap because their relationship is interdependent in practice. For example, teachers with different contracts are working under the same professional standards, while being represented by the same union and sometimes being represented by the same bargaining unit within the union. The professional standards, although overseen by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) are what the members of the union are obliged to follow in their work practice. The literature on teacher professionalism that is relevant for this project can broadly fall into the following categories: the governing body literature that outlines the standards of the professional practice (Ontario College of Teachers, Standards of Practice), writing that locates teachers as a profession within the larger capitalist labour process and political economy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bocking, 2017; Bourke, Lidstone, & Ryan, 2015; Chomsky, 2003b; Connell & Crawford, 2007; Mills, 1959; Ozga & Lawn, 1981; Smaller, 1995; 1997; 2015a), literature from an Ontario education perspective that discusses inequities experienced by teachers with occasional contracts who have the same professional standing as their colleagues (Mindzak, 2016; Walkland, 2017), research that discusses teacher professionalism but does not address labour contract inequity (Brock & Ryan, 2016; Pennycooke, 2014; Rogers, 2018; Solomon et al., 2011) and literature that connects the



political implications of teacher professionalism with its relation to unionism, the labour movement, and larger justice struggles (Bascia, 2015; Bennett, 2020; Blanc, 2019; Bocking, 2017; Hanson, 2009, 2013b, 2021; Jaffe, 2021; Ross, 2013; Weiner, 2012).

### **Ontario's professional standards of practice (SOP) for K-12 teachers**

Framing the professional standards of practice for teachers in Ontario is the 'Standards of Practice' (SOP) which was produced and is overseen by the OCT. The OCT has no affiliations with the teachers' unions and the teachers' unions largely disagreed with how it was created (MacLellan, 2009; Nuland, 1998). There are five professional standards that K-12 teachers in Ontario's school systems must follow in their daily practice: Commitments to Students and Student Learning, Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Leadership in Learning Communities, and Ongoing Professional Learning. From the government employer's perspective, the degree to which teachers can verify that they incorporate these practices into their work can partially determine their perceived level of professionalism along with their credentials. However, these standards were created in the year 2000 and literature around teacher professionalism existed before this. The research on teachers' professionalism provides differing views as to what teacher professionalism is, which gives rise to a few questions that are relevant for this project: if public sector teachers are professionals, how might the concept of professionalism function as a form of state management control? How might teachers with different contracts feel about professionalism? And how might teachers' unions promote forms of professionalism that are in the interests of management/the state or, conversely, organize around forms of professionalism that create worker solidarity between the different contract types which then connects with larger intersectional justice movements?

### **Teacher identity and teacher professionalism**

In *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (Edgar & Sedgwick (Eds.), 2002) the entry for ‘identity’ states, “Cultural studies draws on those approaches that hold that identity is a response to something external and different from it (an other)” (p.184). Following Archer’s (2000) suggestion to “accept the existence of a dialectical relationship between personal and social identities” (Archer, 2000, p.288), I would add that the “response to something external” is also a continually reflexive response influenced by ‘others’ and combinations of ‘others’ in different contexts. Those contexts, others within those contexts, and the race, class, and gender identities that overlap and develop from this interaction create an overlapping and intersectional notion of personal and worker identity. Cho et al., (2013) write about the importance of an intersectional understanding of identity for researchers. One of the reasons for its importance is that it helps connect the experience of the individual with larger systemic structures and practices that can be oppressive. The structures and practices are informed by political economic issues which influence and shape the lives of people including their workplace identities (Booyesen, 2018). The context of a teacher’s workplace would include the type of labour contract that they need in order to work in that place as well as their work in that place. According to Yearwood (2021) a teacher's work largely involves supporting the educational development of students so that they can reach their “best potential” (Yearwood, 2021, p.14). This context that includes the labour contract along with workplace notions of professionalism for working with students, can then influence the teachers' own identity that is already partially shaped by the larger political economy including its exploitative elements. Pennycooke (2014), Mindzak (2016), Yearwood (2021), and Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), address the issue of teacher identity and how the

teachers labour contract along with the personal identity of the teacher can influence their sense of self as a professional and vice versa.

Pennycooke (2014) brings attention to what their research found were two aspects of teacher identity and professionalism supported by neoliberal policies and norms. The first is the “new managerialist identity” (p.25) and second is the “safe teacher” identity (p.149). The first comes about from a performance and evaluation focus within teaching that is heavily influenced by “edupreneurs” (p.25) hoping to “market specific forms of teacher evaluation” (ibid). Teachers hoping to perform well for their evaluation may become more concerned with managing an image of what the management defines as ‘professionalism’ and meeting performance targets than modeling an intrinsic appreciation of educational processes and/or critical pedagogy. Pennycooke (2014) also points out how notions of teacher professionalism are historically situated and used by the state to “assert control over teachers” (p.140). Pennycooke’s (2014) point about the development of the idea of the “safe teacher” in the early 2000s further helped the state assert control of teachers by encouraging ‘maximum’ “self-surveillance” (p.153). According to Pennycooke (2014), “the professional teacher” is “a safe teacher” (p.156). Pennycooke questions to the extent that this “safe teacher” identity is “a new, global identity for teachers” (ibid) shaped by the values of neoliberalism. However, if there is “a new, global identity for teachers” it might not be the same for all teachers who have different labour contracts or even within those contracts.

Mindzak (2016) discusses the ideas of “identity work” by Watson (2008b) and “occupational narrative” by Standing (2011) to highlight how teachers with precarious contracts experience work differently than their colleagues with secure contracts and this influences their perceptions of self. With “identity work” people are constantly struggling to shape and give

meaning and coherence to their personal and occupational lives. For the teachers in Mindzak's (2016) project, their employment status and their identity as a teacher were "inextricably linked" (p.119). Some of Mindzak's (2016) participants who were precarious did not see themselves as teachers, instead they preferred to be called "educators", or one person would say, "I'm not a practicing teacher" when asked by friends or family what it was, they did for work, because they did not feel like a teacher without a permanent contract (ibid). However, there was also a teacher in Mindzak's (2016) study who would tell people that they are a teacher and leave out the part that they are precarious. Mindzak (2016) suggests this type of omission might be because the person is feeling a sense of "personal embarrassment or failure from being without full employment" (p.120). On top of being reminded of their precarious situation when talking with others and feeling the need to hide it, teachers with occasional contracts could also be reminded of this perceived failure regularly by the students they work with. One of Mindzak's (2016) participants mentioned that "Probably on a daily basis" they are told by students "you're not a real teacher" (p.121). Central to Mindzak's (2016) discussion on identity and precarious teaching is the idea that without a permanent contract occasional teachers do not always think they are a part of the same "professional community as other permanent teachers" (p.122). This difference in professional identity influences what Standing (2011) refers to as an "occupational narrative" and those teachers with precarious contracts are not experiencing the same narrative their colleagues with permanent contracts are. Mindzak (2016) quotes Standing (2011) to highlight "those in the precariat lack a work-based identity" (Mindzak, 2016, p.121).

However, Yearwood (2021) points out that the notion of shared identity amongst any group is not always universal and this is specifically the case with LTOs and ethnic identities. For LTOs, Yearwood (2021) writes, "there are no fixed identity indicators for LTOs, it is difficult

to define a group identity for this type of worker because their job specification is volatile and precarious” (Yearwood, 2021, p.15). Yearwood (2021) is highlighting that it is difficult to provide a group identity for LTOs or for teachers in general because teachers “embody various social identities” that intersect with their professional identity which is different by contract type (ibid.). Even amongst those social identities, such as ethnicity, perceptions of ethnic characterization are not always shared by others in the same group (p.16). My own inference from Yearwood’s (2021) work is that they are alluding to a non-essentialist and intersectional lens in which to consider the professional identity of LTO teachers specifically and teachers in general. As much as a non-essentialist lens has benefits it can also risk minimizing shared experiences like how most teachers with racialized identities from Abawia and Eizadirad’s (2020) study felt they had to “prove” their “professional identity as a teacher”.

Abawia and Eizadirad’s (2020) study helps connect how issues of identity, particularly racial identity, can influence perceptions of professional identity by school administrators and hiring practices. Abawia and Eizadirad (2020) study found that “racial identity directly correlates with experiences and encounters in seeking and obtaining employment as a teacher in publicly funded school boards [in Ontario]” (Abawia & Eizadirad, 2020, p.192). Taking into consideration the work from Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), and Yearwood (2021), suggest that once a teacher gets hired into an Ontario school board they still may work in a precarious role for an indefinite amount of time. Some teachers leave the profession or move out of the province to find educational work (Yearwood, 2021, p.79/116). In 2014 teachers in k-12 waited on average for 5-7 years before they secured work (Mindzak, 2016, p.189). In 2019, despite some increase in teachers getting permanent contracts when leaving teachers college, about half of first year certified teachers still worked in alternative jobs (OCT, 2019, p.47). About two

thirds of these teachers still worked in some form of education, i.e., childcare, post-secondary teaching or research, and tutoring (ibid). This suggests that for many teachers who are trained in education, they might ‘see’ themselves as teachers and consider that a part of their identity. For these teachers it might be difficult and a challenge to their perception of self to leave and change careers if they are not finding secure permanent work. This dynamic could be like a sessional instructor in post-secondary education seeking a tenure track position and continuing with insecure sessional work despite it being precarious and the hopes of a secure contract are slim. Struggling for secure employment could be inferred as a way that workers could ‘prove’ themselves and their commitment to their work, but this effort to ‘prove’ oneself in the hopes of attaining secure employment may not be felt equally amongst all teachers. For teachers with racialized identities the process of getting hired and spending their early career in a precarious role might also consist of them “having to prove” (Yearwood, 2021, p.27) their professional identity as a teacher in ways that white colleagues who have a permanent or precarious contracts, may not have to.

Teacher identity is informed by a mixture of occupational professionalism, the contract of the teacher, and a combination of factors that shape the personal identity of the teacher before they became a teacher and while they are not teaching or working elsewhere. A reflexive and intersectional approach to considering how teacher identities are formed and continually reforming can allow for a sensitive and enhanced analysis for educational labour researchers. Importantly, this approach does not erase larger structures or systems and highlights how identities form and reform not in a decontextualized manner but in a way that is embedded within a specific political economy and historical moment. In different ways, the work of Pennycooke (2014), Mindzak (2016), Yearwood (2021), and Abawai and Eizadirad (2020) help

to make some of the different contexts that help shape teacher professional identity clearer for like-minded researchers.

### **Connecting teacher professionalism to history and political economy**

Smaller's work (1995; 1997; 2015a) adds historical context to the situation of teacher professionalism in Ontario. Smaller (1995; 1997; 2015a) highlights some of the challenges for the teacher to function as a critical public intellectual when state created versions of teacher professionalism in Ontario, have been structured to benefit the maintenance of the capitalist social order. In reference to 19th century schooling Smaller (1995) writes, "Men would learn...the manner of keeping their position in society" (Smaller, 1995, p.346). The word profession and its history can imply a certain level of worker independence, albeit within the boundaries allowed by the state. Historically, teachers in Ontario have had little independence and in moments when they have acted independently, they have been met with further modes of state management oversight (ibid.). As Smaller (2015a) puts it, teachers in Canada have "never been 'professional' in the traditional structuralist-functionalist meaning of the concept" (p.151) and their role as critical public intellectuals has been limited. Smaller (2015a) references the work of Cuban (2009) to suggest that teachers have a "slender autonomy". The word 'slender' suggests that there is some independent room for teacher autonomy, however, it is embedded within a much larger state framework of public intellectual monitoring and control.

One way of controlling access to work that is considered 'professional', could be through an award and incentive labour sector that is structured around tiered labour contracts. To climb this ladder (or pyramid), the worker must conform to professional standards. When the highest tier of contract is one with stability and benefits, this could be a powerful incentive for workers to act in a manner that moves them up the tiers of labour contracts towards job security. In a

society with increasing levels of precarious work, conforming to management or state defined professional standards could feel compelling to workers looking for security. Despite the somewhat shifting definitions of ‘professionalism’ that tend to be based on the interests defining it at that moment in time, the idea of ‘professional work’ has often been associated with work where the worker is held a little more accountable as an individual (Cheng, 2012). To Smaller (2015a), this is how top-down control becomes internalized, “the crux of accountability is that teachers believe they will be held accountable, and their behavior is subject to consequences” (p.151).

### **Occasional teachers and teacher professionalism in Ontario**

Pollock (2008; 2010) was one of the first to draw attention to issues of inequity facing teachers with occasional teaching (OT) contracts in Ontario and how they might face greater issues of inequity related to accessing professional development. For teachers with OT contracts to be considered ‘professional’ by their colleagues with permanent contracts and school administrators they needed to participate in a great deal of professional development that was often unpaid work and training (Pollock, 2010, p.14-15). The inequities behind professional development practices suggest a work environment where teachers with a permanent contract, who may be popularly perceived as having more ‘professional’ status in the work hierarchy than their insecure colleagues, are given greater access to enhance that standing, than teachers with occasional contracts. Pollock’s (2008; 2010) research about teachers with occasional contracts in Ontario education helped open pathways into further research by Chalikakis (2012), Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), and Yearwood (2021).

Mindzak’s (2016) PhD thesis is important for studies into precarious work, educational labour processes and how teachers with insecure contracts feel about issues of professionalism



and their professional identity. One of Mindzak's (2016) research participants describes how she feels that occasional teaching contracts have impacted her professional development:

I would like to say this about teaching right now. I think the fact that they're not hiring for contract teachers but they're hiring LTOs is a symptom, and this is totally my opinion, I haven't done any research on this really, but it's a symptom of the *casualization of the workforce*. I think we're getting that everywhere else and I think we're now getting it in teaching... The unfortunate thing is *it discredits our professionalism* (p.87).

The idea that precarious teaching is de-professionalized teaching is also present in Walkland's (2017) work.

Walkland's (2017) MA thesis was a collaborative inquiry project that involved their participation with five other teachers who had occasional contracts. Walkland's (2017) research illustrates examples of ways in which the idea of 'professionalism' is influencing teachers' internal perceptions of themselves and how they feel others might view them. There is one example from Walkland (2017) where a teacher feels like they are "always at war" (p.52) with themselves over their professional identity and they feel that they are being "de-professionalized" as a teacher with an OT contract. There is another example of a teacher who felt that they could not discuss their sexual identity because that could have "professional repercussions" (Walkland, 2017, p.94). The literature on precarious teaching in Ontario covered so far, does address issues of professionalism. However, there is also literature focusing on teacher professionalism that can minimize issues of precarious teaching or ignore it.

### **Critiques of teacher professionalism that minimize precarious teaching.**

Research that discusses teacher professionalism and larger social issues but does not critically address contract inequity or influences on the health of teachers with different contracts can be seen in the work of Pennycooke (2014), Rogers, (2018), and Solomon et al., (2011). A common theme in educational research is often the absence of those working with occasional

contracts and discussions on the role of precarious teaching is either minimal or non-existent. Pennycooke (2014), Rogers (2018), and Solomon et al., (2011) provide examples within the context of Ontario’s public education system.

Pennycooke’s (2014) PhD thesis looks at the role of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) in “reforming” Ontario’s teachers, yet there is no specification about teachers with different contracts nor how the “reforming” might be different for these teachers. However, Pennycooke (2014) references Foucault’s ideas on ‘governmentality’<sup>10</sup> to show that a professional labour contract can be a form of discipline by the standards entailed with maintaining it. There is a similar lack of reference to occasional teachers in Rogers (2018) PhD thesis.

Rogers (2018) also discusses forms of neoliberal governmentality and the influences on teaching social studies. Rogers (2018) also uses the work of Foucault. For Rogers (2018), in addition to ideas on ‘governmentality’, Foucault’s historical methods help her research and I discuss my own adaption of Rogers (2018) historical lens in Chapter 4. In the work of both Pennycooke (2014) and Rogers (2018) there is no mention of ‘occasional’ teachers or teachers with ‘LTO’ contracts, or ‘precarious’ workers. The word precarious appears in both their thesis but only minimally and it is not in the context of worker precarity. Both authors raise important concerns about the inequities being created in educational labour sectors through neoliberal reforms that influence professional standards, threats of discipline, and teacher evaluations (Pennycooke, 2014) as well as the democratic importance of teaching social studies (Rogers, 2018). However, both authors also miss the opportunity to connect these issues and how they

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<sup>10</sup> Pennycook (2014) broadly defines Foucault’s ideas on ‘governmentality’ as “the range of techniques that the state or its representatives apply to indirectly manage and shape a particular population in specific ways” (p.37).

also might overlap with an increase in precarious teaching contracts. Solomon et al., (2011) also missed this opportunity despite explicitly stating that the purpose of their work was to help teachers, “doing social justice work in neoliberal times”.

Solomon et al., (2011) discuss problematic and inequitable issues around teacher professional development, however, inequity between teachers with different labour contracts is not one of them (p.123-125). Solomon et al., (2011) state that the “Pressures of professional development add to the stress levels of teachers and feelings of burnout” (p.123) and that teachers face constant pressure to “stay current ” (p.124). Yet the authors do not distinguish how these issues might impact teachers with precarious contracts compared to teachers with permanent contracts. Unfortunately, there are similar absences when looking at literature into teachers’ unions.

### **Professionalism and the Janus face of Ontario teachers’ unions**

Smaller (1995; 1997; 2004; 2015) in Canada, Ozga and Lawn (1981) in the UK, and Jaffe (2021) in the US, all highlight contradictory ideas that went into the growth and development of teacher unions in their respective countries. On one hand, teachers’ unions can represent a structure that allows democratic debate, encourages a critical notion of professionalism, and can help to address inequities in the larger world outside of teaching through intersectional justice work. On the other hand, they can represent Michel’s ([1911] 1962) ‘iron law of oligarchy’, stifle democratic debate, support a conservative ideal of professionalism, and maintain social inequities and hierarchies within the organization.

There is literature that suggests precarious workers do not often have favourable views of their union or unions in general. Standing (2011) has noted that there can be distrust felt by workers with precarious contracts towards institutions like organized labour. In Mindzak’s

(2016) study participants “did not view Ontario teachers’ unions in a positive light” (Mindzak, 2016, p.136). Walkland (2017) discusses an incident where one of their study participants mentioned the high levels of “member-on-member conflict” (Walkland, 2017, p.77) that the unions are seeing which suggest divisions within the union and Yearwood (2021) writes that in her study “all participants expressed disappointment with their precarious work arrangement and felt that stronger union representation was necessary” (Yearwood, 2021, p.124). In the interviews for this project a few teachers expressed similar views to the ones shared by the participants in Mindzak’s (2016), Walkland’s (2017), and Yearwood’s (2021) research, but some did not, and this will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

Hanson (2009; 2013b; 2021), Bennet (2020), Savage and Mancini (2022), Bocking (2017), and Yearwood (2021) all write about ways in which teachers unions can be vehicles for political mobilization to fight for improved labour rights. Issues of inequity between workers with different contracts and problems around worker solidarity are mostly addressed by Hanson (2013a) and Yearwood (2021). There is also an important chapter in Bascia (Ed.) (2015) by Popiel (2015) where the author argues that there are three areas in which teachers’ unions can focus on to help build their “moral legitimacy” as well as solidarity. The three areas are ‘classroom, community, and *contract*’.

Yearwood (2021) suggests that unions should play a “greater role” (p.131) in helping teachers with precarious contracts get hired permanently. Yearwood’s (2021) suggestion could be a type of forward thinking because Hanson (2013b) has noted how occasional teachers have been used against the union in the past, as a form of scab labour (Hanson, 2013b, p.323-324), while also pointing out that organizing occasional teachers was a gain to labour unions. Hanson’s (2013b; 2021) work on the history of teachers’ unions in Ontario is informative and his

inclusion of occasional teachers in his analysis is important for understanding the history of occasional teaching labour. On the other hand, Bennett's (2020) work glosses over the issue of inequitable teacher labour contracts, but like Hanson (2013; 2021), emphasizes that teachers' unions have been influential leading challenges to neoliberal policy reforms, "unions have emerged in the forefront of the battle to curtail or redirect the advance of system-wide reforms that impinge upon teachers' autonomy and freedom in the classroom" (Bennett, 2020, p.65).

Bocking's (2017) PhD thesis argues that teacher autonomy is being eroded under neoliberal policy changes to education systems and that unions can play a unique role in fighting that erosion. Bocking (2017) looks at three cities, Mexico City, New York City, and Toronto. Bocking (2017) specifically discusses precarious work in Mexico City and New York City but less so when looking at Toronto. Bocking (2017) argues that in the former two cities the rise in precarious teaching is "to a greater extent deliberate" (Bocking, 2017, p.57) whereas in Toronto it is "the result of declining student enrolment and budget cuts" (ibid.). However, this fails to address the degree that "declining student enrolment" and "budget cuts" might be connected to "deliberate" neoliberal policies. Generally, neoliberal thinking considers public sector spending as wasteful and teacher unions as potentially radical social influences and problematic towards a privatization of education agenda. Precarity in Toronto educational labour may be at a smaller scale than in Mexico City or New York City, but it is still a deliberate part of neoliberal policy goals. Despite this absence of analysis, Bocking's (2017) thesis still raises critical issues and provides important insights regarding neoliberalism's influences on teacher autonomy and the roles that unions can play challenging those influences.

The work of Blanc (2019), Savage and Mancini (2022), and Weiner (2012), are examples of union strategizing to challenge neoliberal policy changes. Issues relating to divisions between

teachers with occasional contracts, or other school support workers, and those with permanent contracts are briefly touched on in Blanc (2019) and Weiner (2012) but are absent in Savage and Mancini (2022). The latter look specifically at teachers' unions in Ontario where the former two authors look at mostly American teachers' unions. Weiner (2012) argues that sharing information about labour struggles across regions can help strengthen labour struggles locally and globally, "Another way I've seen locals make international developments relevant is to point to teachers struggling elsewhere in the world with an issue that seems local, like the use of long-term substitutes to replace giving teachers full year contracts" (Weiner, 2012, p.63). Weiner (2012) compares two educational labour struggles, one in Newark, New Jersey and the other in Trinidad and Tobago. The latter had more success in spreading awareness about their cause because they took to the streets, protested, and raised local media awareness. Weiner (2012) wonders, "what if the two groups had connected and offered one another mutual support?" (Weiner, 2012, p.63). Blanc (2019) also highlights what might happen when divided groups unite for labour action.

Blanc (2019) details the struggles of US teachers in predominantly Republican ruled states during a 2017/18 teacher labour struggle. Using West Virginia as an example, Blanc (2019) mentions that "Within the education system, support staff are often overlooked. Many people I spoke with felt that this was the deepest divide among school employees" (Blanc, 2019, p.119). For example, during a strike in 1990, school support staff acted as scabs to keep the schools open. However, when these workers were organized with the teachers during the 2017/18 labour action, there was greater solidarity and the labour action was more successful:

We were able to win because we were able to shut the schools down. And we were only able to do that because we had everyone on board—custodians, cooks, bus drivers, teachers' aides. Schools cannot run without them (Blanc, 2019, p.123).

As a result of their made marginalized status, occasional teachers can occupy a grey area between school support staff and teachers with permanent contracts, so Blanc's (2019) insight into the importance of solidarity between all educational workers is important for research into teachers with different labour contracts who are in the same union. Looking at teachers' unions like they have a monolithic membership of full-time permanent contract teachers risks minimizing marginalized voices and possibly weakens solidarity for future labour action and political mobilization.

Research into Ontario's teachers' unions can at times downplay or ignore the fact that a significant portion of their members are not teachers with permanent contracts but may want permanent contracts. One example of this can be seen with the Ontario Secondary Schools Teacher Federation (OSSTF). In OSSTF, the size of the average local bargaining unit's occasional teaching staff is approximately 34% of the local membership (OSSTF). A certain percentage of these workers are probably content with working as an OT. However, research from Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), Pollock (2008; 2010), Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), Yearwood (2021), and this dissertation, suggests that many teachers with OT or LTO contracts would prefer to have a permanent contract. Therefore, it is important that research into the political strategizing of Ontario's teachers' unions includes a discussion of the divisions within the union and the political implications of these divisions. A discussion of the different interests within the teachers' unions could add a layer of analysis to research like that by Savage and Mancini (2022). Savage and Mancini's (2022) article about Ontario teachers' unions and political strategizing could be strengthened by considering the interests of the different groups of teachers with different labour contracts.

## 2.5 - Summary

Literature that looks at the patterns and shifts of precarious work in the global political economy have similarities with precarious work in global education systems in general and Ontario education, specifically. Research into ‘flexible’ or precarious work shows that when it is not by choice, it has negative influences on the worker’s labour process and their health. LPT and its insights about capitalist labour processes, forms of management control, examples of deskilling/reskilling, and the influences on a workers' health and sense of self, is useful for analyzing how precarious work and other influences of the teaching labour process are influencing teachers with different labour contracts. To produce research that can address social and organizational inequities within Ontario’s teaching labour sector, researchers should consider issues of worker precarity within the unions, establish the identities of who is precarious, include historical and political-economic contexts, and make connections between issues of teacher professionalism and teacher unionism. By highlighting issues that affect teachers with different labour contracts differently and calling attention to issues of solidarity within unions, researchers could help provide some answers to Weiner's (2012) question, “what if the two groups had connected and offered one another mutual support?” (p.63)

My thesis aims to fill in the gaps outlined in this Chapter 2 Literature Review by highlighting and discussing the experiences of teachers with occasional, long term occasional, and permanent labour contracts and the issues that influence their different experiences. This literature review shows that there is a need for equity seeking research that considers the different contracts when discussing educational labour in Ontario. In this thesis I will discuss different ways in which precarious work influences and shapes the workspace, interactions with the union, and household well-being of teachers with occasional and long-term occasional



contracts compared with each other as well as with teachers with secure permanent contracts.

The discussion chapters will show some of the ways that differences in contract type influence the material security of teachers which in turn influences how the teachers interviewed felt about notions of teacher professionalism and autonomy as well as teacher unionism and solidarity.

## **Chapter 3 - Research Methods**

### **3.1 - Introduction**

The concepts, theories, and processes used to guide my fieldwork and inform my analysis will be covered in this chapter. I begin by discussing how critical realism (CR) and labour process theory (LPT) work together as analytical tools and are beneficial for researching educational labour and mixed methods research. To give some context into teacher identities historically in Ontario, I discuss using a historical method to help focus on the different identities of teachers with different professional status levels at different points in Ontario educational labour history. I also highlight the benefits of a historical lens to understand the changes in educational labour in Ontario and for considering issues around employment equity, identity, the state, teacher professionalism, and teachers' unions.

Someone's labour contract and employment status along with other categories of identity such as race and gender, influences their sense of self and their experiences at work and in life, so I also wanted to include an intersectional identity lens in my study (Cho et al., 2013) along with historical context (Rogers, 2018). I follow my theoretical framework discussion with a consideration into how my own positionality will influence and be influenced by my fieldwork and use of methods. I then discuss issues around gathering educational labour data in Ontario and using social media for recruitment purposes.

I continue my discussion about gathering data by focusing on the online survey and my use of the Employment Precarity Index (EPI) to assess the levels of precarity amongst the teachers from each contract type. I cover how I selected interview participants based on their contract type and demographic identity, the structure of the interview, the interview questions, and using Zoom for interviews. Then, section 3.5 looks at the reading and reporting of the data

using thematic analysis (TA) and my own adaptations of TA. The second last section highlights the impact of COVID on my research and the final section is the chapter summary.

### **3.2.1 – Theoretical Framework: Critical Realism (CR) and Labour Process Theory (LPT)**

Researchers that are looking to pursue projects that are equity seeking will find that CR and LPT work well together as tools. Thompson and Vincent (2010), make a strong case that CR effectively compliments a core LPT. CR provides a structured framework for LPT analysis into both specific individual work sites and larger labour sectors, and also with social analysis by helping researchers to ‘look over the factory gate’ (Thompson and Vincent, 2010, p.56).

CR developed out of a need to make social science research critical, relevant, and more in line with describing a reality that resonated with people’s lived experiences and feelings. Research using CR takes an in-between approach to the research paradigms of positivism on one end of the spectrum, and constructivism on the other. On the one hand, positivism’s drive for determined universals is by far too extreme in the 21st-century world of quantum paradoxes, fractal geometry, dark matter, and fluid conceptions of the self<sup>11</sup>. While on the other hand, constructivism is similarly extreme by its overemphasis on subjectivity and a lack of emphasis on influencing causal forces. CR finds itself in the middle of these two poles and is a “series of philosophical positions on a range of matters including ontology, causation, structure, persons, and forms of explanation” (Archer et al., 2016).

To further highlight how CR can help analyze issues related to teachers with different labour contracts I will briefly discuss: 1. Four key points by Archer et al., (2016), 2. Fletcher’s three levels of reality (Fletcher, 2017), and 3. Five potentials for CR in the social sciences

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<sup>11</sup> These concepts can all connote ideas of fluidity, indeterminacy, and uncertainty.

(Frederiksen & Kringelum, 2021). The four key points of CR raised by Archer et al., (2016) help to create a framework to guide research using CR. Fletcher's (2017) three levels of reality assist in clarifying and explicating the interconnections between seemingly disconnected events and experiences. The five potentials for using CR in social science research described by Frederiksen and Kringelum (2021) work to inspire an empirically grounded path forward using CR.

Archer et al. (2016) outlines a 'manifesto' for CR (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.43). First, critical realists believe ontology plays a major function in social science research, but many social science researchers have 'forgotten to talk about it' (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.43). Next, critical realists do believe in an objective reality; however, they also believe that knowledge is situated at the intersections of culture, history, and society, and therefore research is not without bias, blind spots, or error. Despite biases that might stem from certain levels of subjective experience, there are collective and interdependent criteria for activities and judgments that, over time, can improve the levels of 'plausibility' that flow from subjective statements about an objective world. Lastly, CR helps orientate social research to 'reconcile' (ibid.) objectivity and values. These four key points are all incorporated into my project: first, individual experience is front and center with the surface and empirical level readings used for analyzing, categorizing, and thematically organizing the interview answers into positive, mixed, and negative experiences regarding work, the union, individual health and household well-being, as well as the changes brought on by COVID; second, those experiences are then contrasted with quantitative data like the EPI scores and union membership ratios between contracts; third, my own biases towards equity seeking research and how this influences my analysis is reflected upon and made explicit; and finally, I am open about a primary goal of my project: that it will

ideally lead to progressive policy changes that improve the lives of teachers working with precarious labour contracts.

The experiences of precarious workers do not occur in a vacuum and thus they are not without cause or effect. Fletcher's three levels of reality: *the empirical*, *the actual*, and *the real*, create an integrated reality with interconnected micro experiences, meso situations, and macro causal factors. For my interviews and reading of the transcripts *the empirical* was my surface reading of the interview along with the descriptions by the participants of their experiences and feelings. *The actual* was considered through the workplace power dynamics discussed in the core principles of LPT (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48) and the norms of education work within capitalist political economies discussed in the educational labour process literature. *The real* was considered through the structures of the teacher's labour contract, the professional standards upheld by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the collective agreements negotiated by the union and the union structure, the Ministry of Education, the funding models set by the state, and the educational goals normalized through international bodies like the OECD. The nuances between the subjective feelings of workers who are working with different labour contracts can be detailed and discussed in relation to larger social processes through CR.

Frederiksen and Kringelum (2021) provide researchers with five potential aspects of CR for Management and Organizational Studies (MOS). However, I feel that these potentials are also applicable with using CR to investigate the labour process of teachers with different labour contracts. First, CR ontology allows for detailed descriptions of the matter(s) being studied, such as the experiences of teachers and the perception of the interviewer as to how the participant may have felt about those experiences. Second, CR provides a framework for analyzing and theorizing the interrelations between structures (i.e., Global bodies and their agendas, federal and

provincial governments and spending, the Ministry of Education and policies, school boards and hiring), and agents (i.e., workers in transnational organizations, state officials, policy advisors, corporate consultants, school board administrators, union officials, and teachers with different labour contracts), at different points in time (i.e., when did significant things between agents and structures happen). Next, CR adds ‘explanatory value’ (Frederiksen & Kringelum, 2021, p.19) in that CR allows for multiple forms of empirical data, which could include comparing large data sets, or scores on the employment precarity index (EPI), with qualitative data from interviews. Fourth, CR epistemology emphasizes the ‘interpretative’ (ibid) role of the researcher in knowledge creation. CR demands that researchers be self-reflective and necessitates that they also strive to be meta-cognitively aware and as honest with themselves as possible. Finally, CR can connect local ideas with larger forms of knowledge. Drawing attention to these connections will help to illuminate issues of precariousness at a micro personal level and a local/regional meso level like in school boards in the province of Ontario, that can then connect, on a more macro level, to capitalist political economies and factors such as neoliberal policy agendas, state budget policies, and studies from other regions into issues with educational labour processes. These connections could highlight global patterns and trends with regional variations while also giving a voice to teachers in different localities and opening new areas for research in LPT, educational labour processes, and precarious work.

Thompson and Vincent (2010) make a case for the use of CR with LPT. Describing the strengths of using CR for LPT research they write, “(CR) alongside and in combination with LPT, can credibly claim explanatory power with respect to the broader political economy” (p.55). They also reference Peck’s argument regarding the need for LPT to ‘look over the factory gates’ to understand the ‘broader dynamics of capitalism’ (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.56).

Thompson and Vincent (2010) see clear applications of a workplace core LPT within a CR framework that opens the factory gates and extends the analysis of causal chains to the commanding heights of international policy agendas and local state budget planning. In addition to these more political economic influences, the influences of certain cultural norms, such as consumerism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy, class hierarchies, and forms of ‘schooling’ over ideas of ‘education’, become useful critical lenses and reference points for researchers using CR.

The many issues that stem from the core principles of LPT (Thompson & Vincent, 2010, p.48) allow for an extension of analysis into the larger culture that influences and is influenced by the norms of the workplace. It is this ability to extend analysis with other forms of discourse, while connecting back to the shop floor, that gives LPT its analytical scope and substance. Core LPT helps on several analytical fronts: 1. It highlights the importance of the workplace as a space for analysis, 2. LPT draws attention to the capitalist need to reorganize once a certain level of control shifts towards the interests of the workers or other capitalists, 3. LPT highlights the need for ‘structured tension’ (p.63), to maintain capitalist control, while also enabling a certain level of worker agency, and 4. LPT points out that the levels of control, structured tension, and needs for reorganization are undetermined. This indeterminacy is a result of the ‘implicit recognition’ (p.63) that changes in the larger political economy influence local labour processes, as do the reflexive reactions from the workers labouring within those processes, and these changes are ultimately unpredictable in specific situations. In the case of secondary teachers in Ontario, some of the changes influencing their labour process have included a drastic reduction in state spending that began in the late 1990s under the Mike Harris conservative government. These

factors, especially the austerity budgets<sup>12</sup> applied to the educational sector have informed the larger analysis of my qualitative interviews and interpretation of quantitative data.

Using CR with LPT has enabled me to consider to what degree the changes in public educational goals within neoliberalism may have led to an increase in the precarious forms of labour contracts while decreasing the numbers of workers with permanent contracts which influenced the context framing the interviews for this project. Thomson and Vincent (2010) feel that there is much “potential for fruitful dialogue between the core theory and other theoretical resources, albeit one framed within a broadly CR ontology” (p.65). Using CR and discussing my interpretation of the surface reading of an interview suggests that it is important to reflect on factors that influence my own subjectivity, biases, and interpretations. To help provide context for my CR and LPT readings I also thought it was important to view them through a historical lens and consider how teachers with different contracts or positions in a labour contract hierarchy have existed at different moments in Ontario educational history.

### **3.2.2 – Theoretical framework: Historicizing identities, hierarchies, and inequities within Ontario educational labour**

In Chapter 4 History and Identity, I use Rogers (2018) adaptation of Lemke’s (2010) use of Foucauldian genealogical method as a theorizing process to consider contexts and relationships when looking at the historical development of educational labour contracts from

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<sup>12</sup> Research by Ellis (2021) into public spending on education in B.C, Canada suggests that accusations of neoliberal governmental austerity are misplaced and that spending on education has increased. However, criticisms of this research by Hunter (2021), Laitsch et al., (2021), suggest that Ellis (2021) did not conduct accurate research. Additionally, Hunter (2021) mentions that Ellis (2021) leaves out in some areas, and inserts in others, capital, and pension expenditures. Hunter (2021) and Laitsch et al., (2021) highlight that in cases when public spending has increased, despite neoliberal austerity arguments of reduced spending, these ‘gains’ may not be what they appear on the surface and require further research.



mid-19th century Ontario (called Upper Canada at the time) until the early 21st century. Like arguments by Quinlan (2012) and Van Arsdale (2018) that show precarious work is not new, there is ample research showing that precarious educational labour contracts in Ontario are also not new, although they may have reduced for a time shortly after World War Two. Using a historical sociological lens guided by Foucault's 'genealogy' to examine the development of different hierarchies and labour contracts over time in Ontario, will allow me to discuss the different identities that worked with the different levels of certification and contract and the historical context that they worked within.

Rogers (2018) method has four areas of interests that make it a good tool for social scientists to historicize and better contextualize their work. The first interest is a disinterest in origins. Rogers (2018), references Lemke (2010) and suggests that genealogy is not interested in finding beginnings, instead, it seeks to look at the development of "subjugated and historically situated knowledge to uncover...masked institutional operations" (Rogers, 2018, p.45). Additionally, I argue that Rogers' (2018) use of Lemke's three other interests: i.e., how technologies of dominance and technologies of the self/subject converge; how a genealogy of the state and a genealogy of the subject interact in a historical process; and how this process fluctuates depending on certain historical moments (p.46), is very relevant to understanding the context that influences some of the differences experienced by teachers with different labour contracts. Rogers (2018) method benefits my project in three important ways. First, the comparative element of my project between the time before COVID and during COVID opens it up to a historical lens. Second, it helps me to show how the teacher's certification, professional development, and labour contracts could be seen as part of the nexus where technologies of dominance and technologies of the subject interact, which also overlaps with the core principles

of LPT, like structured antagonism. Thirdly, if there are certain historical periods when teacher labour is more often precarious or there are hierarchies where some teachers are precarious while others are not, by taking into consideration any historical differences, patterns, similarities, and trends, I can then put forth a more contextualized analysis that allows for more nuanced contract comparisons and effective policy recommendations to address the issue of precarious teaching and inequitable hierarchies within the labour sector.

Researching and discussing the differences between teachers with different labour contracts creates an awareness of those possibly being twice marginalized, first by the larger “white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal society” (hooks, 1997), and secondly, by their labour contract, which could also arguably be a factor of the former. Using this type of bottom-up perspective (Giroux 2018; Zinn, 2003; Zinn & Macedo, 2008) for my analysis of the history of educational labour contracts in Ontario, will help illustrate one way that made marginalized identities in Ontario have been socially structured at different times through a hierarchical educational labour contract dynamic. A bottom-up focus for social critique aligns with a large body of work by the social historian Howard Zinn (Zinn, 1980; 2003; & Macedo, 2008) and educational theorist, Henry Giroux (2018) about the need to ‘flip the script’. ‘Flipping the script’ encourages teachers and researchers to look at history from multiple perspectives, and in particular, multiple perspectives from the working class, women, racialized voices, and other marginalized groups. Historicizing and contextualizing racialized and working-class cultures and their experiences with the different labour hierarchies, certification levels, and labour contracts in Ontario, without assuming dominant paradigm notions of educational [or cultural] ‘deficits’ will guide my historical write up in Chapter 4. Another guide to my research that I will

be conscious of is my positionality as a precarious occasional teacher and researcher looking into precarious educational labour processes.

### **3.3 - Positionality**

“Positionality is always important” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.145). Researcher positionality is important for two primary reasons 1. It helps the researcher see the “barriers” (i.e., their own biases) while enabling them to describe those barriers to audiences, and 2. The “limits” (i.e., their own experiences) that problematize the researchers’ understandings (p.146) are meta-cognitively thought through, detailed, and communicated to readers. Taking a step back and thinking reflexively during the formation of understanding, I would add that researchers should try to also meta-cognitively be aware of their own inferencing patterns or tendencies. To do this, researchers should try to think about what ideas and feelings are lying just below the surface and what might be latent to those feelings, ideas, and interpretations. Next, researchers should extrapolate from any formed understanding(s) within their consciousness, how their own ‘barriers’ and ‘limits’, influence inferencing, analysis, and conclusions.

Personally, my own ‘barriers’ and ‘limits’ encourage me to avoid the narrow, mythically neutral, and value-free seeking confines of a positivist position in my thinking processes. At the same time, in my research I also seek to avoid an overly constructivist, relativist, or at times maybe even a nihilistic perspective, that can be associated with an extreme postmodern view. As CR shows, a stance that is too close towards either pole of constructivist or positivist, is not just a matter of opinion, but, because of the lack of context, historicization, and overlapping influences, is also empirically weak. My own experiences as a teacher and an academic have placed me in a privileged position. My own life experiences along with my position as a precarious teacher

working with colleagues on the shop floor (or in the classroom) encourages me to use more constructivist explanations, whereas my role as an academic researcher tends to push me towards more positivist readings. It is also possible that those are my own biases and that the reverse dynamic could exist for other people. Both are valuable, and the strength of CR frameworks allows researchers to use elements from both constructivist and positivist forms of discourse, while not being locked into one or the other.

My experiences as a precarious teacher and my position as an educator researching educational labour processes, place me in a position of privilege to study the topic, while also in a position open to critique because of my biases. To locate the role and the responsibilities of the researcher, Mindzak (2016) references Lichtman (2013), who situates the researcher as the “primary instrument of data collection, interpretation and analysis” (Mindzak, 2016, p.72). Like Mindzak (2016), I have worked to “remain reflexive and continually (re)evaluate my own positionality with and in the research” (ibid.). To escape or stand outside the complexity of one’s existence and one’s own biases is impossible. Taking into consideration factors such as the wording of questions, survey formats, and the identities of the researcher(s), research is always biased. Hammond and Wellington (2021) remind researchers that the term bias itself might be unhelpful in that it “implies” a “state of being unbiased” (p. 16). Given the complexities of the human condition and human subjects, there is no state of unbiasedness.

### **3.4:1 - Gathering data: Ontario educational labour**

Studying education systems in Canada is not easy (Robson, 2021). To begin, there is a lack of certain data, especially regarding the ethnicity of students, but also teachers. Secondly, the data can be hard to decipher because of differences in terminology for contract types and employment classification. For example, a teacher who is working with a long term occasional

(LTO) contract might also be classified as an occasional teacher (OT). Also, teachers in elementary (grades k-8) and secondary (grades 9-12) can sometimes be combined in workforce numbers making it difficult to decipher specifics about either. Additionally, the use of the full-time equivalent (FTE) category instead of the actual number of workers also prevents gathering clear data into the number of teachers with different contract types.

Using government sources for information on secondary school teachers in Ontario is challenging. To begin, the term ‘Long Term Occasional’ does not appear to have been used on government web pages that provide workforce numbers until the mid 2010s. The government of Ontario also uses the language ‘full-time equivalent’ (FTE) to classify the number of jobs. So, two teachers working halftime would be one FTE. This is a problem for researchers as there is little way to gauge the ratio of teachers with LTOs, OTs, and permanent contracts at different points in the history of Ontario. To attempt to gather this information from many boards, researchers would need to go to the individual school boards, get permission, go through paper files going back decades, if they are available, and count the employees and what they were classified as. The range in classification names could consist of *day teacher*, *itinerant teacher*, *part-time*, *substitute*, *supply*, or *occasional*. Some of these could have been longer term occasional contracts or day-to-day supply teachers and it may have varied between school boards. Regarding the identity of the teachers, the provincial government data only indicates ‘male’ or ‘female’, there is not any officially organized and consistent racial or socioeconomic data on all the people that were teachers.

A lack of racial data is also an issue influencing the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation (OSSTF). Despite this major limitation, the data provided to me by the provincial OSSTF was helpful in that it showed percentage wise, that the amount of secondary level OTs

(which includes LTOs) within an Ontario public school board secondary system were, on average, 34% of the local bargaining unit (as of November 2021). This was slightly lower than the percentage of teachers with OT/LTO contracts that took my survey (37%).

### **3.4.2 – Gathering data: Using social media for research.**

To guide the development of the tools used for social media research (i.e., recruitment posters and an on-line survey) and using social media as a tool itself for research, I followed previous studies into the effectiveness and ethical issues of using social media for studies and participant recruitment (Arigo et al., 2018; Gelinias et al., 2017; Russomanno et al., 2019; Sin, 2015). In this section I cover the ethical issues around using social media for research participant recruitment and my process for creating the social media recruitment campaign for this project.

Using social media for research purposes is a growing trend (Gelinias et al., 2017). With this new tool for research comes ethical questions. Gelinias et al., (2017) point to three main areas of ethical concern when using social media for research recruitment: 1. Complying with the specific platform's 'terms of use', 2. The ethics of recruiting from online networks where there might be less randomness, and 3. The implications for online communication between the researcher and participants as well as between participants who know that each other is participating. While using social media for my fieldwork I remained conscious of these issues and made efforts to address them.

When I began to investigate which platforms I would use for participant recruitment, I made sure to find out what was and was not allowed on the platforms for research purposes. Because of the number of surveys and petitions I had personally seen on these sites prior to my research, I had an idea that they might be accommodating to researchers. All the platforms used

allowed me to post links to a secondary site away from the social media site, where participants would take the survey<sup>13</sup>. However, creating links that take the user out of the social media site still did not prevent me from having concerns regarding issues of privacy and data ownership. The research platforms that I used (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter) all allowed for the posting of material on a user's own 'page'. Regardless, considering the massive profit motives behind data collection (Bhageshpur, K. 2019), I am suspect of this seeming openness on behalf of the social media corporations. Arigo et al. (2018) are also cautious. Arigo et al., (2018) advise researchers using social media to stay on top of any changes to terms of service (p.17). Just because Twitter or Facebook had a certain policy one year, does not mean that it will be the same a year later.

Another ethical concern is the possible lack of randomness in an online network. For my purposes, I did not want total randomness. Persons of all occupations and all levels of teaching use the social media sites that I was using. For my study I needed a specific type of worker (a teacher), from a certain region (Ontario), and even more specifically, teachers with specific types of labour contracts (secondary/high school teaching level and OT, LTO, and permanent contracts) and from different demographics. Complete randomness would not have been helpful and would have been very challenging to sort through. So, I was looking for a more specific audience to come across my recruitment campaign. I did find established networks of online teachers (through Twitter followers, retweets, likes, and hashtags, or in Facebook groups) to be beneficial for the circulation and promotion of the research on social media.

The third ethical concern pertains to online communication between participants themselves and between the researcher and participants. Online communication between

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<sup>13</sup> The survey is described in the following section.

participants was somewhat welcome in that I was able to generate more participation through online ‘snowballing’. I also followed advice from Russomanno et al., (2019) who advised to frequently monitor online postings about the research as they might elicit some negative feedback.

My social media campaign was successful in attracting participants. I designed digital online posters for the different platforms and I included links to the online survey with each poster. To make the posters, I used the poster making website ‘canva.com’ (see Appendices for examples of the posters used). This was free to use, user friendly, and easily transferred onto the different platforms. Unfortunately, I was unable to see which specific social media site linked to the survey. This prevented me from knowing which platform attracted the most participants. However, judging from online sharing of the recruitment posters, Twitter and Facebook seemed to be the most popular. There was no clear interaction with the posters on Instagram and very minimal on LinkedIn. I also had the help of my provincial union, the Ontario Secondary School Teacher Federation (OSSTF), in circulating a link to my survey on their social media sites. There were 390 surveys completed between February 1st, 2021, and April 1st, 2021. Overall, I found that social media was helpful towards getting the level of participation that I did.

### **3.4.3 – Gathering data: The survey and the Employment Precarity Index (EPI)**

To conduct online fieldwork and interviews, I needed approval from McMaster’s Research and Ethics Board (MREB). In my online application for ethics approval, I showed that I was going to use the Lime survey software to build my survey and that I would use various social media platforms to place ads and links to the survey. I submitted eight appendices to the MREB that detailed my use of social media, my recruitment methods, survey questions,



interview questions, information material for participants, and consent documents<sup>14</sup>. I submitted my application package to MREB in early September 2020 and the fieldwork was approved in late September 2020.

The first tool(s) I needed to use were the survey and the Employment Precarity Index (EPI) (PEPSO, 2013; 2015). Both would help me gather demographic information about teachers with different contracts and to recruit interview participants. The online survey had forty-three, mostly multiple-choice questions total, including twelve of which were the Employment Precarity Index (EPI) questions, however, one question, the last question, was an open answer question to allow the participant to share anything specific, ask questions, or comment. Because the primary objective of the survey was to recruit participants and learn about the material lives of teachers with different contracts, the questions consisted of demographic questions about identity, questions about financial security, and questions about the labour contract such as how long the teachers have been working with their type of labour contract, and if they are an occasional teacher, would they prefer to work with a permanent contract. My criteria for who could take the survey was open to any public secondary teacher in Ontario that wanted to take the survey. Within the survey I placed the first ten EPI questions after the demographic questions because I felt they were more closely related to issues of income and demographics and before the questions relating to the labour contract. The last two EPI questions were placed after the labour contract questions because I felt their somewhat sensitive

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<sup>14</sup> The eight appendices can be found at the end of this thesis and consisted of: My social media recruitment ads, an interview question guide (sent to interview participants prior to the interview), the survey questions, a counseling services information sheet (for interview participants and sent once an interview was confirmed), an oral consent log and oral consent script for interview participants (to be read to them by myself prior to the interview), a letter of information/consent form for interview participants (to be sent via email ahead of interview and verbally signed just before interview), an online survey preamble, and a letter of information.

focus (i.e., if the teacher had any concerns about expressing problems in the workplace and if they ever get paid in cash) might deter participants from completing the survey if placed earlier in the survey. I thought that because they were not directly related to demographic information or labour contracts which is why most teachers would have been taking the survey, they might get answered towards the end when the participant might have felt more comfortable responding.

Specifically, the EPI has been used in studies of precarious work in Southern Ontario (PEPSO, 2013; 2015) and is a series of twelve specific questions that then generate a score between 0 (least precarious) and 100 (most precarious). A score of 2.5 or less is considered ‘secure’. After ‘secure’, the next category is ‘stable’, which is a score between 3 and 17.5. The final two categories are ‘vulnerable’ (a score of 18 to 37.5) and ‘precarious’ (a score greater than 38). The survey’s two primary purposes were to recruit research participants and learn about their identities such as their socio-economic status. Having the EPI scores allowed for a socio-economic and quantitative comparison between contracts when trying to contextualize the qualitative data.

When creating research projects and thinking about the pros and cons of different data collection methods, it is important to remember that “surveys go wide and interviews go deep” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.174). For my survey I wanted questions that helped identify different demographics and precarity scores for a ‘wide’ group of teachers. In line with COVID safety procedures set out by McMaster’s Research Ethics Board (MREB), the survey was conducted online. I hoped that the online format via social media sites might make it accessible and more inviting for a ‘wider’ number of participants and from a variety of demographics.

There are some criticisms of using surveys such as: indexes deal with categories and concepts as though they were objective; correlation does not always equal causation; and issues

around non-response rates and explanations are at times considered “cavalier” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.173). Despite these issues, Hammond and Wellington (2021) suggest that any criticisms about surveys should be concerned with how any data is used in the popular media, as opposed to the actual survey itself (p.174). The information from the EPI scores and the demographic identities of the teachers that took the survey are the main areas that would be included in popular reporting of my research. The data from the survey participants allowed me to select a varied group of subjects for the interview. In total, 390 people completed the survey out of 418 who began the survey.

Interestingly, not all survey participants answered all the EPI questions. All the teachers with LTO contracts and all the teachers with permanent contracts completed their EPI questions, however, there were 20 out of 62 teachers with OT contracts who began the survey and did not finish all the EPI questions. For the occasional teachers that did not finish, it is possible that the survey was an uncomfortable reminder that they were precarious teachers and that they could not complete it. For my interviews, I only selected subjects that completed all the EPI questions and therefore I was able to calculate their EPI score. This greatly reduced the number of teachers with OT contracts that I could contact for an interview<sup>15</sup>.

There were four areas where I found using the EPI beneficial. The first, was that I was able to gauge a level of precariousness amongst teachers, especially occasional teachers. Next, I was able to intersect this data with the identities of the participants that allowed me to map what identities were more likely to be classified as “secure”, and which ones more likely to be considered “precarious”. Thirdly, I was able to contrast the EPI scores with other data, such as

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<sup>15</sup> A breakdown between the teachers that took the survey and ones that were eventually interviewed can be found in Figure 3.

what they selected for the second last question which asked the participant to select a statement that indicated how they feel they were doing financially. This allowed me to see when a high EPI score might not translate into that worker claiming that they feel ‘precarious.’ Lastly, the EPI scores and breakdown of demographic data obtained from the survey, created a data set that enabled contrasting and comparisons of the levels of precarity between the categories of teachers with different labour contracts.

In total, 43 out of the 390 teachers who completed the survey and finished the EPI questions identified as racialized<sup>16</sup>. The specific breakdown of the number of teachers working with the different contracts who identified as racialized is as follows: 21 teachers with permanent contracts, 15 teachers with LTO contracts, and 7 teachers with OT contracts. All the teachers who identified as racialized with permanent and LTO contracts completed all the questions, including the EPI questions. However, there were 22 teachers who identified as racialized with OT contracts who completed the survey from start to finish, but only 7 of them answered all the EPI questions. I inferred from this that some of these teachers could have been experiencing two layers of marginalization, the first because of their individual racialized identity, and the second from having a precarious labour contract. Answering those questions may have been emotionally difficult for those teachers.

The surveys were online for eight weeks. I downloaded the responses from the Lime platform onto my computer and then uploaded the results into the Stata software program. However, Stata was a new tool for me and for my own ease of use I eventually decided not to use Stata and instead I used Excel, which I was more familiar with. I first sorted the survey participants by contract type and created three separate Excel sheets, one for each contract type

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<sup>16</sup> See Figures 2 to 6 on pages 75 – 77, for details on survey participants' responses.

(permanent, LTO, OT). The participants were listed down the first column and the survey questions were across the top row. From these Excel sheets I was able to calculate the EPI scores as well as the demographic breakdown between and within the contract types.

Additionally, at the end of the survey willing participants included their email for contact purposes. The Excel sheets provided a strong database to help sort through the contracts and have a record of the survey results by contract type along with participant contact information.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is an increasing body of research about the experiences of precarious teachers in Ontario (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Walkland, 2017, Yearwood 2021). Using the EPI within larger surveys is one method that researchers could employ to learn more about the estimated 50 000 - 100 000 ‘un(der)employed’ teachers in Ontario (Mindzak, 2016, p.2). However, the EPI is just one method. Mindzak (2016), referencing Vosko and Zukewich (2005), states that research into precarious work does not “always flow in a purely inductive manner” (Mindzak, 2016, p.79). Instead, researchers will start with a framework and use a variety of theories and methods that can help them to better understand the phenomena. Using the EPI as an analytical tool to look at different contract types, and combining it with theories like LPT, and methods like CR and TA, follows the insights recommended by Vosko and Zukewich (2005) and Mindzak (2016).

**Figure 2 - Breakdown of number of *survey participants* who started and finished the survey (N=418).**

	Total	Man	Woman)	Prefer not answer (gender)	Non-binary	Racialized	White	Prefer no answer (race)
<b>Permanent</b>								
Survey started	268	87	180	0	1	22	246	0
Survey complete	267	87	179	0	1	21	246	0
Wanted interview	88	33	54	0	1	6	82	0
Interviewed	13	3	10	0	0	5	8	0
<b>LTO</b>								
Survey started	88	17	70	0	0	16	72	0
Survey complete	81	14	67	0	0	15	66	0
Wanted interview	38	9	29	0	0	11	27	0
Interviewed	16	5	11	0	0	3	13	0
<b>OT</b>								
Survey started	62	12	50	0	0	22	48	1
Survey complete	42	8	34	0	0	7	34	1
Wanted interview	16	2	14	0	0	4	11	1
Interviewed	7	1	6	0	0	1	5	1

**Figure 3 - Breakdown of interview participants: Contract type, race, and gender identities. (N=390)**

Contract	Gender	Race	Completed survey (n)	Asked to be interviewed (n/% of completed survey)	Was interviewed (n/% of asked to be interviewed)
<b>Permanent</b>			267	88/33%	13/15%
	<i>Man</i>		87	33/38%	3/9%
		Racialized	4	1/25%	1/100%
		White	83	32/39%	2/6%
	<i>Woman</i>		179	54/30%	10/19%
		Racialized	17	5/29%	4/80%
		White	161	49/30%	6/12%
	<i>Non-binary</i>		1	1/100%	0/0%
		Racialized	0	0	0
		White	1	1/100%	0/0%
<b>LTO</b>			81	38/47%	16/42%
	<i>Man</i>		14	9/64%	5/56%
		Racialized	1	1/100%	0/0%
		White	13	8/62%	5/63%
	<i>Woman</i>		67	29/43%	11/38%
		Racialized	14	10/71%	3/30%
		White	53	19/36%	8/42%
<b>OT</b>			42	16/38%	7/44%
	<i>Man</i>		8	2/25%	1/50%
		Racialized	0	0	0
		White	8	225%	1/50%
	<i>Woman</i>		34	14/41%	6/43%
		Racialized	7	4/57%	1/25%
		White	26	9/35%	4/44%
		Prefer not to answer (race)	1	1/100%	1/100%

**Figure 4 - Interview participants: Contract type, race, gender identity, and EPI scores. (N=36)**

Contract	Gender	Race	Secure: <2.5	Stable: 3 - 17.5	Vulnerable: 18 – 37.5	Precarious: =>38
<b>Permanent (n=13)</b>			1	12	0	0
	<i>Man</i>		1	2	0	0
		Racialized	0	1	0	0
		White	1	1	0	0
	<i>Woman</i>		0	10	0	0
		Racialized	0	4	0	0
		White	0	6	0	0
<b>LTO (n=16)</b>			0	3	6	7
	<i>Man</i>		0	0	3	2
		Racialized	0	0	0	0
		White	0	0	3	3
	<i>Woman</i>		0	3	3	4
		Racialized	0	1	0	2
		White	0	2	3	2
<b>OT (n=7)</b>			0	0	0	7
	<i>Man</i>		0	0	0	1
		Racialized	0	0	0	0
		White	0	0	0	1
	<i>Woman</i>		0	0	0	6
		Racialized	0	0	0	1
		White	0	0	0	4
		Prefer not say	0	0	0	1



## **Contract and EPI**

The contract type was correlated with EPI score. All teachers in permanent contracts had EPIs in the Secure or Stable categories. LTOs reported a mixed of Vulnerable or Precarious Scores. All OTs scored in the Precarious category. It is notable that only one teacher in a permanent contract scored in the Secure EPI category. This compares with just under one-quarter of the participants in the general population who were classified as Secure in the PEPSO 2013 study (Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, 2013, p107). This suggests that even for teachers in permanent contracts, teaching employment is relatively insecure. Further research is needed for greater insights into how the contract plays an influential role in a teacher's EPI score.

Overall, the EPI scores, along with other identifiers like race and gender, helped to inform the context I considered when analyzing the interviews as well as make connections to historical issues in teacher labour in Ontario. This contextual awareness was helpful for all my interview readings but especially so for a couple of teachers that mentioned financial or other issues around material well-being.

### **3.4.4– Gathering data: Selecting interview participants and the interviews.**

In the ethics application I provided: a copy of my interview questions, I stated that I would be using the Zoom platform for interviews<sup>17</sup>, I mentioned how I would protect participant privacy and provide compensation for the interviewees time, and as mentioned in the previous section, I submitted a set of appendices provided by MREB (please see the Appendices for these documents). Some of the appendices involved information and consent forms that I would send

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<sup>17</sup> I describe using Zoom in section 3.4.5, following this section.

to selected participants<sup>18</sup> ahead of the interview such as an ‘oral consent script’ that would also be read to the interviewee just before the interview so that I could have their verbal consent on the transcript before the interview started. For protection of participant privacy, I indicated that after the interview I would use a pseudonym when referring to those participants and that a copy of the interview would be stored in an external hard drive and destroyed within 12 months of the interview. To provide the interview participants compensation for their time, they were provided with a gift card for twenty-five dollars (\$25) to President’s Choice which I considered to be a safe, touchless, and cashless method of payment during the pandemic. President’s Choice was selected because they are affiliated with the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) and this project is underpinned with support for the labour movement and an intersectional awareness in general as well as teachers' labour unions specifically.

The interview questions I submitted to MREB fell into four areas, three of which corresponded with my research questions and the other one consisted of general questions about the individual teacher. There were two questions that focused on the individual interviewee that were not directly related to the research questions, the first was a general ‘tell me about yourself and becoming a teacher’ question that was placed at the start of the interview and the second was an ‘open’ question placed at the end. The last question allowed the participant to share something they wanted to, to ask questions and clarify anything that was on their mind, or a combination of those. The three other groups of questions related to feelings about work and the union, their individual health and household well-being, and the influences from the pandemic. The questions about the pandemic influences were placed near the beginning to establish that I wanted to know about pandemic influences on the questions that would be asked in the interview

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<sup>18</sup> I will describe how I selected the interview participants later in this section.

as well as to establish the pandemic as a separate time than before and that the interviewee could reference experiences and events during and before the pandemic when referring to any of the questions throughout the interview. The questions about work and the union were the bulk of the questions in the middle of the interview and towards the end of the interview there were a few questions about the influences shaped by their contract on their personal relationships, individual health, and the well-being of their household. These questions were placed near the end because I felt they were personal and possibly sensitive so I thought that the participant might feel more comfortable discussing these topics after some familiarity had been built between them and myself.

When selecting interview participants, I considered five factors: 1. An even mix of teachers with each contract type, 2. Teachers with an EPI score that indicated they were precarious, 3. A mix of different genders, 4. Teachers who identified as racialized, and 5. People who reported something of interest about their contract like experiences working with different contracts, in the open comment section of the online survey. I only contacted possible interview participants from survey respondents who indicated that they would like to be interviewed. I knew that I wanted approximately a dozen teachers from each type of labour contract group (12 OT, 12 LTO, 12 Permanent), so I contacted participants based on that desired ratio or close to it. I had to lower the number of OTs I interviewed because of a lack of responses to my email invitation(s). So, I increased the number of LTOs I contacted for interviews to compensate, while knowing that many LTOs have worked as OTs and are also technically OTs while they are in LTOs. But contract variation was not the only factor about teacher identity that I was looking for. Because I was using an identity lens in my analysis, I also wanted a sample group that had a mix of identities such as, different genders, racialized teachers, teachers from different postal

codes, and teachers that were classified as ‘precarious.’ After contacting interested participants and confirming their interest when they responded, I arranged a time to meet on Zoom.

For my own on-line communication with possible interview participants, I contacted all of them through my university email and not my personal email. To select the participants for the interviews, I first looked for teachers that indicated they wanted to be interviewed and identified as racialized from each of the three contract types. Once I was able to confirm interviews with teachers that identified as racialized, I re-read the answers to the final question of the survey which was an open answer question. Participants that expressed an interest to be interviewed and said anything of interest that related to their experiences with their contract, like working with different contracts, were sent invitations. My original hope was to have about a dozen teachers from each contract type. Unfortunately, despite that there were many participants who identified as occasional teachers that began to take the survey, not as many of them finished the survey. Out of those that did, some did not ask to be interviewed, and others that asked to be contacted for an interview did not respond when contacted. This happened more so with the teachers who identified as OTs when compared to teachers that identified with permanent or LTO contracts. Like my inferring about the challenges some OTs might have felt answering the EPI questions, teachers that had OT contracts might have felt uncomfortable talking about their precarious situation to an interviewer once they had thought it over. This situation left me with fewer teachers that had OT contracts to interview compared to the number of teachers with permanent and LTO contracts that asked to be interviewed. Teachers with permanent contracts were the group that asked to be interviewed in the largest number. Connecting this back to my inferring about the EPI questions and lack of teachers with OT contracts, this would be the

opposite dynamic. The teachers with the most job security seemed to feel the most comfortable wanting to be interviewed.

In the interviews I asked more layered and somewhat open-ended questions. This was so that I could allow for greater participant freedom and more subjective data. The more subjective data would then allow me in the coding and analysis stages to go ‘deep’, use CR as a guide, and consider casual factors that may influence the different subjective responses from the teachers with different contracts. I chose to use a semi-structured interview format and conduct the interviews via the Zoom online platform. There are some pros and cons around using different interview structures (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.110). To allow my participants to tell their story, while also connecting to my specific research questions, I felt that a semi-structured interview would be best. Building on feminist ideas that less formal and more conversational interviews allow for a more natural interaction (Oakley, 1981), I thought that a semi-structured interview would allow for this type of communication and observation.

The Zoom platform provided a transcription of the interviews. I estimated that I would need approximately 4-5 times the length of the interview, to go over and check for errors in the transcriptions. This took about one, six-to-eight-hour day, per interview to go over and correct any significant errors in the transcript. Any sections of the interview that were inaudible, were labeled inaudible and most of the interview was left as is.

In total, I conducted 37 interviews. One of the interview participants was an adult-day-school teacher and was not classified as an OT, LTO, or permanent teacher so I ended up only using 36 of the interviews for the discussion in this thesis. The interviews took place between May 14th, 2021, and August 6th, 2021. Interviewees were told that the interview would take 75 minutes. Most interviews stayed around this timeframe. A couple of interviews were closer to

45 minutes and two interviews were approximately 3 hours in length. All but one of the interviews took place during the daytime. A demographic breakdown of interview participants can be seen in Figure 5, below.

**Figure 5 - Demographic breakdown of interview participants organized by contract type (N=36)**

	Permanent (n=13)	LTO (N=16)	OT (n=7)	Total (n=36)
Age 35 and under	3	11	1	15
Age 36-47	6	4	3	13
Age 48 and over	4	1	3	8
Gender Man	3	5	1	9
Gender Woman	10	11	6	27
Single	3	7	5	15
Married	8	9	1	18
Widowed/separated	2	0	1	3
White	8	13	5	26
Racialized	5	3	1	9
Prefer not answer	0	0	1	1
EPI: Secure	1	0	0	1
EPI: Stable	12	3	0	15
EPI: Vulnerable	0	6	0	6
EPI: Precarious	0	7	7	14
Keeping up financially without any problems	9	9	3	21
Keeping up but sometimes it's a struggle	4	6	2	12
Having real financial problems and falling behind	0	1	2	3

### **3.4.5 - Gathering data: Using Zoom for online interviews.**

Howlett (2021) reminds readers that virtual approaches to fieldwork existed before the pandemic. Despite arguments that this type of fieldwork is merely extending ‘armchair’<sup>19</sup> analysis and that to do proper fieldwork academics need to either leave their ‘home’ institution or immerse themselves in a population, Howlett (2021) disagrees and references several scholars conducting successful online fieldwork (p.3-4). I agree with Howlett (2021) and the studies they reference. My own experiences with online fieldwork allowed for conversations that I do not think would have happened had the interviews been in person. Additionally, I feel that the online format allowed for greater professional distancing. This distancing may have detracted from some of the interpersonal connection between myself and the interviewee, yet I felt it allowed for a greater level of ethical interaction and professional distance. Conducting the interviews from the comfort of my own home office allowed me a level of relaxation that I feel enhanced my ability to take in the experience of the interview while also being aware of the theories and concepts I was using to analyze the interview. Having a recording of the interview after also allowed me to consider the details of the interaction such as, topics avoided, repetitions of topics or words, body language, levels of engagement with certain questions, my own feelings during the interaction, how my own biases might be influencing my interpretation, and ways that my ‘presence’ informed the interview process.

Online mediated environments enable a sense of “co-presence” (Howlett, 2021, p.12). This ‘co-presence’ is enabled in two ways. The first is when the interviewer is allowed into the participant’s personal space, which might not have happened to the same degree had the

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<sup>19</sup> What is referred to as ‘armchair’ anthropology is the practice of academics basing their theories and studies on the work of others, as opposed to, engaging with the research populations themselves. (Howlett, 2021, p.3)

interview taken place in person at a public location. The second is when, through online interview recordings and transcribing, the researcher has access to, and more time for, repeated readings of multiple data formats (audio, visual, written), as opposed to having less options with more traditional tools of data collection such as an audio recording and notes in a journal. I feel that ‘co-presence’ helped me to later assess and categorize the responses into the themes of positive, mixed, and negative expressions by the teachers regarding their experiences of work, the union, their health, and their household well-being, before and during the pandemic.

Aside from the practical advantages of online fieldwork during the pandemic, there may be “ideological reasons” (Howlett, 2021, p.13) for continuing digital methods for certain projects in the future. For instance, when trying to expand collaborative opportunities across space and time. Digital recordings can extend the time and space for interaction between collaborators. With tools such as digital recordings, online collaboration can be broadened to include other researchers in separate geographic locations or even within the same location, but with a different schedule of availability. Howlett (2021) also feels that there are moral and ecological reasons for increasing the use of online fieldwork during a pandemic and a climate emergency. I agree with Howlett (2021) on this point and feel that the researcher's ethical concern for the care of their subject requires that interviews are conducted in as safe a manner as possible. Online interviews are one hundred percent guaranteed to not be a site of COVID or other virus infection between the interviewer and the subject. Combine the risks of virus infection with the issue of the environmental footprints that are created with air travel, or even lengthy auto travel, and the ethical problems of putting others and the environmental ‘other’ at risk, begin to emerge.

The primary drawback to using Zoom for interviews was the sometimes ‘choppy’ internet connection. By ‘choppy’ I mean that the internet would pause or cut out. This happened in



about half a dozen interviews. When it did occur, it seemed to increase the familiarity between myself and the interviewee. We would collaborate to troubleshoot the problem and that often helped to reduce the level of formality in the interview and allowed the interview to feel like more of a ‘natural’ conversation. The malfunctioning of the technology felt like it reduced the barrier that was created by the technology. It allowed for the shared experience of human vulnerability at the hands of the technology to reveal itself, while at the same time, allowed for teamwork through troubleshooting the technical problem and a shared sense of accomplishment and purpose working through the challenge. Despite the critiques of online interviews functioning like a new form of ‘armchair anthropology’, for a variety of personal reasons, I do feel it allowed me to practice a more detailed level of analysis that helped to set up a pool of ideas for coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis (TA).

### **3.5.1 – Reading and reporting the data: Using thematic analysis (TA)**

My experience with TA went through two stages during my fieldwork. The first stage came from the initial data analysis. The second stage came about when I was having difficulties writing my discussion chapters in a format that I felt was able to convey the different surface experience of the interview responses in a comparable way that still allowed for deeper connections. I wanted a method that allowed me to show my own interpretations of the different feelings expressed in the interviews that I could then connect to the ideas discussed in the interviews and the supporting theories, history, and research that I was using to analyze the data. I was looking for a way to answer the research questions in a more direct way that let me explicitly compare differences in feelings between the different contract types.

After some consideration, I decided to change my thematic approach, revise the themes, and organize the interview responses accordingly. I did so in a way that reflected how I felt the participants expressed themselves in the interviews and in a way that I could better sort and

compare my interpretations of how the different teachers felt towards the topic of each research question. This process let me compare and discuss quotes between the teachers with different contracts from the interview that are used in Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 as examples of what led to my interpretation of the interviewees' feelings and expressions. I will discuss this second stage after I describe my first attempt at TA.

In my first attempt with TA, I considered that the interviews and responses could fall into three categories, issues of 'self', relations with 'other(s)', or influences from COVID. The three original themes that emerged from these categories were: 1. Differences relating to the self, 2. Differences relating to other(s), and 3. Differences relating to influences from COVID. These themes would later change as I started the writing stages of this thesis. During my third<sup>20</sup> reading of the interviews I began to think about how to best code or 'word' the data to fit with the themes. By this I don't mean that I would always impose my own language onto the interview, but that I would also think about which words or phrases were being used by the subject, and then develop codes from those two angles. This is what I thought about while I was transcribing and editing the interviews.

After the transcript was edited, I began phase four. This was my fourth reading of the interview and I further considered ideas for codes. After this fourth reading of all the interviews, I uploaded the files into the NVivo platform. After the upload, I began a fifth reading of each interview where, following Braun and Clarke's (2012) phase five, I further defined and named the codes while thinking about how I would be categorizing them into a coding tree and under the appropriate themes I was using. To prepare for phase six and to write the report (this thesis), I formally went over the interviews a sixth time. After this read over I felt prepared to organize

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<sup>20</sup> I am counting the actual interview as the 'first' reading.

the codes into a coding tree under each theme. This process was lengthy yet much easier than would have been had I not used the NVivo software, Zoom transcripts, or not followed the research by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012). There are benefits around the ‘value of verification’ (Scharp & Sanders, 2018) that Braun and Clarke's system provides, however, there are also potential weaknesses in their system and its critical potential (Lawless & Chen, 2018).

One of the strengths of the method provided by Braun and Clarke (2006: 2012) is that it has a high level of verifiability. Scharp and Sanders (2018) note that the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) forces qualitative researchers to think about what a theme is to begin with. Scharp and Sanders (2018) use Braun and Clarke (2006) to show that a theme encompasses a significant element of the data “in a patterned way” (Scharp & Sanders, 2018, p.1). The systemic use of categorizing patterns, connecting them to specific data (i.e., specific points in the interview), coding them, and then reporting on the process, provides an ‘audit trail’ to help future researchers conduct similar studies (Scharp & Sanders, 2018, p.4). My own concern about not being able to effectively encompass the data “in a patterned way” (ibid., p.1) and connect my interpretation of the surface level of the interview to larger topics, influenced my decision to alter my themes and change my approach. I decided that I would try to use TA in a looser sense but in a way that was still analytically critical.

Researchers that choose to use forms of TA should seek to remain ‘critical’ (Lawless & Chen, 2018). The word ‘critical’ can be applied to a great deal of contemporary humanities and social science research. But what makes something ‘critical’? Lawless and Chen (2018) contend that the only reference to anything “critical” by Braun and Clarke (2006), is that TA “is flexible enough to be used with any framework” (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p.2). Lawless and Chen (2018) say they are concerned with “methodological rigor” whereas Braun and Clarke

(2006) are concerned with “flexibility” (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p.2). Lawless and Chen (2018) create a “spectrum of criticality” where research which pays *minor* attention to “macro structures” (p.3), would sit at the “lighter” end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum, the end that is more ‘heavily’ critical, is research that highlights the influences of “larger and structural issues” (ibid.). I feel that the themes I used when I applied a flexible version of TA permitted me to ground my analysis of the interview from what was said by the participants and how I interpreted what was said and to help make connections with events, histories, and structures outside of the interview yet interrelated to the interview. My use of TA illustrates how it is “flexible enough to be used with any framework” (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p.2).

For my own research that seeks to give voice to marginalized and precarious teachers, TA, or ‘critical’ TA (CTA) is an effective analytical tool for using qualitative research to achieve social justice objectives (Lawless & Chen, 2018) and combines well with CR (Fryer, 2022). My adaptive use of Foucauldian genealogy (Rogers, 2018) to help historicize my project also overlaps with Lawless and Chen (2018) who reference the benefits of using Foucauldian ‘archaeology’<sup>21</sup> to “identify how human discourse is linked to larger social constructions, grand narratives, and social ideologies” (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p.5). If a project using TA wants to enhance its level of criticality, be closer to the ‘heavy’ end of the spectrum, and function as CTA, then its use of TA must be: 1. politicized (i.e., equity seeking and including multiple identity perspectives that connect to larger events and structures) and 2. historicized (i.e., how does something in the present resemble or differ from something that was in the past). To help focus a

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<sup>21</sup> Foucault’s ‘archaeology’ is not the same thing as and can sometimes be confused with Foucault’s ‘genealogy’. Foucault’s ‘archaeology’ is concerned with how artifacts connect, whereas his ‘genealogy’ is concerned with the identities that would interconnect with the artifacts. (Phung, 2012).

researcher's inquiry, Lawless and Chen (2018) provide a list of questions that critically minded projects must ask. The questions provided by Lawless and Chen (2018) relate to looking for and questioning systems of power and domination, normative value systems, forms of social reproduction, and historical examples with similarities.

The type of CTA approach argued for by Lawless and Chen (2018), enhances the data analysis of interviews and compliments the other research lenses used for this thesis. For example, my use of LPT analysis along with a CR framework encouraged me to be aware of historical-socio-economical-political power dynamics, imbalances, inequities, norms, patterns, and trends, and how they shape the experiences of the teachers interviewed. Lawless and Chen (2018) also helped steer my inquiry into how those influences might have been experienced differently, by teachers with different status positions and different labour contracts at different points in history. TA, or CTA, as I have used it, is a method of reading and reporting on data that fits well with the larger CR theoretical framework that considers both epistemic and ontological realities. The themes of positive, mixed, and negative experiences also helped connect my reading of the responses in the interviews with other research and larger contextual issues.

### **3.5.2 – Reading and reporting the data: Creating themes of ‘positive, mixed, and negative experiences/expressions/responses.’**

When I drafted my first discussion chapter, I felt it lacked a compelling way to compare the details of the interviews between the different teachers with each other and my interpretation of those differences. It felt like I was simply listing themes with some corresponding codes and discussing them which did not seem to connect with the experience of the actual interviews and allow me to be explicit with how I biasedly interpreted the interviews. Because I was already using a CR approach, I was focused on what I read on the surface of the interview and how that

connected to the material discussed in the interview and because I was aware of my own positionality, I knew that my reading was my interpretation and not definitively accurate as to what the interviewee may have meant at the time. I did use my best judgment as to what I thought the participant was trying to express but I could be wrong. Interviews are “not then the truth as seen by the interviewee but a discourse about a topic. The story changes in its telling” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.111). From this line of thinking and to provide a way to allow me to compare participants feelings towards the research questions, I decided to classify what I felt the interviewee was trying to express regarding if they felt favorable or positive, negative, or unfavorable, or a mix of the two, towards their work, the union, their individual health and household well-being, before and during COVID. I would not be able to measure the degrees of change or intensity of feeling, that would need further research and tools. I am just considering my own reading and if I feel the teacher felt generally negative, positive, or mixed, about issues related to one of the research questions.

To begin this process, I decided to first create a spreadsheet. The teachers' pseudonyms were listed in the first left hand column and separated into three groups by their different contract type. The first column of cells contained the names of the teachers in three separate groups. The first group were permanent contracts. The second group below were the teachers with LTO contracts, and the last group was the teacher with OT contracts. Along the very top row of the spreadsheet, I had six columns in three groups of two. For each group of two, the first column was before COVID and the second was during COVID. The first group of two columns, where the ‘before’ was the first column and the ‘during’ was the second, was ‘work before and during COVID’. The second group of columns was ‘the union before and during COVID’. The third group was ‘individual health and household well-being before and during COVID’. I then reread

the interview transcripts and looked for sections that corresponded to the research questions. In these sections I decided if the interviewee was expressing one of three types of feelings: A primarily favorable or positive feeling regarding the experience being described, a primarily negative or unfavorable feeling regarding the experience being described, or an unsure mix of the two. For each participant I decided if they expressed one of these three feelings towards their work, the union, their individual health, and household well-being, and how these all compared to their comments about before and during COVID. Then I found examples from each participant. Next, I copied and pasted the chosen example quotes into a spreadsheet in the row connected to each teacher's name in the corresponding 'before' or 'during' column. For example, a comment that was reflective of the teacher who had an OT contract and was feeling favorable or having a positive experience towards the union during COVID, that comment would be copied from the interview transcript or the coding tree and pasted into the spreadsheet across from the teacher with the OT contracts name and under the column heading of 'union during COVID'. Next, for each quote that was copied and pasted into the Excel worksheet, I wrote just before the quote began either a 'pos, mix, or neg' so that I could quickly identify my interpretation of how the teacher felt about that topic. I then identified any corresponding codes that had already been attached to quotations in phase 1 and made a note so that I could reference them in the findings and discussions chapters. Finally, I added up the results so that I could visualize the differences in the form of bar graphs<sup>22</sup>. For example, if about half of the teachers with OT contracts expressed that they had more often negative or unfavorable experiences

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<sup>22</sup> The bar graphs for work and the union pre-COVID are in Figures 7 and 8 in chapters 5 and 6, respectively. The graph that compares individual health and household well-being pre-COVID can be seen in Figure 9 in chapter 7. In Chapter 8, Figures 10 (work), 11 (union), and 12 (individual health and household well-being) show a comparison between pre-COVID with during COVID.

towards work before COVID, I could say, ‘approximately 50% of teachers with an OT contract expressed negative experiences towards work before COVID compared to say 75% of teachers with a permanent contract’. This process allowed me to get the sense of a visually comparative shape between the positive, mixed, and negative expressions and experiences of the different contract types towards the different research questions.

My use of positive, mixed, and negative themes was inspired by affect theory (Shmurak, 2006, p.7). Firstly, I am critical of affect theory and cautious around its lack of emphasis on structure and culture. However, the general idea that humans can express themselves in three broad ways that each encompass a variety of specific feelings and expressions that are subjectively interpreted and can be contradictory, made sense to me as an organizational structure that could be turned into subjective thematic areas.

Affect theory has positive, negative, and neutral categories of classification, which I saw as restrictive and too deterministic. To begin, I used the language of “themes” instead of “categories” and for the third “theme” I used a “mixed” “theme” instead of a “neutral” “category”. I did this because ideologically speaking, I feel there is always bias, even if it is mixed with different feelings. I feel neutrality in oneself and others is difficult to establish at best or even illusory. For example, if somebody in an interview expressed “surprise”, which is one of Tomkins neutral classifications, I would consider the context and infer if the surprise was a positive, negative, or mixed expression relating to an experience. More specifically, if there was an expression of surprise about hearing of the death of a loved one, I would say that was a negative experience, whereas if it was surprise about gaining a work promotion somebody was hoping for, I would see this was positive and admittedly these could be inaccurate interpretations on my part.



Also, I feel the “mixed” “theme” allowed for contradiction. If a participant mentioned surprise when hearing about the death of someone close and getting a promotion they hoped for, I would see this as mixed. So, I thought a “theme” of “mixed” feelings towards one of the research questions was more appropriate than a “neutral” one. I feel that my analysis and the contrasting of differences in how the teachers felt toward the work, their union, their household and personal health, before and during COVID, was improved with my adaptation to TA and using positive, mixed, and negative thematic interpretations as flexible and overlapping themes as opposed to distinct categories. This invites future research to reinterpret my findings while being aware that I intended for such re-interpretation.

The TA method used is an adaptation built from my own inferring about possible ideas into the organizing and reporting of data that came to me after reading Braun and Clarke (2006) and Lawless and Chen (2018). I hoped this method would help my own analysis and maybe even allow for a level of ‘reliability’ for future qualitative researchers in education looking to compare different feelings, experiences, and expressions by different teachers and connect those to larger historical, cultural, and political-economic processes. Hammond and Wellington (2021) write that “a study becomes reliable when there is enough commonality between contexts to make some level of comparison worthwhile but enough which is different to make any generalization a task of imaginative re-interpretation” (Hammond & Wellington, 2021, p.95). If Smaller (2015a) is correct and the contexts of educational labour are somewhat similar “in most parts of the world” (Smaller, 2015a, p.138) and there is an “increasing normalization” of “increased standardization and bureaucratization” (ibid), then hopefully the CR, LPT, TA synthesis used in this project to analyze qualitative data, has made the comparison of differences easier to understand and can be used by future researchers in different global locations.

### **3.5.3 – Why I used Thematic Analysis and visual graphs to display my readings of participant feelings.**

I used Thematic Analysis (TA) because I felt that it would allow me to discuss any “pattern(s)” (Scharp & Sanders, 2018) I felt emerged from the interview responses in a “flexible” (Lawless & Chen, 2018) way. I also decided upon using broad themes of general emotional terms like positive, mixed, and negative feelings to show the subjectivity of my interpretation and that the emotions were not always clear. My uncertainty might not be conveyed had I used the positive, mixed, and negative feelings as strict “categories” as opposed to flexible “themes”. I feel the idea of a “theme” represented my own subjectivity better than suggesting I had found some new form of “categorization” for the feelings of teachers with different labour contracts.

Because of my subjectivity I wanted to leave my thesis and exploratory research open to different interpretations and to encourage different interpretations and discussions in future research. I hope this project will encourage more research into educational labour practices and comparative contracts from kindergarten to post-secondary. If I had used an ordering structure that was more strictly categorical, I worry that I would be implying a level of definitiveness and objectivity that I feel is always difficult to achieve. I can never know what is going on in the head of a research participant. An interpretation of one’s own feelings and that of others is always fluid and can be readjusted when more context comes to light that is reflected upon.

This openness to my own reconsiderations of my own understanding as I was doing the research is why I liked using TA to help organize my readings of the interviews, because that was an admittedly subjective task. I also wanted to keep the themes broad and general because I did not want to label more specific feelings that could be more in line with a phenomenological analysis which might be more detailed into the feelings of participants but detract from my CR lens which allowed me to make larger contextual connections. The CR lens was important for

discussing connections between the interviews and the labour process of teaching. CR allowed me to connect the content and readings of the interviews to larger historical, cultural, and political economic issues, which was one of the aims of my thesis.

Eagleton-Pierce (2016), Archer (2000), and Hochschild (2012) all discuss the challenges that can arise from discussing experiences and emotions, especially those of research participants. Eagleton-Pierce (2016) notes that “disconnections may exist between the represented experience” and how a person might “actually feel” (p.68). Because of this disconnect along with my concern for more of a CR lens as opposed to a phenomenological lens to help with my analysis, I kept the themes very general. I felt the most general themes to encompass how somebody might have felt about something without naming a specific emotion, was to create themes of positive, mixed, and negative feelings about one of the areas of comparison, i.e., towards work, the union, or individual health and household well-being. Like an iceberg, this would allow me to display what I thought the participant felt from my surface reading or what was above the water without cementing it as fact, as well as make deeper connections below the surface of the water to history, culture, and political economy. In relation to making connections between a surface reading to deeper issues, Archer (2000) writes that “there is a lot of ground to trace between the first emergence of our emotion and the full elaboration of the internal conversation” (p.195). Because that “ground” can range from personal psychology to memories of historical events and feelings about or experiences stemming from political economic policy, I felt limiting the emphasis on more specific emotional themes and using more general themes would allow for a greater discussion of systems, events, and causal factors related to a CR analysis. Additionally, my own biases would have further influenced my selection of more specific emotional labels like “shame” or “pity” (Hochschild,

2012), which can vary in how they are felt about and expressed between cultural groups. To help move my analysis towards larger structural issues influencing the emotions and not the emotions themselves, I used the types of themes that I did.

Lastly, I wanted a way that I could quickly reference the general degree of differences between how the themes involving the experiences and feelings of the teachers with different contracts were different. A form of visual representation seemed to me to be an effective way to do this and I also felt it would help to make my research more accessible to the “40% of college students” (Clarke III, Flaherty, & Yankey, 2006), other researchers, and members of the general public who are visual learners. By emphasizing my own subjectivity, biases, and positionality along with using “flexible” themes to pick up “patterns” that are not definitive and are open to interpretation, I hope that readers of my research will not view the visual bar graphs I have used as hard objective facts. Instead, they should be seen more so as rough sketchings that provide a quick visual reference for readers into how I interpreted the interviews which also invites future inquiry and researchers to help clarify and extend on.

### **3.6 –Researching precarious educational work during COVID**

Prior to March 2020 and the arrival of COVID, the plan for my thesis was to look at the differences experienced amongst high school teachers with different labour contracts, during non-pandemic times. When the pandemic hit and school staff and students in Ontario were told on Friday, March 13th, 2020, that there would not be a return to in-person learning after the March break, I needed to adjust my project. To include some of the different ways that the pandemic influenced the experiences of the teachers with different labour contracts, as well as to enhance the scope and authenticity of my research, I had to make some changes.

In the spring of 2020, when the pandemic was first reported in North America, there were academic calls for research into the effects, specifically on mental health, of the COVID pandemic (Holmes et al., 2020). There were also calls for researchers to reconsider how they'll conduct their studies during a pandemic (Clay, 2020). The first adjustment I made to my project was that I added a third research question: 3. How have these differences been influenced since the start of the COVID pandemic? I also added a couple of questions to my interviews that dealt with COVID. Second, I initially had planned to conduct as many interviews as possible in-person. COVID prevented any in-person interviews from taking place and therefore I used the Zoom platform for all my interviews.

COVID had many influences on this project, some beneficial, some problematic. The primary benefit was that interviews were generally more accessible being conducted online. The main drawback was that a lot of the interview conversations would jump around when talking about before and during COVID which made it challenging at times to know when exactly was being referred to. The Thematic Analysis (TA) approach that I used to read and analyze the interviews was adapted partially to address these drawbacks by allowing me to begin my analysis with how the teacher appeared to feel about an issue and then to connect that feeling to events or issues in pre-pandemic time or during the pandemic. The initial drawbacks helped me to create an adapted form of TA that might be able to provide new insights and possible openings for future studies into precarious public sector educational work and comparative educational labour studies.

### **3.7 - Summary**

This chapter provided the context and explanations involving the research methods used for the development of this thesis. CR, LPT, and my positionality helped to inform how I interpreted the interviews and used tools like TA. The benefits of historicizing teacher labour in Ontario to help think about current contexts and my use of an adaptive form of TA to help with my analysis into the different contracts and identities was also discussed. For the survey, using the EPI added an important element to the data because of the issue of precarious work that underlies the thesis. Gathering data online and through social media presented challenges and opportunities but functioned as a useful resource for finding a diverse range of research participants (teachers with different contracts and identities) from a select group (public secondary teachers in Ontario). The ethical considerations that guided my recruitment of survey and interview participants as well as fieldwork was also highlighted. The influence of COVID on my project was covered in the last section before this summary. Finally, Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 have been included to show visual representation of the survey and interview participants.

**Figure 6 - *Interview participants* with pseudonyms and EPI scores**

Name	Age	Gender	Relationship Status	Ethnicity	EPI Score	Contract	Location	Last 12 Months
Barb	42-47	Woman	Married/Common law	White	17.5 (Stable)	Permanent	Eastern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Roger	36-41	Man	Married/Common law	White	15 (Stable)	Permanent	Northern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Jeremy	36-41	Man	Married/Common law	South East Asian	5 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Catharine	54-59	Woman	Separated/Divorced	Indo-Caribbean	7.5 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Kimberly	36-41	Woman	Married/Common law	White	5 (Stable)	Permanent	Northern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Shane	36-41	Man	Married/Common law	White	0 (Secure)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Maureen	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	White	7.5 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Leslie	48-53	Woman	Widowed	Metis	5 (Stable)	Permanent	Northern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Melissa	48-53	Woman	Married/Common law	First Nations	15 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Eve	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	Multi-racial ethnic	12.5 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Alyssa	30-35	Woman	Married/Common law	White	10 (Stable)	Permanent	Eastern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Cheryl	48-53	Woman	Married/Common law	White	10 (Stable)	Permanent	Eastern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Nadia	42-47	Woman	Single/Never married	White	10 (Stable)	Permanent	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Desiree	30-35	Woman	Married/Common law	West Asian	60 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Sabrina	30-35	Woman	Married/Common law	Multi-racial ethnic	70 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Joseph	48-53	Man	Married/Common law	White	47.5 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Maurice	30-35	Man	Single/Never married	White	30 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Having real financial problems and falling behind
Kathleen	23-29	Woman	Single/Never married	White	15 (Stable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Janice	30-35	Woman	Married/Common law	White	42.5 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Merideth	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	White	27.5 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Anessa	36-41	Woman	Married/Common law	Other	15 (Stable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Cathy	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	White	45 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Agatha	36-41	Woman	Married/Common law	White	27.5 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Allison	23-29	Woman	Single/Never married	White	17.5 (Stable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Barry	42-47	Man	Married/Common law	White	45 (Precarious)	LTO	South Western Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Michelle	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	White	57.5 (Precarious)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Valerie	23-29	Woman	Married/Common law	White	37.5 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Steven	30-35	Man	Single/Never married	White	37.5 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Nigel	36-41	Man	Married/Common law	White	35 (Vulnerable)	LTO	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Shelly	54-59	Woman	Single/Never married	White	60 (Precarious)	OT	Eastern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Shoshanna	42-47	Woman	Married/Common law	South Asian	77.5 (Precarious)	OT	Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Melvin	42-47	Man	Single/Never married	White	60 (Precarious)	OT	Southern Ont	Having real financial problems and falling behind
Joelle	36-41	Woman	Single/Never married	White	65 (Precarious)	OT	Northern/Southern Ont	Keeping up without any problems
Debbie	30-35	Woman	Single/Never married	Prefer not to answer	70 (Precarious)	OT	Southern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle
Layla	48-53	Woman	Single/Never married	White	90 (Precarious)	OT	Southern Ont	Having real financial problems and falling behind
Mandy	60-65	Woman	Widowed	White	50 (Precarious)	OT	Eastern Ont	Keeping up, but sometimes a struggle

## Chapter 4 - History and Identity

### 4.1 - Introduction

This chapter looks at the history of public education in Ontario within three time periods. The first period, 1840s-1940s, explores different levels of teacher certification during the early and mid-years of the Ontario school system. The second period is during the 1940s-2000s when the relationship between teachers, their unions, and the state continued to formalize. Lastly, in the post 2000 period, there was an increase in teachers with occasional contracts and a trend of government austerity towards the educational labour sector. When COVID was declared a pandemic in March 2020, the public education system in Ontario had lower levels of funding than decades earlier, an increase in the number of precarious workers with occasional teaching contracts, and rising labour action.

The analysis for each period is informed by four considerations taken from the Foucauldian genealogical methodology adapted by Rogers (2018). Rogers' (2018) approach considers the overlap between subject(s) and object(s) and complements the micro-macro and multi-level social lens and trans-disciplinary analysis that CR provides throughout this thesis. It is an approach that fits well with an LPT lens that helps researchers consider the labour processes and forms of occupational control experienced by teachers by adding an awareness of what the relationship between teachers and state management have looked like at different points in history. Roger's (2018) approach has four considerations that I will now outline and provide examples from this chapter: 1. A disinterest in finding an official beginning or origin story, acknowledging that each period are moments in larger processes, 2. An awareness that technologies of power (ex. state policies, formalization of state and union relationships, defining what is considered 'professional' in a given occupation, forms of labour contracts) and



technologies of self/subject (ex. formal/informal education, training, individual professional development, identity as a professional teacher with a type of certification or contract, organizing with other workers) both converge, 3. An understanding that the genealogy of the subject and the genealogy of the state interact in a historical process, the two are not separate, and 4. That this process fluctuates depending on certain historical moments (Rogers, 2018, p.42-48).

Using this historical lens has allowed me to connect the perspectives of teachers and historical events in Chapter 4 with the analytical considerations used elsewhere in this project. It has also enabled me to think about the similarities and differences at certain points in the history of Ontario around issues involving teacher labour inequity and how the state and educational labour sector overlap. This approach has helped me to consider questions like, who is working with what type of certification or contract type at different points in time? Who, what, and where are they teaching? What are some of the differences between teachers with other certifications or contracts? How have ideas about teacher professionalism and teacher unions helped to maintain these differences while also problematizing them? And, how secure or insecure was the work of teachers with different types of employment status at different historical moments? Using the historical lens provided by Rogers (2018) allowed me to consider the roles that race, class, gender, professionalism, unions, and job security have played in the identities of teachers at different points in history and how the political economy and historical process have reflexive elements to them that influence subjective experiences. These insights have helped to add context and analytical material for my own thinking through the levels of CR analysis that went beyond the initial reading of the interviews for this study.

#### **4.2 - 1840s - 1940s - Precarious teaching in Ontario**

The early years of the school system in Ontario were largely influenced by the interests of the developing nation state. Teaching was generally precarious work. This period saw the use of different levels of teaching certification that different teachers worked with, the rise of organized teachers, and the creation of the Teachers Profession Act.

#### **Centralization, certification, secondary schools, and social hierarchy**

After the social tensions and rebellions of 1837-38 efforts were made to bring schools and teachers under greater control of authorities in early Ontario. For a variety of reasons, including ideas around morality, politics, and value systems, historically there has been concern on the part of authorities about the type of teachers working in the schools and the influence they might be having on the youth. For example, Smaller (1997) references that teachers were “often” considered “transient” and seen as “common idlers” who “frequently” provided “vulgar, low-bred, vicious and intemperate examples for their students” (Smaller, 1997, p.99). Althouse (1967) specifically mentions political concerns regarding what teachers might model and talk about with their students. Althouse (1967) quotes Thomas Rolph, a local official during this time, “It is really melancholy to traverse the province and go into many of the common schools; you find a herd of children, instructed by some anti-British adventurer, instilling into their young and tender minds sentiments hostile to the parent state... teaching them an anti-British dialect and idiom” (Althouse, 1967, p.9). Building on these ideas, Smyth et al. (2000) reference the work of Cookson and Lucks (1997) to point out that teaching has “historically...been a dangerous activity because of the transmission of ideas and the acquisition of literacy invites critical reflection...its underlying purposes remain quietly revolutionary, although few teachers think of

themselves as change agents” (Smyth et al., 2000, p.7). The authorities of early Ontario made efforts to counter those “revolutionary” possibilities through legislation.

Smaller (1997) argues that the purpose of the 1841 Common School Act was to “begin the process of establishing a centralized school system aimed at promoting the moral regulation of the youth of the province” (Smaller, 1997, p.100). A regulation in 1853 clarified who could authorize certain levels of teaching certificates to oversee who would teach the youth. A provincial certificate allowed teachers mobility anywhere in the province whereas a county certificate was regionally specific. Althouse (1967) describes how the regulation “transferred the certification of one class of teachers (and the class most likely to be successful), from the local to the central authority...The teacher’s status was conditioned by the certificate which he held” (Althouse, 1967, p.23). The legislation was part of the process towards the centralization of the school system, the refining of the levels of certification, the clarifying of divisions between elementary and secondary schools, and the use of certain teacher identities teaching in certain schools and to certain types of students.

Existing mostly in the form of what were called ‘grammar schools’ throughout the early and mid-19th-century, secondary schools were not officially formalized into the education system until 1871 (Harris, 1967, p.48). According to Althouse (1967), secondary education more so than elementary education, was established in the British tradition, “In the field of secondary education, that tradition was more firmly entrenched” (Althouse, 1967, p.144). In line with the European influences, Ontario secondary schools in the latter half of the 19th-century catered to a particular social class that was wanting to prepare their usually male children for the universities or commercial and professional trades and were often taught by male teachers with a university degree or some university education.

Prior to the mid-19th century teaching often took place in buildings where elementary education and secondary education overlapped and there was a wide range of student ages (from 5 or 6 years old until late teens) (Gidney & Millar, 1990, p.3-4). Schools and teachers' salaries were generally funded by the church, local voluntary groups, or private citizens who would need to approve of the teacher, agree to pay them for a certain amount of time, and renew their contract at certain timely intervals, if desired by the employer (Smaller, 2012, p.25-26). However, these relationships could be precarious, "lengthy tenured employment sometimes eluded those teachers who desired and/or needed it" (Smaller, 2012, p.26). Eventually, as schools became more organized and local educational authorities were more established, the hiring of teachers would fall to local trustees and later the local school board.

The 19th-century schools were often gendered<sup>23</sup> (Gidney and Millar, 1990, p.19), socially segregated (p.8-9), and largely racially segregated (Aladejebi, 2021). In some scenarios the teachers who taught in them reflected the populations they were teaching. For example, in 1850 a law officially created a separate school system for Black students (Cooper, 2000, p.22). Although Black students were not officially forbidden from attending white schools, when Black students tried to attend certain white schools, this was resisted by those white communities, "school segregation based on race was already a reality before 1850" (ibid). School segregation based on economic and social class was also an issue during this time. Unfortunately, information into the schooling of elite members of Upper Canada society is mostly unavailable because very few of the private school registrars from the middle decades of the 1800s "have

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<sup>23</sup> Gidney and Millar (1990) have written that prior to the 1860s there were "no province wide estimates" (p.106) about the number of girls attending grammar schools. However, for the period of the mid 1860s, the province wide estimate for grammar school enrollment was that girls accounted for 37% of total pupils (ibid).

survived” and researchers “do not have the sources” (Gidney & Millar, 1990, p.8). On the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, there were only a few of “the respectable poor” (ibid) who attended school.

The different students, the different schools, and the hierarchical interests of the colonial elite led to the development of a teaching certification system and labour contracts that were flexible for and in the interests of, the employer. Teaching in early Ontario required a licence that often took the form of a certificate which would speak to the level of qualifications (academic and professional training) of the teacher. There may have been some rules around who could teach, but in general, “boards were free to pick and choose among levels of qualifications according to their budgets and ambitions” (Gidney & Millar, 2012, p.125). At times, communities looking to save money would ‘oust’ a more experienced teacher “for a cheaper, less qualified volunteer” (Althouse, 1967, p.63).

Teaching in some of the rural common schools and poorer areas often required only lower certification such as a third-class teaching certificate<sup>24</sup> or a character recommendation from a local official. There was a degree of subjectivity around this recommendation and hiring process which was largely influenced by local elites. Smaller (1997) describes this dynamic, “certification of teachers during the mid-nineteenth century depended largely upon the subjective opinions of the local elite as to the “proprietary” of individuals who should be allowed to teach the young people of the community” (Smaller, 1997, p.105). Another example of local elites using the certification system towards social stratification can be seen in New Brunswick.

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<sup>24</sup> Third class certificates were the lowest level of certificate. The top of the certificate hierarchy was the first-class certificate which was followed by the second-class certificate. The standards, rules, and usage of these certificates varied at different periods and different locations in early Ontario and other provinces.

Although third-class teaching certificates were eventually abandoned in most provinces during the 1920s, in New Brunswick, some normal schools offered them, “to ensure the poorest districts had a supply of licensed teachers” (Gidney & Millar, 2012, p.406). On the other hand, at the turn of the century, to teach in a secondary school a teacher “rarely needed” (ibid., p.126) professional training but often needed university experience and if not, then generally a first-class certificate.

Without university experience an elementary first-class certificate “might qualify an individual to teach at the secondary level as well” (ibid.). The identities of who were able to afford greater levels of education and certification or socialize in networks that made access to both easier, would generally have reflected the larger social dynamics and inequities of the time. Referencing how secondary schools were developed in Europe to help sort a social hierarchy, Anderson (2004) writes, “it was only after the last decades of the nineteenth century, as part of a policy of social exclusion that schools were sorted into a clear hierarchy” (Anderson, 2004, p.99).

In early Ontario, similar patterns of hierarchy were adopted and structured into the educational system. In 1846, Upper Canada’s chief superintendent of education, Egerton Ryerson, used the term ‘secondary’ to describe a stage in the French and Prussian school systems (Gidney and Millar, 1990, p.5). In Upper Canada this stage generally tended to coincide with what was taught in the grammar schools. Despite the shifting and fluid language around the name for the stage of schooling that existed between elementary and university, there was an element of stasis underlying the changing language. What was largely stable amidst the changes in the education system were the intersecting social divisions based on race, class, and gender. In places where Ryerson visited and learned about school systems, like France and Prussia, the

secondary school system was developing in line with pre-existing social and economic class divisions (Anderson, 2004).

Anderson (2004) argues that as secondary schooling grew in the latter half of the 1800s, “demand was diverted into new and inferior types of school, allowing the function of the old elite schools to remain intact with minimal concessions to utilitarianism” (Anderson, 2004, p.96). Although this was in reference to Europe, the development of school systems during the 1800s had international overlaps and Ryerson’s tour of European school systems was one of many transnational tours by educators and an example of relationships between educators and state officials globally. As educators from European states and Eurocentric colonies were traveling and learning from each other, immigrants from mostly European states were also moving around, some coming to Canada. Between the 1890s and the 1920s, a primary purpose of education in English Canada “was to assimilate the large numbers of immigrants...to dominant Anglo-Saxon values” (Brock University, 2022). Despite the hierarchical social reproduction role of teaching and schooling, in this chapter there is an example of the social hierarchy not exactly replicating itself while there are a few other examples where it did. There is one example where I discuss a racialized teacher who had relative job security despite a lower certification level. Yet, there is also an example where racialized teachers were replaced by white teachers with higher levels of certification.

### **Black teachers and separate schools**

The life of Julia Turner (1831-1900), the events in Chatham in 1859, and the experiences of Fern Shadd Shreve, show three different yet similar experiences for Black teachers who held a range of teaching certification which, along with their identities, influenced the contracts that they worked under (Cooper, 2000). Julia Turner was born in Ontario to parents who fled slavery

in West Virginia in 1828. She began teaching at 14 in a Black separate school in Essex (Cooper, 2000, p.19). There was a need for Black schools because in 1850 Ryerson helped enshrine into law, legislation that created separate schooling for Black students (Cooper, 2000, p.22).

Interestingly, McLaren (2004) argues that many Black people fought against segregation and having a separate school system, preferred inclusion, and when they did open separate schools, “children of all ethnic backgrounds were welcome in these institutions” (McLaren, 2004, p.27).

At some point early in her career Turner received a third-class teaching certificate. It is possible that it came from a county school because there is no record of her attending teacher training at a normal school. Over time Turner upgraded her credentials and in 1866 she was awarded a first-class teaching certificate. Turner never married, taught her entire career “solely” (Cooper, 2000, p.29) in Black separate schools, died owning property, and at the time of her death was one of the highest taxpayers in Essex County because of the amount of property she owned. Turner’s story highlights that a Black teacher was able to work consistently for a long period with lower credentials yet still achieve higher credentialing at some point. However, despite this possibility, Black teachers were still limited as to where they could teach. They were marginalized in their opportunities to teach in schools that white teachers with higher, similar, or lesser credentials would be more able to teach in. There is at least one example of a white teacher with a first-class certificate who was used to replace Black teachers in a separate school with lower certification levels, despite objections from the local Black parents.

In 1859 school trustees in Chatham replaced two of the local Black teachers with a white teacher (Cooper, 2000). The school trustees justified the replacement because of the teacher's teaching certificate, not because he was white. However, the Black parents objected, were happy with the teachers they had, and felt “that their children needed Black teachers as they served as



better role models” (Cooper, 2000, p.38). For the Black parents, the certificate level was less important than the identity of the teacher. For the trustees, it could have been both were important, but that the identity of the teacher was allowed to be minimized because of the hierarchy in certification and their hiring was justified by the certificate. Connecting this to the present day, occasional and permanent teachers are encouraged and can feel pressured to engage in ‘professional development’ (PD) in the form of ‘additional qualifications’(AQ) to enhance a teacher’s area of certification. Permanent contract teachers may do this to teach in another subject or, OTs and LTOs might do so, so that they can apply to more jobs, including permanent contract jobs, as well as LTO and OT<sup>25</sup> jobs. The fee to enroll in an AQ course in Ontario can range between five hundred and approximately seven hundred dollars or more, depending on where a person takes it. Additionally, teachers are often encouraged to volunteer free time to gain more PD (Pearce, 2012). For equity minded research, a question that then arises is, ‘who is able to afford these AQs and volunteer for free?’ The answer is generally those with access to support and privileges. Another question that arises is, how does this certifying and volunteer system function as a form of control over workers and justification for management decision making? Despite the inequities that these questions raise, the case of Julia Turner shows that Black teachers could upgrade from a third-class certificate and get first class certificates.

However, she was only able to upgrade after more than 20 years of working as a teacher. As

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<sup>25</sup> Despite contracts being different from certification, I argue that there are hierarchical similarities in status and identity between the levels of certification then and the levels of contract now, and this could be a topic for future research. Later in this chapter I highlight the emergence of the language for ‘occasional’ teachers in the Education Acts of the mid-twentieth century and the term ‘long term occasional’ in the Ontario College of Teachers publications in the early twenty-first century.

shown below, forms of discrimination that limited access to teaching work based on identity were still a systemic feature 45 years after Turner's death.

In the mid-late 1940s Fern Shadd Shreve graduated from a normal school and gained an unknown level of certification to teach. Upon graduation she was only able to get a labour contract at what was “for all intents and purposes ... a Black school” (Cooper, 2000, p.30). Fern Shadd Shreve eventually left on maternity leave and during that time the Black school was dismantled and replaced with a white school. Upon her return from maternity leave she could not find work in the new white school. In her words, “Black teachers were not allowed to teach in white schools” (ibid.).

Fern Shadd Shreve's certification level is not clear and like data in the present day, statistics about certification or labour contract do not specify race. However, to get an idea of what the breakdown of certification levels looked like in the early 1900s there is data from a 1913 national study. In 1913, across Canada, 9.7% of Canadian teachers held first-class certificates, 42% had second-class, 30% had third-class certificates, and another 18% had below third-class and were working with officially approved teaching permits (Gidney & Millar, 2012, p.127). There was also an overrepresentation of third-class certificates and permits at the elementary level. Teachers with permits and third-class certificates “constituted 48% of all elementary teachers” (ibid.). Alongside the various teacher labour experiences prior to the 1950s, there were also two factors helping to unify, but also formalize within state interests, the teaching labour sector. Those were teachers' associations or unions and notions of teacher professionalism.

### **Associations, unions, and professionalism**

As schools and teacher certification became more organized in the late 1800s and early 1900s, so did teachers' organizations. In some of the early organizations, teachers appeared to play a minor role to that of trustees and other educational officials who were also a part of the associations and “in many cases, these associations...were tied into the state’s larger agenda, often to the disadvantage of teachers” (MacLellan, 2002, p.53). After World War One, demand for teachers began to grow and teachers began to support the “establishment of special-interest teachers organizations aimed at achieving a degree of occupational self-control” (MacLellan, 2002, p.54).

MacLellan (2002) connects the teacher labour movement and the demand for teacher labour to increasing student enrolments. However, another factor for increasing levels of teacher labour organization could have also been the pro-labour movement occurring locally and globally, reflected in the 1911-1914 UK Great Unrest, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the 1919 American Great Steel Strike (Brown & Boswell, 1995), the 1919 Great Canadian Labour Revolt (Kealey, 1984), the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike (Bennett, 2020; Thiessen, 2020), and the 1918-19 Red Scare (Francis, 2010), to name a few significant worker related international events<sup>26</sup> of the time. There was also the 1918 flu pandemic which added to an insecure social and political economic environment (Bambra, Riordan, Ford, & Matthews, 2020) where workers would have been looking for forms of community and support and teachers’ organizations could

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<sup>26</sup> If Althouse (1967) is correct, influential members of the Upper Canada elite were concerned that teachers were expressing to students “sentiments hostile to the parent state” (Althouse, 1967, p.9). If that was the case, then the further professional formalization of secondary teaching with the creation of OSSTF in 1919 during the tail end of a Red Scare, could have functioned on one hand to further keep an eye on teachers who may have been critical of “the parent state” during a time of political crisis. On the other hand, the creation of OSSTF did provide a greater collective body for secondary teachers to build solidarity with during a turbulent social period.

have functioned in such a way. Historically, teachers were workers that state officials were concerned about for a variety of reasons including political (Althouse, 1967; Hanson, 2009; Smaller, 1997; 2004; 2012; 2015a).

As much as teachers gained degrees of advocacy through associations like the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation (OSSTF), the state also gained a structure to monitor teachers more effectively. The establishment of OSSTF in 1919 (Bennet, 2020, p.30-31; Bocking, 2017, p.102) helped create an organization that would advocate for teachers' labour conditions, job security, and the eventual development of the standard permanent teaching contract in 1943, a year before the creation of Teaching Profession Act (MacLellan, 2002, p.65). In the history of teaching in Ontario, the term 'professionalism' has often been used to bring teachers more in line with state objectives (Hanson, 2009; Smaller, 2015a). At the same time, the concept has also helped teachers argue for and establish improvements to their working conditions and rights, like a more secure contract and the right to strike (Hanson, 2009). These organizations, along with the Teaching Profession Act of 1944, helped develop and enforce certain notions of teacher professionalism in the post-World War Two era that may seem contradictory. On the one hand, a teacher was a servant who worked in the interests of the Anglo-Saxon state and on the other, they were a rank-and-file member of organized labour.

#### **4.3 - 1940s - 2000s - Secure teaching increasing**

During the 1940s - 2000s, teaching contracts generally became more secure for teachers, the language for 'occasional teacher' first appeared in the Education Act (1974), occasional contract teachers were removed from the unions in the mid 1970s, hierarchy and status still existed between teachers with secure contracts but with different levels of certification, long term

occasional teachers were used to strike break, and occasional teachers were organized and legislated back into the teachers' unions in the mid 1990s.

Prior to 1938 and the Teachers Board of Reference Act (TBRA), teachers could lose their job, be removed from a board, and have their contract terminated with less than one month's notice (Berryman, 2000). The TBRA created a process that would help provide some oversight and protections for teachers from being fired. It also strengthened the influence over teachers by the state and their union through notions of professionalism to which teachers would need to conform to so that they would not be recommended for review by the Boards of Reference. Shortly after this and just before teachers were officially recognized by the state as a profession, school boards started to issue tenure contracts to permanent teachers in 1943 (MacLellan, 2002, p.65). The Teaching Profession Act of 1944 recognized teachers as professionals and required all teachers to belong to an Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF) affiliate. However, what does "all teachers" mean and who is it referring to? There is no language around the term 'occasional teachers' in the Education Acts produced shortly after this time until the 1974 Education Act. 1974 was also the year before the teachers with occasional contracts were taken out of the unions by the provincial government.

The absence of language around occasional teachers in the Education Acts prior to 1974 could be for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons could be that there was not a significant number of occasional teachers. Another could be that even if there was a significant number, maybe it was a position worked mostly either by retired teachers, workers networked through the staff of a school, or sometimes by a new teacher for a brief time until the board could place them in a more secure position. Occasional teachers have been used by the Toronto District school boards since at least the 1870s (Danylewycz & Prentice, 1986). When occasional teachers were

used it was initially because of high levels of teachers being sick from infectious diseases and needing time off (ibid.). The language describing them was absent in earlier Education Acts prior to 1974 but does appear in the 1970 Schools Administration Act, where it states, “an occasional teacher means a teacher employed to teach as a substitute for a permanent, probationary, or temporary teacher” (Schools Administration Act, p.132). In 1975 when Bill 100 was introduced and teachers were granted the right to strike, occasional teachers were taken out of the teacher’s unions and put under the rules of the Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA). Hanson (2013b) writes that the “legislative requirements of the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB)” (Hanson, 2013b, p.240) allowed workers, in this case occasional teachers, to choose their own union. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) was the first to organize the occasional teachers and eventually OSSTF found a way to organize occasional teachers by “revising its constitution to meet the requirements of the OLRA” (Hanson, 2013b, p.240). Having the teachers in separate unions governed by different workplace norms would enable boards to use teachers with occasional contracts against teachers with permanent contracts in the event of permanent contract teacher labour action.

### **Teacher shortages and recruiting teachers.**

Economic post-war public sector state expansion, a baby boom, and the increase in school age children were factors that influenced a teacher shortage in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1953 the name of the normal schools was changed to ‘teacher’s colleges’, and qualifications were lowered to help attract workers that wanted to teach. Despite the certification level achieved, teachers wanting secure contract work generally found it, unless they were racialized. Between the mid-1950s to early 1960s, trained teachers from outside of Canada were allowed to come to Ontario to work. These teachers came from various states in the British commonwealth. In

1954/55, a total of 629 teachers came from the British Isles and elsewhere in the commonwealth, however, "patterns suggest preferences may have been given to white commonwealth immigrants (UK, Australia, and New Zealand)" (Aladejebi, 2021, p.29). Some of the UK teachers brought with them "beliefs in the long-established tradition of teacher unionism" (Gidney, 1999, p.117). To certify these teachers, they were given "Letters of Standing" that substituted for an Ontario teaching licence (Aladejebi, 2021, p.29). In addition to recruiting teachers from abroad, marriage prohibition rules were relaxed and married teachers or teachers who hoped to marry, began to enter teaching (Aladejebi, 2021, p.26). As the 1960s began, the still largely white teaching labour sector was beginning to diversify along race, class, and gender lines within a job that was increasingly more secure than it historically had been. Depending on the school board, the teacher shortage of the 1950s continued into the late 1960s and mid 1970s.

### **Inequities and racialized teachers**

For most of the 1960s the salary increases for permanent contract teachers in Ontario "had ranged from 5-10% annually" (Gidney, 1999, p.117). However, wage gains were not the same for all teachers. For example, a 1969 survey of Hamilton, Ontario teachers shows that despite comparable education, Black teachers earned considerably less than their white counterparts (Aladejebi, 2021, p.36). For Black teachers in the 1960s and 1970s, "educational qualifications did not translate into high economic rewards" (ibid.). Some Black teachers came from the Caribbean or England and were able to teach with their 'Letters of Standing' that certified their credentials. Aladejebi (2021) shows that the types of contracts Black female schoolteachers worked with differed at times. One of the teachers who came to Ontario from the Caribbean via England taught with a permanent contract in Toronto. Another Black teacher came to Toronto from England in 1967 and taught as a supply teacher (Aladejebi, 2021, p.48).

Aladejebi (2021) also highlights the story of Nicolette Archer who graduated teachers' college in 1962, moved to Detroit, and was able to work as a supply teacher in Windsor for "several years" (Aladejebi, 2021, p.46). The women who were supply teachers could possibly have preferred to have worked as supply teachers. However, considering that the last Black segregated school in Ontario closed in 1964, ten years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in the U.S (Aladejebi, 2021, p.22), it is also possible that because Black teachers had greater challenges finding secure work compared to their white colleagues<sup>27</sup>, some may have become supply teachers out of a necessity to find some form of employment. For the "hundreds" (Aladejebi, 2021, p.18) of Black women who became either permanent or occasional contract teachers between 1940 – 1980, teaching may not have always felt like it was easily accessible or secure work.

### **Teachers' unions, labour militancy, and shifting cultural norms.**

Prior to the 1970s the teachers' unions and the state had been moving towards a closer relationship. However, between 1969 and 1974 the relations between the teachers' unions and the school boards increasingly "became combative" (MacLellan, 2002, p.102). Throughout the 1960s teachers were gaining improved wages, they were becoming a more diverse group, and the secondary teachers were being classified into new types of certifications that specified their academic or vocational areas of work. This latter move would have the effect of creating what some teachers perceived to be a hierarchy within secondary teachers that existed between

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<sup>27</sup> Aladejebi (2021) also tells the story of Jackie Morris who was unable to find work in white schools after graduating from teachers' college in 1962. Upon graduation Morris accepted a teaching job in Northern Ontario. Her mother recommended that before she sign her contract that she should inform her employer that she was Black. She followed her mother's advice and her employer said that they would call her back, when they did, they told her that the job was no longer available (p.33).



teachers who taught academic subjects and teachers that taught vocational courses (Humphreys, 1970). This hierarchy is not much different than the one that existed between teachers with different levels of certification in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Harris, 1967, p.75), or the hierarchy between teachers with occasional contracts and teachers with permanent contracts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mindzak, 2016, p. 132). In this hierarchy the academic teachers were the group with the higher status and the teachers of commercial and technical courses were considered lower in status.

The hierarchical ordering of status and value between members of the same profession and union is important for historical and political reasons. Historically, it is like the status differences in the older certification system. Politically, it could be seen as potentially counter to the democratic ethos that has been a significant factor in the history of the labour movement (Langford, 2015) and is also problematic for union solidarity. Certain union members being regarded as higher status than other members are also relevant because in a 1965 OSSTF provincial committee brief on the aims and objectives in schools, the committee “espoused the *need for the democratic ideal as the foundation* of educational philosophy, school administration, curricula, and teaching methods” (MacLellan, 2002, p.91). Interestingly, ‘associations/unions’ are absent from these areas where “the democratic ideal as the foundation” is ‘needed’. This absence could suggest that “the democratic ideal” is already implied in that this is a union document. Or it could suggest that the union might not be as committed to “the democratic ideal” as some other unionist perspectives might feel they should be. The language seems to create a contradiction between a union whose members are supposed to support democracy in the schools on one hand, while on the other hand, those members are working within an inequitable certification and contract status hierarchy system that carries over into the makeup of the union

membership. In the late 1960s and early 1970s any differences between members did not seem to prevent union solidarity and the unions were able to mobilize and fight for better working conditions and workplace rights.

In the 1970s teachers were demanding a say in areas outside of their direct teaching work. Some of these areas included smaller class sizes and sabbatical leaves both which required hiring more teachers. In some school boards some of these demands were won and eventually teachers would also win the definitive right to strike through Bill 100 in 1975 (Hanson, 2009). Interestingly, this was a year after the term ‘occasional teacher’ first appeared in the Education Act (Education Act, 1974). Bill 100 removed occasional teachers from the teachers’ unions and put them under the framework of the OLRA. This could have been to weaken the power of teachers’ unions who had been active and militant in the first half of the 1970s. These changes would lead to labour organizing campaigns into the 1990s to help provide all occasional teachers with union representation which they eventually achieved in 1997 (Hanson, 2013b, p.239/40).

### **Documents missing language/terminology around occasional secondary teachers**

Referencing Baldwin (1934) Pollock states that occasional teaching has existed since schools became larger than one room (Pollock, 2008, p.10). The language around what these teachers are called has had a wide range including titles like ‘itinerant’, ‘substitute’, ‘supply’, ‘day teacher’, ‘alternate’, and ‘on-call teacher’. My own research did not find literature about secondary educational labour in Ontario that used the terms ‘occasional’ or ‘long term occasional’, prior to the 1970s. My own inference from this lack of linguistic reference is that it is possible there were *fewer* teachers in these types of contracts prior to the 1970s/1980s and after this time, these positions slowly started to increase because of budget demands but also

because of political economic influences and shifting cultural norms. An article by Zeytinoglu (1989) focuses on occasional teachers in elementary teaching but I have not found an equivalent article for secondary teachers. There is also research into Canadian teacher labour markets from the late 1990s that does not include the language ‘occasional’ teacher (Press, 1998; Press and Lawton, 1999).

It is possible that occasional teaching contracts were more common for elementary teachers - who have more women members<sup>28</sup> - than secondary teachers, a group that has a higher percentage of men in teaching positions (Government of Ontario, 2019). It is also interesting that many of the teachers who are discussed in the literature that work without permanent and secure contracts tend to be racialized and/or women. Creating groups of periphery workers and a privileged core of workers that those in the periphery can aspire to be, is one way that management can maintain a carrot and stick incentive system. This system can create hierarchies that keep workers with different levels of status, either through certification or contract, divided. This situation could help orient aspects of teacher professionalism and unionism towards the interests of the employer as opposed to the autonomy of the worker, incentivize the forms of the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ as discussed by Michels ([1911] 2001) (Tolbert, 2010) within the union, as well as have problematic implications for union solidarity and worker mobilization.

### **Marginalized identities and occasional elementary teachers**

Zeytinoglu (1989) researched part-time elementary school teachers. During her research and her discussions with teachers’ associations about part-time teachers, the associations

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<sup>28</sup> Zeytinoglu (1989) writes that one of the factors that school boards considered when hiring for occasional or part-time teachers was the gender of the teacher; women teachers were “considered more suitable for part-time work” (p.11).

“identified another group of part-time teachers” (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.11). When Zeytinoglu (1989) talked with teachers’ association representatives, they identified ‘occasional teachers’ as another group within teaching labour that is “the most disadvantaged of all” (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.11). Zeytinoglu (1989) writes that “the group consists of part-time or occasional teachers working on an involuntary basis because they are unable to receive a full-time contract with a school board yet want access to those full-time jobs through part-time or occasional positions” (ibid.). The points that they “are unable” and “yet want access” suggests that these workers are not all working as occasional teachers by choice and would like more secure work.

This employment dynamic was also occurring in the wake of two shifting norms. The first were the governmental policies over the previous decade and a half, which limited investment towards expanding permanent contract work for teachers. The second was a shifting political economic system that was underlined by a belief that the state was not “the solution” to “problems” but was “the problem”. President Ronald Reagan summarized this belief in an early 1980s speech when he said, “government is the problem” (Reagan, 1981). However, it is not all government costs that are a problem for Reagan and neoliberal thinkers and policy makers. It is care sector spending, like on educational labour or social services that is “the problem”. For neoliberals, martial sector spending on the military and law enforcement is not a problem nor wasteful, like care sector spending is considered to be (Hartman, 2022, p.106).

Along with changing cultural norms that privilege individualism and free enterprise over community and social protections, costs and savings by school boards might be one of the variables contributing to insecure contracts. Zeytinoglu (1989) mentions this possibility, “Teachers' associations and school boards did not consider low labour costs an important factor in employment decisions for the unionized teachers since collective agreements provide for an

equivalent compensation package. They did, however, indicate that it may be a factor in hiring unorganized occasional teachers” (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.11).

The effort on the part of school boards to save money via reduced labour costs does not seem much different than past school board hiring practices in early Ontario. Zeytinoglu’s (1989) research connects back to the cost savings sought by local communities in the late 1800s who wanted to hire lower class certificate teachers over first class teachers to save money (Althouse, 1967, p.63). Although there are similarities between the third-class certificate teachers in the past and teachers with occasional contracts in the present, the contemporary difference in union representation can add greater levels of solidarity and collective support for teachers in occasional contracts, but not always.

Changes made during the Mike Harris conservative government required all occasional teachers to have union representation under Part X.1 of Bill 160 (Shilton, 2012, p.226). This could indicate that hiring teachers into OT contracts, post-Harris, might not result in cost savings for a school board if the teachers are now under a collective agreement. However, even if daily rates are similar for teachers with OT or LTO contracts when compared to their colleagues with permanent contracts, access to benefits like paid sick days or sick leave are not similar, and any expectation that a job will be continuous does not exist for the teacher with an OT or LTO contract. Cost savings for school boards regarding various benefit schemes could be more of an incentive to hire teachers with occasional contracts even though they are now in the teacher’s unions.

In addition to cost savings there is also an increased element of management empowerment and control over the teacher’s adherence to state sanctioned notions of

professionalism when their job is not a permanent contract and is up for continual renewal.

Gidney (1999) identifies three areas of control over a teacher's work: the curriculum, administrator oversight, and standardized testing (p.19). However, Gidney (1999) does not consider the contract itself and/or an economic environment that encourages less secure contracts as forms of control. The variables that influence the educational labour market and make the labour contract itself a form of control over the work of teachers are what enable the degrees to which the three forms of control that Gidney (1999) identifies can be operationalized. The degrees to which Gidney's forms of control can be used against teachers with less secure contracts compared to teachers with more secure contracts would be different, and they would also be different in different political economic environments.

Despite identifying possible incentives for cost savings by school board employers, Zeytinoglu (1989) goes on to write that “demographics” influence teacher hiring and “not the market forces” (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.14). Zeytinoglu (1989) does not consider how market forces may influence demographics or governmental policy. Governments that are trying to align their economies with the global market are influenced regarding their budget designs, levels of immigration, the type of immigrants allowed to immigrate, types of labour sector investment, public spending budgets, the number of public sector workers/teachers needed, norms around standard school sizes, norms around smaller class sizes, and the types of curricula offered. Zeytinoglu (1989) writes that what was seen as the suitable identity for the part-time or occasional teacher by almost half of the board officials they interviewed was, “a female with dependent children” (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.15). This comment suggests that certain types of worker identities which are shaped by the larger culture and political economy and any associated employment costs are or were, significant factors influencing school board hiring.

The idea that some education officials in charge of teacher hiring associate certain identities with certain forms of work could connect with historical literature that suggests racialized teachers were seen as suitable for certain forms of teaching, like teaching students in Black separate schools. Whereas other teachers, like white teachers in general and white middle-class men specifically, who, because of privileges like signifiers related to their identity and possible access to greater resources, may have had easier ways to attain higher credentials, teach in the secondary schools, and have a greater sense of job security. In the history of Ontario education, higher credentials have generally allowed teachers to access more preferred teaching jobs in urban centres and at higher academic levels. When the modern permanent teaching contract was created in the 1940s and adopted by school boards, levels of certification were subsumed into the labour contract. After this change, once a teacher was hired by a board, it was harder for the board to remove a teacher that they were not happy with. The possible increasing use of occasional teaching positions by school boards in Ontario during the 1980s and into the 1990s and 2000s, could be related to the larger socio-political changes that began to occur in the early 1970s where the gains and job security won by teachers around the mid-20th century slowly began to be dismantled by the state.

#### **A Public sector under attack and organized occasional teachers.**

In the 1960s conservative politicians like Bill Davis and John Robarts appeared to believe in a well-supported public education system, and one with its own research capacity (Gidney, 1999, p.55). However, the 1970s - 1990s saw a reversal of this scenario and near the end of the period the left-leaning NDP party-imposed forms of austerity on the educational labour sector. The NDP under Bob Rae reduced the power of teachers' unions, re-emphasized the power of the capitalist state regarding teacher labour relations, and claimed these policies were needed to

lower government debt (Brennan, 2009). The NDP did not win re-election in 1995 and their ‘social contract’ was followed by the conservative government’s ‘common sense revolution’, led by premier Mike Harris. Harris would be even more disciplinary than the NDP towards teachers, through Bill 160. The policy changes under Harris and the conservatives removed two billion dollars from school system spending formulas, centralized funding provincially, eliminated the ability of school boards to tax municipalities, and removed principles and vice principals from the unions. Additionally, Harris wanted to allow uncertified teachers to be able to work in positions like coaching, however, this was eventually removed from the list of changes.

Bill 160 also brought in changes that led to all teachers with occasional contracts being represented by a teachers’ union<sup>29</sup> (Shilton, 2012, p.225). On one level, this move does grow the membership of the teachers’ unions which may seem at odds with the labour disciplinary tone underlying the neoliberal policies backed by the conservatives. On another level, looking at insights provided by critics of neoliberalism, LPT researchers, and others gives some context behind the conservative policy to grow the union membership.

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<sup>29</sup>Prior to these changes a “significant number” (Shilton, 2012, p.225) of occasional teachers were already unionized. Some of the public-school board occasional teachers that were organized, were represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), which was the first union to organize occasional teachers. Others were organized by the Ontario Public School Teachers Federation (OPTF). Catholic occasional teachers were represented by OCOTA, the sister organization of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) (Zeytinoglu, 1989, p.5). The OSSTF found a way to revise its constitution to “meet the requirements of the OLRA” (Hanson, 2013b, p.240) so that they could organize occasional teachers. The other teachers’ unions eventually adopted the OSSTF model to organize their occasional teachers (ibid.). Even though many OTs had union representation, the changes brought in by the Harris conservatives made it so that all OTs now had representation by a teachers’ union.



The larger cultural shifts influencing party policy in both the Rae NDP government and the Harris conservative government were influenced by interests supporting neoliberalism<sup>30</sup> and the move by many governments towards the standards set out in the Washington Consensus (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p.218). Neoliberal policies encouraged the empowerment of private capital management over labour power and public goods. To help strengthen management oversight and control over workers, neoliberalism has influenced organizations to create metrics for performance measurements and accountability that favour managerialist aims. Organizations have done this technologically through Enterprise Planning Resource (EPR) systems in IT<sup>31</sup> (Hall, 2010) and adopted forms of New Public Management (NPM) in public sector jobs (Baines, 2006, p.268; Wilkins et al., 2019). The use of NPM in capitalist education systems has been researched (Tolofari, 2005). These management policies could hint at incentives for Harris to put the occasional teachers together with all teachers in that they help with management oversight and organizational alignment which is also more conducive to centralized collective bargaining and organizational structures. Bargaining with one union would be less time consuming and costly than bargaining with multiple unions. Lastly, there is also an incentive from management to weaken labour. Combining workers from the same workplace and doing

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<sup>30</sup> My use of the term ‘neoliberalism’ is taken from Bourdieu’s outline in ‘The essence of neoliberalism’ (1998), which could be summarized when he writes, “The neoliberal programme draws its social power from the political and economic power of those whose interests it expresses” (Bourdieu, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note Hall’s (2010) non-neutral and non-deterministic description of how technology is viewed through an LPT lens, “an LPT of technology in general rejects a view of technology as benign or neutral, and instead asserts an admittedly pessimistic ‘capitalist continuity scenario’, it must be emphasized that it also rejects a deterministic view of technology as sinister or malignant” (Hall, 2010, p.163).

the same job but with different contracts and interests into the same union can also divide the union between workers which weakens labour solidarity.

Creating hierarchical divisions within the union can create control through influence and norm setting by higher status members. For example, a ‘team’ of privileged workers with permanent contracts could set a standard that those below, the teachers with occasional contracts, must follow if they want to stay active and be valued within the team (Taylor, 2010, p.253). Having two groups of workers periphery to a core third group can also work to establish an oligarchic structural dynamic like the organizational forms discussed by Michels ([1911] 2001) (Tolbert, 2010). On one hand, the move by Harris could be seen to strengthen the unions by increasing their size. On the other hand, considering the neoliberal and NPM organizational trends towards standardization and management oversight and the weakening of the collective interests of organized labour, combining teachers with different labour contracts could be seen as moving in line with certain neoliberal values despite increasing the size of the unions.

Since Harris made all teachers become members of the teachers’ unions in 1997, local branches of the teachers’ unions had two options. One option is that they can have two separate bargaining units between teachers with permanent contracts and those with occasional contracts, the latter includes teachers with LTO contracts. The other option, pending agreement with the board and a vote by the membership, is that they could combine the occasional teachers with the permanent contract teachers. According to their website, in OSSTF as of 2022, 15 out of 31 English secondary school bargaining units were combined units where teachers with permanent contracts and occasional teachers are organized together. The remaining 16 English speaking

locals were separated into different units, one for teachers with permanent contracts and the other for teachers with OT and LTO contracts (OSSTF).

Shortly after these changes to the structure of the unions, a conflict between the occasional teachers and permanent contract teachers in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) occurred. The two units in that local were separate, but they were both represented by OSSTF. The permanent contract teachers wanted priority in selecting their coverages for absent teachers and the occasional teachers saw this as an infringement on their access to daily work. The occasional teachers filed a duty of fair representation complaint arguing OSSTF should protect their access to work opportunities. The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) “rejected the complaint” (Shilton, 2012, p.226). The OLRB felt that OSSTF had “no fair duty of representation to a group of employees except when it is acting on their behalf...” (ibid.). As these fissures within OSSTF bargaining units were developing in the 1990s, there was also a return to union militancy.

Some researchers have said that the period during 1995-2000 “was one of ‘the most tumultuous’ times in relation to education in Ontario’s history” (MacLellan, 2009, p.68). Many of the gains won by organized teachers’ unions over decades were removed by the conservative government. When looking at the aspects of Bill 160 that were, “aimed at removing from teachers’ collective agreements, provision for limits to class sizes and staffing ratios” (MacLellan, 2009, p.67), it is important to consider that these changes would influence the number of teachers that might be hired into secure contracts and could also encourage the use of more occasional contracts to help meet staffing or budget limits. The allocation of the number of secure contracts that are available to teachers within a local board is heavily influenced by the dominant political economic ideology, business cycles that are influenced by the political

economy (Teppe & Vanhuysse, 2008), the local policies that the provincial government and the Ministry of Education support, and guidelines set out by them for class sizes school norms. The number of available secure teacher labour contracts is largely influenced by ideological, governmental, and school board objectives regarding education, training, and employment planning.

#### **4.4 - 2000s - 2020s - Precarious teaching increasing**

During the 1990s the Bob Rae (NDP) and Mike Harris (Progressive Conservative) provincial governments attacked the rights of teachers and reversed labour gains from the previous decades. The Liberal party came to power in 2003 and never brought back the funding levels to education that Mike Harris and the conservatives removed. There is also data showing that non-permanent teaching contracts across Canada increased during this time from 14.2% in 1999 to 17.9% in 2005 (Lin, 2005; Mindzak, 2016, p.32), while the number of teachers registered with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) also continued to increase (OCT).

#### **Regulation 274 and teacher surpluses**

In 2012, the Ontario Liberal government introduced Regulation 274 (Reg.274) to help manage the hiring of teachers in Ontario and create greater transparency through a regulatory system by developing LTO hiring lists and clarifying interview selection procedures. Reg.274 and the LTO list created somewhat of a regulated hiring process from contract to contract and further normalized a hierarchical employment structure within the Ontario public sector educational labour market (see Figure 1 from Chapter 1). However, when did these terms of LTO and OT that make up this structure that Reg.274 helped clarify, become normalized? The first time the word ‘occasional’ appeared in the Education Act was in 1974 (The Education Act, 1974). The words ‘long term occasional’ are not in the same 1974 Act. The words ‘long term

occasional' do appear in the 'Transitions to Teaching' reports from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) going back to at least 2002. However, the short form, 'LTO' does not appear in the same texts until 2007. This could suggest that around 2007, shortly after the increase that Lin (2005) showed, teachers with LTO contracts were becoming more significant to the Ontario education system and they got their own acronym.

Around this time there was an increasing percentage of teachers with insecure contracts looking for secure work. Lin (2005) shows that between 1999 and 2005 non-permanent teaching positions increased in percentage (Mindzak, 2016, p. 32). Within the context of a labour sector that was experiencing increasing levels of workers with precarious OT and LTO contracts, Reg. 274 was implemented in 2012 and would eventually be removed in 2020 by the conservative government. The Reg.274 process and the use of the LTO list was implemented differently by different boards (Saldaris, 2014, p.43; Hatt et al., 2019, p.469). The number of people on the LTO list could vary by board. Some boards might have small lists that allowed them to sidestep the hiring of teachers with more seniority that were not on the LTO list. Other school boards reportedly implemented the regulation in a way where most occasional teachers who qualified and wanted to be on the list could be on the list, which could have been beneficial for teachers with more seniority. In 2014, two years after coming into practice, a report indicated that there was little consistency in how school boards were using the regulation: "Implementation of the Regulation varied widely across the 72 school boards" (Saldaris, 2014, p.58). The provincial conservative government removed Reg.274 in October 2020, about seven months into the COVID pandemic (Goodfield, 2020). From early on, unions and boards had mixed feelings towards the regulation with both groups seeing benefits and drawbacks, sharing some and disagreeing on others (Saldaris, 2014, p.53-57). Reg.274 was initially believed to offer greater

transparency for the hiring process amidst a competitive labour market (Saldaris, 2014). Even though Reg.274 was problematic, with its removal there is now no process to guide teachers from OT work to steady LTO work to a permanent contract in a timeframe that is equitable for all teachers and transparent enough so that teachers can effectively plan their lives.

In addition to Reg.274, the Liberals announced that teacher's college would move from a one-year program to a two-year program beginning in 2014. This move would further limit the number of teachers entering the profession while also helping to enhance perceptions of teacher professionalism. While they were supposedly trying to enhance perceptions around teacher professionalism, the Liberals simultaneously attacked the teachers' unions with anti-labour laws. The Liberals introduced Bill 115 in 2012, which attacked the rights of workers to strike and enforced a union agreement with one union, OECTA, onto ETFO and OSSTF (Hewitt-White, 2015; Mancini, 2020). A few years later in 2018 the conservatives won the provincial election and replaced the Liberals. One of the conservatives' educational policy goals was that they would eliminate Reg.274 so that, according to the conservatives, boards could hire the best candidate and unions could not protect senior teachers (CBC News, 2020). However, if Reg.274 was being implemented differently by different boards and there are claims around unions protecting senior teachers like the government made, this should be questioned and researched further as to how different rollouts of Reg.274 supposedly produced such similar results.

The conservatives also said that they would create mandatory online learning for secondary students and that they would reduce levels of government spending (The National Post, 2015). Online learning would lead to fewer teachers being needed and less funding could further enable the reduction in secure contracts. Both moves would strengthen government oversight and control of teachers. One way oversight and control can function is through greater

modes of surveillance via online learning. Another way is by being able to control how many teachers can enter the profession through budgets and policies. Fewer teachers in the profession also limits the number of teachers that would be paying dues to the union which helps to erode their power. Ontario teachers' unions were opposed to these policies and mobilized to challenge them in the fall and winter of 2019/20.

### **COVID, teacher shortages, and leading up to the present.**

In the fall of 2019, labour action by teachers began and periodic strikes occurred between December (DeClerq, 2019) and February 2020 (Crawley, 2020). However, this action came to an abrupt stop in March of 2020 when COVID arrived. When the COVID pandemic began in North America, schools were temporarily closed, learning went online, occasional teaching jobs decreased, and unions voted and signed off on contracts that prevented labour disruption during the crisis. For teachers not in an LTO or without a permanent contract, this time had added levels of uncertainty for them. Paradoxically, on top of the uncertainty there were reports of a 'teacher shortage' in the media (Balintec, 2022). This could have been related to the issue that just prior to the pandemic, the Ford government was deliberately reducing the number of teachers (Rushowy, 2019) and maybe it was not solely the pandemic influencing the shortage. Additionally, media headlines and political statements about teacher 'shortages' should generally be investigated further because research has shown the 'teacher shortage' claims can be politicized (Gorard and White, 2004).

Historically, increasing state policy and rhetorical influence over teacher's professional work, teachers' unions, and the educational labour market, has been an ongoing issue throughout the history of Ontario teaching. Looking back at the history of educational labour in the province suggests that many of the differences in teaching experiences, access to job opportunity,

and job security by teachers with different levels of qualifications, contracts, and identities, is not new. Like how the history of precarious work is older than the neoliberal era (Van Arsdale, 2016), insecure teaching work connects back to pre-1940s political economy norms in early Ontario. The work of Pollack (2008; 2010), Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), and Yearwood (2021) suggest that in the 2000s-2020s, many teachers have been working with OT and LTO contracts for uncertain amounts of time. This situation is like the insecure work of a teacher with a permit, third- or second-class certificate that was unable to get work in certain areas or lost work opportunities because somebody with a higher certificate or a different identity came along. On the other hand, even a teacher with a first-class certificate who was 'too expensive' for the employer(s), was also insecure. The historical commonality is that the political economy and the employer's needs and interests determine the contracts offered and who they are offered to in early Ontario and in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. For most of Ontario's history, teaching has generally been insecure work. For a few decades post-World War Two that appeared to be changing and tenure teaching contracts became a norm. Teaching work started to become less secure again in the 1970s as the state slowly reconfigured its policies in line with pro-neoliberal influences within the larger global political economy. The interests of the provincial government in Ontario to control the teachers' unions and the educational labour market, as well as its ability to discipline teaching labour through the threat of insecure work or creating further union divisions by increasing the number of occasional teachers in the union, all benefit the interests of the influential members of the state so that it can, "compete effectively in the global marketplace" (MacLellan, 2002, p.131). Unfortunately, for workers hoping to become teachers with permanent contracts, these types of controls may be decreasing the number of



teachers that can enter the profession and reduce their ability to find secure teaching work while increasing the number of teachers with occasional and long-term occasional contracts.

#### **4.5 - Summary**

From colonial capitalism in early Ontario to the period of neoliberal capitalism in contemporary Ontario, the experiences of being a teacher have differed. These differences have largely depended upon the historical context, the type of political economy influencing state policy, and on the qualifications, certification, and the labour contract created by the authorities and held by the teacher. Some of the differences between teachers influence their ability to find secure work, their personal well-being, the courses, and types of students they teach, their perceptions of being a professional teacher, and their relationship with their union. Interestingly, comparing some of the patterns from the 1800s to the 2000s suggests that some of the political economic contexts influencing the extent of these differences may be systematic features of capitalist reproduction and a structural tendency towards forms of colonization, assimilation, segmentation, and hierarchization through the educational sector to complement capitalist labour markets.

In addition to the political economy, taking into consideration historical context and identity when discussing the different responses to the research questions asked for this project is important. Historical context helps shed light on the events and structures that underlie and influence the participants having the contracts they do and their responses. Examining these factors can help point to areas that might uphold dynamics and relationships of disparity and inequity amongst different identities. Capitalist political economies, the formalization of teachers' unions, and the notions of teacher professionalism have, on one hand, upheld these disparities between different teachers. For example, the case of the occasional teachers taking

the permanent contract teachers to the NLRB where the union, rather than working towards a more collectively beneficial outcome, were working against the most marginalized and least secure members within the union. At other moments, like the push for a form of permanent school board labour contract, or the organizational successes of the 1970s and winning the right to strike, teachers' unions and the idea of teacher professionalism have helped to address the issues that teachers were facing as a group and provided forms of solidarity. Levels of job security and differing notions of teacher professionalism and teacher unionism have been significant features in the history of Ontario educational labour. Many of the teachers interviewed expressed differences around their feelings and experiences relating to teacher professionalism, the role of unions, and their material security because of their contract. These differences will be further explored in the findings and discussions found in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

## Chapter 5 - Work

### 5.1 - Introduction

Chapter 5 discusses the responses to the interview questions related to the first half of the first research question, the part on ‘work’:

*How do teachers with different labour contracts feel towards their work and their Union?  
How do these differ?*

To help frame the discussion I start with Figure 7 that illustrates the interview participants' views about work before the COVID pandemic.

**Figure 7: The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards *work* pre-COVID from the teachers under different contracts.**

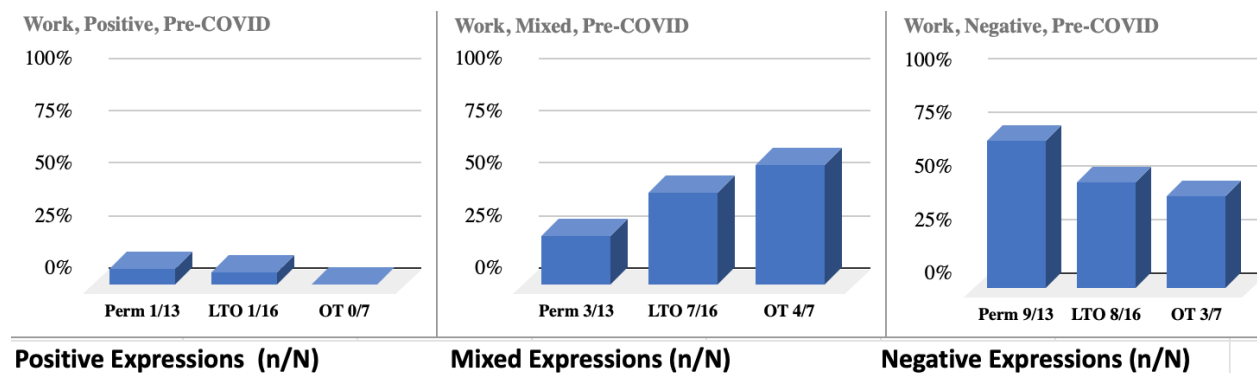


Figure 7 paints a bleak picture of teacher views of their work across all types of contracts.

Before the pandemic, only one teacher in a permanent contract expressed positive views about work and just under a quarter expressed mixed views. Almost three quarters frequently expressed negative feelings towards work. Very few LTOs and OTs expressed positive views of their work. OTs were marginally less likely to view their work negatively compared to teachers in permanent contracts.

The assessment of teacher views of work was drawn from the responses to the following interview questions:

*7) Do you feel that your labour conditions enable you to meet the 'professional standards of practice' in a way that you feel confident and encouraged about? Please explain.*

*8) Are you concerned about any issues of surveillance by the administration/the school board? Either on electronic devices (at work or home) or as drop in visits/walking by classrooms etc.? How does this impact you personally/professionally?*

*9) Do you feel empowered (encouraged to grow and network) or disempowered (frustrated, defeated, etc.) with the flexible/networking hiring model (i.e., the LTO List)? Please tell me more why you feel that way? If you are a permanent teacher, do you feel the different types of contract teachers help to improve labour conditions or problematize them?*

*10) Do you feel your labour conditions, such as the rate of speed you work at, are conducive to individual and/or workplace wellness? Any other conditions that might impact wellness?*

*11) Do you feel your type of labour contract (permanent or occasional/LTO) influences how you teach? Do you feel comfortable talking about controversial issues/current events with students?*

*12) Do you feel your type of labour contract impacts how you feel towards colleagues, students, the union, the board? If so, how so?*

*13) In what ways might your work environment impact how you feel towards the union or the board? Do you feel listened to, validated, confident in your job security, empowered in your profession, comfortable expressing yourself and raising questions? Do you feel comfortable questioning administrative decisions/policies?*

## **5.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts Describe their Working Conditions**

### **5.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a positive view of working conditions**

This section compares the attitude of teachers under different contracts regarding working conditions. As indicated in the introduction very few teachers in any type of contract had a positive view of their working conditions. There were a few exceptions.

Pre-COVID, I could teach, I would have my prep, I come home, I go to the gym and then I come back and any marking I had to do, it was done.... I would say pre-COVID when

it's regular times, it's fine. I got my own stuff down and I'm good. (*Catharine has a permanent contract*)

This quote from Catharine (Perm) highlights some of the criteria that made work a positive experience for teachers. Catharine (Perm) was the only teacher with a permanent contract that had primarily positive things to say about work. Catharine (Perm) expressed that when she “could teach” and interact with students that she was “good”. Catharine’s (Perm) example is one of a primarily positive workspace experience. It seemed that her experiences were more often positive than mixed or negative because they consisted of an appreciation for some autonomy over her work, an ability to balance work with personal and leisure interests, and a secure contract that made those factors feel predictable. Like Catharine (Perm) there is also one example of primarily positive comments towards work from a non-permanent contract teacher, who I look at next.

Before [the pandemic], I think for the most part, we thought it was working really well and students were achieving well, [in our board], our board in particular does fairly well. If you look at any of these sorts of measurables like EQAO or any of the extracurricular learning contests that are around, we do fairly high... [During the pandemic] one of the good things that our board really did was communicate 'community over curriculum' 'grace before grades'. We know this is going to be a tough year, so let's make sure that the students are being well looked after. (*Steven has an LTO contract*)

Steven (LTO), like Catharine (Perm), was the sole person in their contract group who seems to have felt that their work was a generally positive experience. However, the differences between Steven (LTO) and Catharine’s (Perm) responses could reflect differences that emerge between teachers with secure contracts and teachers with precarious contracts. Catharine’s (Perm) positive expressions towards work connected more holistically with how work fits into her overall life, not just her work experience. Whereas Steven’s (LTO) potentially positive responses mostly connected to feelings that his work was important, that he was working with

what he felt like was a good employer, and that his work was having a positive influence on the students he was working with.

Unlike Catharine (Perm), Steven's (LTO) positive expressions of work did not overlap into his homelife. In the interview Steven (LTO) did indicate he was very busy because of his workload; but it appeared that he viewed that level of work as an acceptable part of the job. When asked about working conditions before COVID, Steven (LTO) mentioned that "for the most part, we thought it was working really well and students were achieving well" and his concern for how his employer treated students which influenced his work experience carried over into the pandemic, "one of the good things that our board really did was communicate 'community over curriculum' [and] 'grace before grades'". Steven's (LTO) emphasis on the treatment and success of his students as being integral to how he experienced his working conditions is reflective of similar sentiments expressed by other teachers from all contract types. Steven's (LTO) use of "we" also highlights how he identifies as being a part of his school board and sees the effort towards helping students succeed as a collective board-wide effort.

Steven's (LTO) sense that he and his school board had a collective purpose was another important factor that seemed to give Steven (LTO) a positive feeling towards work. When Steven (LTO) describes the favourable results that students were attaining, he says "our board...does fairly well". Steven's (LTO) use of 'our' suggests that he feels there is a level of connection between his own identity and the board. Stevens' (LTO) positive identification with the board also has to do with how it compares to other boards in an academic hierarchy, "If you look at any of these sorts of measurables like EQAO or any of the extracurricular learning contests that are around, we do fairly high". Steven's (LTO) experience connects with Yearwood's (2021) point that helping students achieve their "best potential" (Yearwood, 2021,

p.14) is a significant part of a teacher’s professional identity and a part of their labour process that overlaps with rhetorical management goals about student success.

Part of Steven’s (LTO) positive feelings towards his professional identity and his relationship with the board is that it is a board where student achievement is higher than in other boards in the province and this higher ranking can bring a sense of prestige within the educational sector and a feeling that one is helping students reach their “best potential”. Operating that student success is connected to learning conditions and that learning conditions are connected to working conditions, one could infer that Steven (LTO) might also have had working conditions that better enabled student success. Steven’s (LTO) appreciation of his board can be contrasted with the opposite feelings by many other teachers who were interviewed and felt that their school boards may not be serving their student populations or their workers to the best of their ability.

There were no primarily positive expressions towards work by any teacher with an OT contract. It has been suggested that to cope with the uncertainty of precarious teaching work, some workers, particularly higher education workers, might engage in the ‘good life fantasy’ in that working precarious contracts will one day lead to the ‘good life’ (Bone, 2021). However, for some teachers with OT contracts that want a permanent contract, they may not believe in the ‘fantasy’ anymore and as a result they do not believe they will ever get hired, which could add to any negative experiences that already arise from teaching in general and precarious teaching specifically. If OTs are feeling negative but are still encouraged to ‘stay positive’ or ‘optimistic’ by peers and family, it may be a form of “cruel optimism” where they are aware that any optimism might be illusory and any reason for it, like getting a secure contract, unattainable (Bone, 2021). In addition to the uncertainty around daily work and the inability to organize a life

like Catharine (Perm) did, the “cruel optimism” that could be required by OTs to maintain a certain level of emotional labour through ‘surface acting’ to hide any deeper feelings, might be a factor preventing them from having primarily positive feelings towards work. Indeed, this corresponds with literature from Chapter 2 that argues working with precarious contracts may be “worse” than having no job at all (Lewchuk et al., 2011; Mindzak, 2016, p.152).

**Summary of teachers under different contracts with a positive view of working conditions:**

Regardless of contract type, most teachers did not view working conditions positively. The teachers that did, were for different reasons. For Catharine (Perm), her contract allowed her to set clear boundaries between work and home that seemed to enable her a sense of autonomy at work and at home. For Steven (LTO), it was because he felt that he and the board he was working with were being successful in reaching the students and helping them succeed. Steven (LTO) felt positive towards work because he saw his professional skills as being effective with students and he felt a sense of solidarity with the school board. Steven’s (LTO) insecure contract still allowed him to express positive feelings towards work because he disconnected his work experience from his homelife. Whereas Catharine’s (Perm) secure contract allowed her to associate a positive feeling towards work with what it enabled in her homelife. However, the positive feelings towards work pre-COVID, expressed by Catharine (Perm) and Steven (LTO) were the exceptions in this study. The overwhelming feelings by teachers of all contract types towards work were either mixed or negative.



### 5.2.2 Teachers under different contracts with a *mixed* view of working conditions

The number of mixed responses increased the more insecure the contract group was. OTs had the most mixed responses followed by LTOs and then permanent contract teachers. Jeremy (Perm) and Cheryl (Perm) provide examples of mixed responses below:

One of the things that the teachers are sort of against was...the whole e-learning system and students having to take e-learning classes...we have data showing that...the students who stay and finish the class are generally successful, the marks are good, but a whole bunch of them drop out...we have students who are melting, that's a term I use 'melting', just because, you know, the motivation and the mental health and all those pieces, they just can't take it anymore. (*Jeremy has a permanent contract*)

Workload wise, before COVID we had issues with...prep time being taken away because we had to supply for another teacher...the school wouldn't fork out the money to hire an LTO or an OT...We would take our own prep time and we'd have to do that. And it was a big complaint. There were always teachers that were getting hammered by these on calls. (*Cheryl has a permanent contract*)

Although maybe not apparent at first, the above quotes are representative of overall mixed responses from teachers with a permanent contract. Cheryl (Perm) and Jeremy's (Perm) issues highlight the influence of 'neoliberal policies' on public schools, the feelings of 'helplessness' that can arise when teachers work with students who are struggling, and the changing demands of work that influence a teacher's sense of autonomy, like a push towards online learning and losing prep time.

Neoliberal policies have had influences on the work of all public secondary school teachers in Ontario through forms of work intensification like frequently losing preparation

(prep) time<sup>32</sup> and forms of e-learning<sup>33</sup> that reduce the required number of teachers and increase management surveillance. Some of those policies, or lack of, include increasing professional development (PD) demands without PD support, a governmental refusal towards reducing class sizes/ratios and hiring more teachers, and a move towards more online learning. All these issues are interconnected in that hiring more teachers with secure contracts and regular schedules could allow for more predictive and organized scheduling where teachers do not lose prep time and there is less online learning for students that do not want it and who might ‘melt’, which in turn causes stress for the teacher.

Jeremy’s (Perm) points show some concern regarding online learning as well as some advantages to it, for both the work of teachers and for student learning which then reflexively influences the teachers work experience. Jeremy’s (Perm) concerns about students and appreciation for benefits created a mixed response. Jeremy (Perm) mentions that “a bunch of them [students] drop out” but also states “Data showing that students are, you know, the students

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<sup>32</sup> Public secondary teachers in Ontario who have full-time contracts and work in a semester system teach three out of four periods in a school day. During a fourth period (which can be any period during the day, it is not always the last period of the day), they have a planning/preparation period, or “prep” period. However, when teachers are absent and if there are no substitute or occasional teachers who pick up the absent teacher’s job, then teachers at the school may have to cover for the missing teacher. This results in the teacher who is covering for the absent teacher losing their “prep” time. During the pandemic when there were shortages of occasional teachers, fulltime teachers would have had to do more coverages and have less “prep” time.

<sup>33</sup> E-Learning in Ontario secondary schools can allow for more students in a class. For example, in Ontario high schools there is an average class size limit of 22 students for in person learning and 30 students for online learning (Government of Ontario, 2020). For every 3 online classes, approximately 1 in class teacher can be replaced. Additionally, e-learning also helps to enable forms of managerial oversight of the teacher’s labour process. Everything that takes place online can be recorded, stored, and analyzed (Welsh, Wanberg, Brown, & Simmering, 2003). With e-learning there is no need for administrators to roam hallways and observe teachers teaching. There is also more ability to have larger class sizes for teachers to teach (Sears, 2003, p.217). Both issues could result a reduction in the number of administrators and teachers needed for a school board to operate.

who stay and finish the class are generally successful, the marks are good”, which I considered to be positive. However, the feelings of ‘helplessness’ that Jeremy (Perm) expresses when he states that “we have students who are melting, that’s a term I use ‘melting’”, suggests a negative experience around e-learning in that it can be harmful to some students as well as the teachers. Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) have argued that there is a negative function of emotional labour for teachers when they feel they are unable to help students (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p.128) which suggests that Jeremy’s (Perm) experience with the students he feels are “melting”, was negative. This experience along with Jeremy’s (Perm) point that there were students who were successful, is an example of why I thought Jeremy (Perm) expressed mixed feelings about work in general and work with e-learning specifically. Some issues with online work during the pandemic are discussed further in Chapter 8.

Cheryl (Perm) also expressed mixed feelings towards work. Cheryl (Perm) seemed happy with her job as a teacher, however, she did express some concerns about issues that are problematic for teacher autonomy like increasing work intensification and losing prep time. Cheryl (Perm) said that “prep time [was] being taken away because we had to supply for another teacher”. Cheryl’s (Perm) point about having to cover preps that then lead to reduced preparation time for herself, also influences the teacher’s sense of autonomy and their relations with colleagues when they have less control or input about how they spend their planning time. Issues related to reduced planning time were coded with both ‘work hours’ and ‘autonomy’. Lost planning time could be a way that worker frustrations can be redirected laterally onto other workers because of the increased work that can then lead to a sense of helplessness which might get taken out on colleagues.

When Cheryl (Perm) says that “the school wouldn’t fork out the money to hire an LTO or an OT” she implies that financial resource issues are influencing teachers losing their prep time. While there is research showing some neoliberal policies have increased public education spending in places, even when there is an increase in spending it has usually not been used to reduce class sizes in line with equitable practices or hire more teachers with secure contracts (Laitsch et al., 2022). If spending were additionally used to reduce class sizes and hire more permanent contract teachers this could better enable day-to-day system planning by increasing the chances that staff are on site. Improved day-to-day system and individual planning abilities could allow teachers to have their full preparation time and address the issues that Cheryl (Perm) raises. Like Cheryl (Perm), teachers with LTO contracts might also lose their prep time that then prevents day-to-day planning too, but they also have challenges planning their longer-term schedules past the ending of the LTO.

In addition to challenges to their autonomy with insecure prep period schedules like permanent teachers had, many LTOs also expressed concerns around income insecurity and long-term financial planning. For example, depending on the local collective agreement an LTO contract can potentially end early and with little notice if the in-class teacher decides to return earlier than anticipated. The following statements from Sabrina (LTO) and Agatha (LTO) highlight some of these issues around a reduced ability to plan for the day-to-day professionally at work or financially for the long term at home, that teachers with LTO and OT contracts can experience that permanent teachers do not:

So, the problem with LTOs is this: if the teacher decides to come back before your LTO is over, your LTO is out the door. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. There's nothing that can be done about it. And that's the one worry that I have...you're being told that you're supposed to be there for X amount of time and then all of a sudden, they decide to change that. And then you're back to the drawing board. (*Sabrina has an LTO contract*)

There's always going to be issues, I think, like nothing's ever going to be, awesome and perfect, but funding and I've definitely noticed differences in funding in terms of just having to do more for yourself and like I use my own personal computer a lot of the times because I know that it'll work all the time. When you're in a different school, you never know...So, I mean, funding isn't, I don't think the best...it can definitely be better.  
(*Agatha has an LTO contract*)

Like Jeremy (Perm) and Cheryl (Perm), Agatha (LTO), and Sabrina (LTO) expressed mixed feelings in their interview and discussed scenarios that can be traced back to issues around the influence of 'neoliberal policies' on the educational labour sector and their work. These policies influence government public funding and investment as well as the encouragement of neoliberal values of entrepreneurialism, competition, resiliency, and individualism amongst workers. The lack of resources for Agatha (LTO) encourages an individualized solution as she finds it easier to use her own computer which is needed largely because of insufficient funding and the lack of knowing when a job will end for Sabrina (LTO) is seen as an individual problem for her to deal with.

When Agatha (LTO) says, "funding isn't, I don't think the best...it can definitely be better", she brings attention to the neoliberal trend of reducing funding for public services or not using funds to hire more secure workers, which I thought was a negative feeling but her overall feelings towards work seemed generally ambivalent. Prior to this comment Agatha (LTO) also expressed that, "There's always going to be issues, I think...". This slightly deterministic position relates to the idea of TINA (there is no alternative) and neoliberalism that Queiroz (2018) has written about as an ideological and management controlling force. This statement suggests that Agatha (LTO) might have accepted the current state of educational funding as though there was no alternative, despite also believing that "it can definitely be better".

Sabrina's (LTO) mixed response towards her work experience showed an awareness that things were unfair, but with her union involvement she discussed at other points in the interview,

she was also hopeful that things can get better at work when teachers are more involved with the union. In addition to expressing hope for the potential of workplace changes through union involvement, Sabrina (LTO) expressed a concern that LTO contracts in her board can be ended abruptly if the teacher being covered for, decides to return to work early, “the problem with LTOs is this. If the teacher decides to come back before your LTO is over, your LTO is out the door...”. For the scenario that Sabrina (LTO) describes codes like the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ and ‘neoliberal policies’ were applied to show the status hierarchy between the teacher with the permanent contract over the teacher with the LTO contract and the individualisation that Sabrina (LTO) experiences around uncertainties as an LTO who may lose work unexpectedly. Despite working in a unionised public sector job, when Sabrina (LTO) is dismissed from her LTO contract with little notice she is generally left alone to figure out how she might find her next contract. This process of individualization is a partial objective of neoliberal policies that can encourage the values of entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, and resiliency (Joseph, 2013). Sabrina (LTO), who is involved with her union and encourages collective union involvement from occasional teachers is forced to navigate her search for a new contract on her own and is influenced to ideally accept the encouraged neoliberal norms.

Agatha’s (LTO) experience also suggests a degree of individualization. Experiences of individualization can be empowering and help with senses of autonomy, but they can also be alienating and disempowering. Agatha’s (LTO) description of not knowing the quality of the equipment one must work with or where resources are located when they start their job seems disempowering. The lack of organizational order is another consequence from the general underfunding of public education that encourages individual private strategies (she uses her own computer) to navigate a public policy created context.

Policy influences from larger governmental bodies (Sorensen et al., 2021) and the objective of getting students better adapted to issues stemming from new technology underlie the Ontario secondary educational policies that support the STEM<sup>34</sup> fields of learning.

Technological familiarity for students and future workers is considered valuable to organisations like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who promote global education policy, so it makes sense that schools in OECD member states would promote them.

However, in material terms, the resources to accomplish these goals appear to be lacking in some schools, including those that Agatha (LTO) works in where she needs to use her own device.

This type of inequality creates inequitable public-school teaching and learning environments for both teachers and students. Newer teachers out of teacher's college, possibly with forms of debt from years of education and possibly without any financial support, might be unable to acquire their own laptop or if needing a new one, might not be able to replace it easily. Educational tech access and the demands of teaching in the 21st century raises questions into inequalities and inequity around the learning conditions for students, but also how teachers with different contracts might experience similar labour conditions differently and be disadvantaged because of the organizational pressures for personal spending. Being in a technologically well supported classroom with proper training could be a positive experience that increases a teacher's sense of autonomy, but the opposite is also possible.

Cheryl (Perm), Jeremy (Perm), Agatha (LTO), and Sabrina (Sabrina) all had mixed expressions towards work. Their comments described events that can be traced back to neoliberal policies, neoliberal values, and issues of underfunding that I felt influenced some possibly negative expressions. However, the teachers' individual experiences also had various

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<sup>34</sup> STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

positive aspects like having a positive outlook or believing that fighting for change in the workplace can be accomplished. This variation made me feel their feelings towards work were mixed. The comments from OTs who had mixed feelings towards work also connect to issues of neoliberal policies except with more violent outcomes.

Before COVID, when I think of the working conditions, I just think of how you were able to see people in the same department as you every day and you're able to kind of like lean on them and share resources...There was the time where a permanent teacher yelled at me and I got really upset and I was like, 'I want to talk to a guidance counsellor', weirdly. And I was crying...I'd never been yelled at by someone in a professional setting. And there were two other teachers that witnessed it and they didn't say anything at the time. So that...didn't feel good...It obviously wasn't OK for him to...scream at me like that...it happened in the department office...the guidance counsellor wanted me to go to the union to report the teacher, and she kind of was hinting that something like that had happened before. And she's like 'if you don't report him...it'll continue to keep happening.' But I didn't report it because...you just don't know. You just feel like you don't want anything like that. Like, you don't want to be seen as a problem. (*Debbie has an OT contract*)

Before COVID we were trying to address situations of...escalating issues with students. Teachers are worried in class that they could be attacked, especially when you have more of the specialised classes. It could happen because these are students that, it's not their fault in any way, shape, or form. But they do have issues. And you could be a target of their lashing out or a target of just them being who they are, and more teachers were seeing that...I can never tell when some student is going to go off in a regular classroom. And I could have something thrown at me that's more than just a pencil...Day to day, it was OK. You know, we got our jobs. (*Mandy has an OT contract*)

The quotes from Debbie (OT) and Mandy (OT) mention issues of violence that they have experienced directly or indirectly in the workplace which were negative. However, they still had comments that suggested there were things that they felt positive about like collaborating with colleagues or just getting to work “day to day” which influenced me to classify their responses as mixed. Most of the teachers with OT contracts mentioned forms of inequitable treatment by various school community members, such as administrators, colleagues, and students. The overall lack of public sector funding encouraged through neoliberal policies may not be directly related to these incidents, however, it may be indirectly related.



First, a hierarchical workplace like that created by the contract status pyramid could be divisive in organisational structure which can also create a model for social learning and social relations. Combine this model with issues like a lack of planning time that Cheryl (Perm) talked about earlier and at times there may be frustrations taken out on other teachers or more possibly those lower in the hierarchy. The violent incidents described by Debbie (OT) and Mandy (OT) could be directly or indirectly related to problematic working and learning spaces that are shaped by spending policy. These spaces can then influence the levels of anxiety in teachers as well as students who might be sensing their teachers' stress, which can lead to further forms of conflict and reactions (Kuen Tsang & Lok Kwong, 2017; Oberle et al., 2020).

The incident at Debbie's (OT) school was also not a one-time occurrence and there is concern that it might "keep happening". Debbie (OT) mentions that another colleague, the counsellor who she spoke to after the incident, "hinted" that this teacher had a history of such conduct, but Debbie (OT) does not say if that conduct was towards other teachers with OT or LTO contracts or if it was towards teachers with a permanent contract. The counsellor was concerned that if Debbie (OT) did not "report him...it'll continue to keep happening". However, a power imbalance between Debbie (OT) and the teacher that was hostile to her seems to exist when Debbie (OT) suggests that she does not want to report the incident because she does not "want to be seen as a problem". When a colleague who may have a known history of accosting other colleagues is verbally violent to another colleague and does not face any repercussions because the other workers are concerned that they will be the ones who are seen as the "problem", then there is a discriminatory power imbalance that seems largely shaped by different contracts. However, Debbie (OT) does gender the teacher "him", so it could suggest that forms of patriarchy and misogyny are also influencing workplace events and functioning as disciplinary

methods along with the contract hierarchy within Debbie's (OT) department. Debbie's (OT) experience also suggests that there could be demanding levels of emotional labour that she would have to practice working with that colleague in the future. Debbie's (OT) story highlights the need for possibly a higher level of emotional labour when interacting with colleagues that may have more secure work contracts who might exploit discriminatory power imbalances within a top-down contract status hierarchy. Debbie's (OT) story also points to the process of involving the union when there are member disputes or other workplace conflict issues that might infringe on a teacher's professional autonomy and personal safety. This feeling of belonging to an organization that a worker could turn to might enable a sense of solidarity with a protective body that benefits the experience of work for teachers even if they are precarious, like in Mandy's (OT) case.

Mandy's (OT) work with her local union has helped give her a broader view of what is happening in her local school district towards other occasional teachers with issues of violence. Mandy (OT) seemed to feel positive about getting work despite her negative experiences regarding concerns about violence, which I saw as a mixed expression. Teachers that Mandy (OT) knew through the union were "having escalating issues with students. Teachers [were] worried in class that they could be attacked".

Mandy's (OT) answers reveal a level of violence relating to health and safety issues that occasional teachers experience whereas teachers with a permanent contract may have a different experience. For example, statistics show that Educational Assistants (EAs) are some of the most assaulted workers in Ontario (Draaisma, 2021). Salary and job security wise, they are also arguably lower down the occupational status hierarchy than teachers with an OT or LTO contract. One inference from this could be that teachers with an OT or LTO contract might face

fewer incidents of violence than EAs who are lower in the hierarchy, but possibly more incidents than teachers with a permanent contract who are higher. Mandy's (OT) lack of secure work and lower position in the hierarchy might be why she seems to be able to be somewhat accepting of the violence because, "day to day it was okay...we got our jobs".

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with *mixed* views of working conditions**

All the teachers discussed with mixed feelings towards work described work environments and labour processes that have been influenced by neoliberal policies in different ways. For the teachers with permanent contracts the issues that they expressed mixed feelings towards related to prep time, teaching curriculum, e-learning, and student success, which could suggest their secure contract had influences that allowed those professionally specific considerations to be expressed in the interview over other concerns. For the teachers with LTO contracts who had concerns about the logistics of being able to teach or plan a life and the teachers with OT contracts who expressed mixed feelings about working with others in a safe environment, their mixed expressions were less on issues directly related to student learning and more so on issues that are needed to be addressed before curriculum can be taken into consideration, like personal safety and well-being. Having a certain type of contract had influences on what the different teachers expressed mixed feelings towards in their workplace. The security of the contract allowed the permanent teachers to express mixed feelings around issues of professional autonomy at work while the LTOs and OTs expressed mixed feelings around issues of job security, safety, and being able to plan a career or life in a long-term way.

### 5.2.3 Teachers under different contracts with a negative view of working conditions

Several teachers in all contract types expressed negative views about their work situation. The number of permanent teachers with negative responses was higher than either the LTOs or the OTs. Almost three quarters of permanent teachers had primarily negative expressions. This section examines some of the reasons for this.

I think one of my biggest frustrations with working conditions for teachers... I have many frustrations... But technology, like the tech the teachers get, is laughable to do our jobs. And so that's been an ongoing frustration. And just like the quality of the school environment, as far as the actual infrastructure, you know, the classrooms are too hot or too cold and not ventilated properly, et cetera, et cetera. So that's just a constant baseline. *(Nadia has a permanent contract)*

In March I accepted the headship at a new school... Because I went to high school there, it was hard for some of the colleagues in my department to see me as a professional... I started saying we need to do more around indigenous issues, and they were like, 'we do residential schools'... And I was like, no, there is more. And it wasn't until I convinced one of the women to go to a workshop that she came back, and she was like, 'we need to change everything'. And I was like, 'that's what I said'. So, I felt infantilized at times. And so, my acting department head, like she would make stuff up... she went down to my principal and said I wasn't following the curriculum. And I was like, are you kidding me? People were very toxic. *(Maureen has a permanent contract)*

As Mindzak (2016) and others have shown, teaching, regardless of contract type can be stressful (Mindzak, 2016, p.117). The permanent contract teachers interviewed largely verified this insight. For many of them, like Maureen (Perm) and Nadia (Perm), their concerns were about how situations around teaching, like tech support or school infrastructure, workloads, trying to learn new content and formats for teaching, or collaborating with colleagues who have problematic positions, were negatively influencing their ability to authentically plan, assess, teach, and feel like a professionally autonomous teacher. Nadia's (Perm) work environment is supported with tech that is "laughable" and there are also issues with ventilation and overall infrastructure that seem to prevent Nadia (Perm) from functioning as she feels a teacher should be able to while at work. Nadia's (Perm) quote illustrates how permanent contract teachers were

often concerned with issues that disrupted or negatively influenced the learning environment of students which prevented them from performing their work in a way that they felt good about which in turn added to the negative experience for them. Maureen's (Perm) story also highlights a situation where the negative experiences of teachers with a permanent contract at work, largely related to issues about the quality of the lessons and the learning space for students.

Maureen (Perm) discusses an incident involving her colleague who also had a permanent contract. For this incident, I applied the codes 'polarisation between colleagues', 'surveillance', 'neoliberalism promotes schooling not education', and 'racism'. Maureen's (Perm) experience with work was interpreted as primarily negative. Working in a department office where she was treated as a lesser member of the group by more senior teachers, being questioned about her suggestions for equity lesson initiatives, and reported on by colleagues, created what seemed like tension, stress, and a negative experience of the workplace for Maureen (Perm).

The polarisation largely came from the relationships between Maureen (Perm) and her colleagues where she felt "infantilized". The hierarchical relationships based on her status as a former student and newer teacher, created an environment where some teachers felt they could oversee Maureen (Perm) and go to the administration when they felt she "wasn't following the curriculum". These relationships also enable an oversight on Maureen's (Perm) labour process by management via her colleagues. Lateral influence by colleagues that is in line with management goals can lead to forms of deskilling. Deskilling could look like feeling reluctant to learn or practice new forms of pedagogy such as incorporating a variety of indigenous perspectives into lessons. A sense of oversight by colleagues can encourage teachers to "conform to set business processes" (Hall, 2010 p.174), as opposed to suggesting new ideas.

The polarisation between colleagues also developed around Maureen's (Perm) initiative to "do more around indigenous issues". This form of polarisation connects with the codes 'neoliberalism promotes schooling not education'. The goals of schooling and education can differ with the former functioning more towards a tight interpretation of the curriculum that gets checked off and is forced mechanically on to students and the latter functioning more with an openness to reflection, change, and adaptability to draw out from the students what they learn. Relating this to the matter of teaching a broader range of material around indigenous issues, Maureen's (Perm) colleagues seemed to support the schooling aspect and conveyed a narrow view towards historical inquiry when they asserted, "we do residential schools". This incident was also coded with 'racism' and suggests that when forms of education are more in line with 'schooling' and checking off curriculum, they can indirectly uphold older norms, patterns, and forms of hierarchy and discrimination. Because these equity issues overlap with my research, I felt it was important to create a specific code that was applied to incidents that could be interpreted as 'racist'. A teacher dismissing another teacher that raises the idea to include more material about marginalised groups without inquiring further and asserts that only one issue needs to be discussed in relation to those groups, i.e., "residential schools", could be seen as having racist undertones, if not being overtly racist. It also traces back to a primary purpose of schooling in early Ontario to socialize students into a white, Christian, Anglo-Saxon culture, political economy, and value system in addition to acting as a form of structured antagonism between workers in a hierarchy. And it raises questions around how the pedagogical ideas of an LTO or OT who would be even lower in the workplace hierarchy would be received. Maureen's (Perm) experiences in her department illustrates a type of polarisation even between workers who all have permanent contracts but may still be in a hierarchy divided by their level of

seniority, race, and/or gender. Teachers with permanent contracts and seniority can also experience what it is like to be lower on the contract status hierarchy if they join a new department like Maureen (Perm) or change school boards and must start over as an LTO in the new board, like Melissa<sup>35</sup> (Perm).

Melissa (Perm) taught for 19 years with a permanent contract before she decided to switch boards, mostly so that she could have a shorter commute. When Melissa (Perm) was hired by her new board, she was hired with an LTO contract and had to work multiple LTO contracts for four years before she was able to get a permanent contract again.

As an LTO, you get your interview last for the last positions available, right? And generally, I would find out the day before the first day of semester what I was teaching ...which is untenable... it feels so fucked up to me that the youngest, most vulnerable, most insecure, and inexperienced teachers are being thrown into this like hot mess of a timetable with no supports...like, 'that's the department head who I can go to, who can give me resources' or 'that's the teacher who I've networked with who can help' or even just like, 'I taught this last semester. I get to teach it next semester and now I know what I can do better.' But they don't have that continuity. It's a ridiculous system, particularly for newer teachers...your first year, you don't know what you're doing. You have no clue. You're just treading water. But to do that on top of... all this financial insecurity and job insecurity is like such an emotional toll. The toll is unbelievable. (*Melissa was recently in an LTO contract but now has a permanent contract*)

Melissa's (Perm) experience as a teacher with a permanent contract who then worked with LTO contracts before getting a permanent contract again, offers unique insight into feelings of job security versus feelings of job insecurity, the "emotional toll" that the latter can entail, and the negative influence on professional and personal autonomy that an insecure contract can have. Melissa's (Perm) interview was coded with 'feeling secure or not', 'little consistency', and 'precarity's negative impacts'. Prior to getting hired with the new school board, Melissa (Perm)

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<sup>35</sup> Melissa was hired into a permanent contract before the interview. Her story speaks to experiences with both Permanent and LTO contracts.

had worked with a permanent contract. With that permanent contract, Melissa (Perm) experienced feeling secure in her work and having a consistent schedule.

Melissa (Perm) has experienced work as a teacher with a secure contract, so the feelings of insecurity towards work that she describes working with an LTO contract seem relevant. She mentions that the “most vulnerable, most insecure” teachers experience scheduling and working conditions that are “untenable”. She considers the work and scheduling situation facing teachers with occasional contracts as “so fucked up”. A couple of the reasons for the situation being “fucked up” could be that there are “no supports” and the timetables for LTOS are “a hot mess”. In addition to these problematic issues for teachers with LTO contracts, the general teaching load, schedule, and unpredictable future income, is inconsistent. Inconsistent work, inconsistent courses, inconstant relationships, unpredictable levels of income, and the feelings and life experiences that those factors can frame, and influence can be detrimental to a persons’ health. These factors can increase levels of anxiety and stress, create strained relationships, and result in ill health outcomes (Lewchuk et al., 2011; 2015; Mindzak, 2016). The negative health influences from precarious work add credence to Melissa’s (Perm) point about the “emotional toll”. Melissa (Perm) thinks the current hiring and hierarchical contract system is “a ridiculous system, particularly for newer teachers” that takes an “emotional toll”. On top of this “ridiculous system” Melissa (Perm) also makes the connection that often “newer teachers” are doing this while experiencing “financial insecurity” along with “job insecurity”. The professional and personal autonomy that Melissa (Perm) felt she had as a teacher with a permanent contract was challenged when she changed school boards and had to take jobs as an LTO teacher.

The next two teachers with primarily negative responses about work touch on some of the issues with inconsistency that Melissa (Perm) mentions and have only worked with OT and LTO



contracts, but they would prefer permanent contracts. Their negative experiences generally didn't focus on classroom pedagogy like Maureen (Perm) or school problems with infrastructure like Nadia (Perm). The concerns around work expressed by LTOs had more to do with negative experiences from trying to get hired so that they could work with a secure contract. In the pursuit of hopefully getting a permanent contract some teachers felt they must spend a significant amount of time and money taking extra courses and going to interviews. For Anessa (LTO), she feels that to stay competitive she needs to “keep on taking AQs (Additional Qualifications)”. For Maurice (LTO), it is the frequent application and interview process that is “exhausting”. The quotations from both Anessa (LTO) and Maurice (LTO) also support the issues that Melissa (Perm) mentions about an inconsistent work environment which impacts levels of worker autonomy. In that environment, teachers searching for LTO contracts are not always growing and developing a program, a set of courses, lessons, and assessments but are often having to spend time interviewing multiple times a year for jobs, sometimes in different subject areas, and continually upgrading their qualifications to stay competitive and appeal to administrators as a desirable candidate for a permanent contract:

I feel like as an LTO or OT teacher, I don't think I can make as much of a big impact in education as I want to until I get permanent, and I think that's what I'm struggling with ...I think working [outside of Canada] has set me back...in my career, I'm [in my early forties] and I don't have a permanent job...It's not like I changed careers. I have a master's degree, I'm...taking three AQ courses.... I'm taking Special Education, Chemistry, and Social Sciences [AQs], just because for the next round of hiring, whether it's LTOs or permanent, I want to be competitive. And if it means...I have to keep on taking AQs for the next little while because I just need to make sure that my application stands out...because it's hard. Like it's hard. (*Anessa has an LTO contract*)

It was just all over the place [the interview feedback for jobs]. Sometimes it was very specific. Sometimes it said I was a poor communicator, and I never really received that feedback before. In the past, I've had, like 'all your questions were well done. You just didn't say enough of this or whatever'...it felt like it was inconsistent [the feedback], and I wasn't really sure. And it was getting very stressful, like I was starting to get very anxious. I did end up getting medical accommodations for it where I have the list of

questions beforehand so I could go over and make notes and then go into the interview. But I wasn't successful...it's stressful having to go to these interviews all the time, like three times a year to multiple interviews, it's exhausting. (*Maurice has an LTO contract*)

Trying to be “competitive” in an “inconsistent” work environment could lead to feelings of helplessness. Maurice (LTO) and Anessa (LTO) had the codes ‘helplessness’, ‘interviews and applications’ and ‘good enough to LTO permanently’ applied to their responses. Anessa (LTO), Maurice (LTO), and many of the other LTOs seemed to feel helpless in their pursuit of a permanent contract, which corresponds with the research by Mindzak (2016), Walkland (2017), Abawia and Eizadirad (2020), and Yearwood (2021). Anessa’s (LTO) comments show one way that LTO teachers can try to overcome their feelings of helplessness. By upgrading her credentials and maybe gaining a feeling of some control over possibly increasing her odds of being hired permanently, it might help her mitigate feelings of helplessness. On another level, Maurice’s (LTO) comments show the emotionally draining and ‘exhausting’ influences that feelings of helplessness eventually have on an occasional teacher after repeated unsuccessful interviews and what he felt was superficial feedback from administrators.

Maurice’s (LTO) experiences with “multiple” interviews and applications every school year was “stressful” and “exhausting”. These experiences influenced Maurice (LTO) to the point where he was “starting to get very anxious” and he “did end up getting medical accommodations” for his interviews. Some of the reasons for Maurice’s (LTO) anxiety was that the feedback was “all over the place” and “inconsistent”. For Maurice (LTO), it felt like management was constantly shifting the criteria for him to be successful in the interviews. This lack of clarity for a path forward towards a permanent contract had a negative influence on Maurice’s (LTO) experience and relationship with work. For Anessa (LTO), who also experienced a lack of a clear path towards a permanent contract, she felt that staying

“competitive” and taking various AQ courses would improve her chances. Being ‘resilient’ within a public sector workplace facing austerity measures by the government and staying ‘competitive’ are both manifestations of a neoliberal value system within public education.

Like the state influenced colonial capitalist values that teachers in the 1800s and early 1900s would have had to interpolate and navigate to become a teacher, newer teachers like Aneesa (LTO) and Maurice (LTO) were having to navigate a neoliberal capitalist value system. As Chapter 4 discussed, the value systems within Ontario’s capitalist public education system have their roots in the colonial legacy of social relations and social conservatism in early Ontario which also overlap with neoliberalism’s conception of social relations in the early 2000s and 2020s regarding hierarchy and status. These are social relations that normalize social hierarchies, competition, and resiliency, to attempt to ascend the hierarchy which can then exacerbate pre-existing social inequities with those lower on the hierarchy having to spend money upgrading credentials in an attempt to ascend. Aneesa (LTO) felt that she needed to stay “competitive” for the chance of getting “LTOs or permanent”. To stay competitive, Aneesa (LTO) was taking “three AQ courses” at the time of the interview and was planning to “keep on taking AQs for the next little while because I just need to make sure that my application stands out”. Neoliberal management goals around creating workers who are entrepreneurial and resilient could be influencing the workday experiences that Maurice (LTO) and Aneesa (LTO) mention and preventing them from having a clear pathway to a permanent contract.

Neoliberal management goals, while seeking to limit the power of public sector unions, also help produce certain aspects of worker identities. These aspects of individual identity could be seen as ‘entrepreneurial’ like Aneesa (LTO) who wants to “be competitive” and is willing to “keep on taking AQ courses”, or possibly building ‘resiliency’ like Maurice (LTO) might build

through repeated unsuccessful interviews. However, with Anessa (LTO) it is not her free choice to be entrepreneurial and with Maurice (LTO), events that management might see as building resiliency, like learning from unsuccessful interviews, are, for him, “exhausting” and questionable to the degree that they are building resiliency. These concerns about looking for and hoping to find secure work when talking about work were not described by teachers with permanent contracts.

Looking next at two OTs who expressed negative feelings about work shows that like the LTO teachers, when they discussed work, it was on how issues around their insecure contract made it difficult to discuss work primarily regarding the job of teaching students. Melvin (OT) expressed an awareness that he felt he was being overseen by administrators which was like how Maureen (Perm) felt about being overseen by her colleague and reported on to the administration. However, Maureen (Perm) did not feel she was doing anything wrong and felt her colleagues were being “toxic” whereas Melvin (LTO) felt he might be seen as doing something wrong and felt “oh crap”:

In regard to the surveillance...I was supply teaching. And when you're teaching, you're always looking for that next LTO. I was covering a Spec Ed class and...I looked over and there were two administrators looking in the window of the door like, ‘what are you doing? And I was just like, ‘crap’. And part of it is that...I think they're empowered to criticise me in a way that they're not empowered to criticise somebody who's more protected by the union and maybe it was just in my head and that they were just looking in. But I'm so sensitive to my vulnerability that I was like, ‘oh, crap.’ And it just felt like the end of the world...but once again, that ties into my position of underemployment and a lack of security. (*Melvin has an OT contract*)

Like Melvin (OT) and the LTOs, Layla’s (OT) experience with an OT contract shaped a negative experience of work which influenced a negative “relationship” with work. Her primary thoughts about work were the injustices she experienced there and not overly related to issues of pedagogy or professional practice. Layla’s (OT) contract seems to prevent her from feeling

autonomy over her work or her personal life and influenced her feelings that she was emotionally abused by her employer.

I see the board as the narcissistic psychopath that I dated for 15 years. You know, that would gaslight the crap out of me... This is a class mentality of not recognizing who their people are, not actually even thinking of it because they think of it as kind of like that supply teaching is now the new minimum wage... Where people... still believe that minimum wage jobs are entry level jobs instead of, actual jobs that support rent and raise children and everything else, and so it's that mentality that the board has, because it's not paying minimum wage, it's doing piecemeal, instead it's feast or famine... I see work as a relationship... I see that I was in an abusive, unhealthy relationship. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT) would both like a secure permanent contract. They have worked with OT and LTO contracts on and off for approximately 15 years each. Like Maurice (LTO) and Anessa (LTO), Melvin (OT), and Layla (OT) work with occasional contracts in somewhat of a permanent manner. Their experiences with what seem like a ‘semi-permanent’ occasional contract status, had a negative influence on their experiences of work by creating emotional and security concerns that carried over into the workspace.

One of the common codes that Layla (OT) and Melvin (OT) each shared with members of other labour contracts was ‘emotional labour’. However, the specific uses of emotional labour might differ between Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT). Melvin’s (OT) experience when the administrators walked by his classroom while he was in front of a group of students, is when his use of ‘surface acting’ in the classroom seemed to be compounded with the feeling of being monitored by management. Melvin’s (OT) feelings around being monitored at work required degrees of emotional management so that Melvin (OT) would not show to the students or administrators that he was “sensitive to his vulnerability”.

So, Melvin’s (OT) precarious contract makes him “sensitive” to how he is viewed by administrators. Melvin (OT) feels that the administrators might be “empowered to criticise” him

“in a way that they’re not empowered to criticise somebody who’s more protected by the union”. However, Melvin (OT) also says, “maybe it was just in my head and that they were just looking in”. This could suggest that if he were to have a permanent contract, he might be less likely to be concerned about what the administrators walking by his class were thinking, or maybe not. If teachers are less concerned about consequences from management surveillance, they could have more mental and emotional space available for their own wellness and their students' needs and they might feel a greater degree of professional autonomy. Some teachers with a permanent contract might also share Melvin’s (OT) concerns about in person surveillance, but the ones interviewed did not seem as concerned about this issue.

Layla’s (OT) use of emotional labour comes with needing to maintain regular composure in a workplace relationship that she feels is “abusive” and “unhealthy”. Layla (OT) feels that the school board she works with has the traits of a “narcissistic psychopath” in its “relationship” with her. Part of the marginalisation that Layla (OT) experiences in her relationship with the board comes from feeling that administrators and other board officials are unaware of her situation and they, “still believe that minimum wage jobs are entry level jobs instead of actual jobs that support rent and raise children and everything else”.

Inferring from Layla’s (OT) comments draws attention to two perceptions about public sector teaching in Ontario. The first is that public sector teaching in Ontario is a secure and well-paid job for those that want to teach and the second is that people with OT contracts choose them and do not need a wage level that can support a family. The administrators that Layla (OT) references seem to share these types of perceptions. Unfortunately, these views can deny the lived reality of teachers with occasional contracts who want a permanent contract and lead them to feeling ‘gaslit’, which was a term Layla (OT) used at other points in the interview. Layla (OT)

mentions that “this is a class mentality of not recognizing who their people are, not actually even thinking of it” which suggests that she feels that administrators lack a socio-economic awareness of present day political economic issues like precarious employment. Some of the negative feelings towards work expressed by teachers with OT and LTO contracts connect to the idea that people, including some colleagues and school board employees, generally do not understand that teaching is an insecure job for teachers with occasional contracts who do not choose to work with them and would prefer permanent work. Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT) felt that administrators misunderstood or were not sympathetic to how their insecure contract status might be influencing them at work.

**Summary of teachers under different contracts with a negative view of their working conditions.**

For permanent contract teachers their negative feelings generally centred around issues with workloads, school infrastructure, and curriculum and pedagogy issues, which all influenced how they could perform as teachers. Nadia (Perm) and Maureen (Perm) are illustrative of these experiences from an environmental level and a personal level. Nadia’s (Perm) comments show that a lack of quality infrastructure and support for teachers can influence negative feelings and Maureen’s (Perm) experience shows that hierarchies exist within permanent contract teachers which can have a negative influence on her professional growth and experience of work.

For the non-permanent contract teachers, misunderstandings from a lack of clarity about hiring processes created frustrations around not knowing what to do to get hired, like Maurice (LTO) and Anessa (LTO) experienced. Relating to this lack of awareness about hiring issues, Melissa’s (Perm) story showed that teaching with a permanent contract can be insecure if you move boards and start over with an occasional contract. Her story also showed that when job

security is an issue, a teacher who formerly had a permanent contract can also think of work as something that is preventing them from having an organized professional and personal life, as opposed to seeing work as something they can grow with and improve in. This was evident with Melvin (OT) and Layla's (OT) comments on work, where their contract allowed few if any feelings of professional autonomy and they both lacked a clear awareness as to what they could do to get hired.

The teachers from all contract types that had negative feelings towards their work seemed to feel 'frustrated' in their school communities, misunderstood by or disconnected from certain colleagues or the administrators within them, and somewhat prevented from performing as professionally autonomous teachers. For permanent contract teachers, their negative feelings towards work seemed more so related to pedagogical issues and learning conditions that were preventing them from feeling supported or like a professional teacher, whereas for both OT and LTOs, their concerns were more about issues around their insecure employment that were preventing them from feeling secure in their work. If teachers are a labour sector that needs to be controlled and monitored by the state as was shown in Chapter 4, then reducing teacher autonomy amongst all contract types through work intensification, lack of support, antagonistic hierarchies, surveillance, and an emotional 'toll', would be one way to enable those goals.

### **5.3 – Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and Views of Work**

Pre-COVID expressions towards work from most teachers were generally negative. The positive, mixed, and negative feelings largely revolved around issues and perceptions of autonomy and security, both professional and personal, which in turn shaped the relationship between the worker and their work. However, the specifics about what issues the teachers felt



were impacting their feelings of autonomy and working as a professional teacher seemed to differ based on contract type and job security.

Most permanent contract teachers had negative experience towards work. Just under a quarter of permanent contract teachers expressed mixed views and only one permanent contract teacher expressed primarily positive views towards work. For the negative views, the permanent teachers mentioned certain working conditions like a lack of proper technology, poor infrastructure, and personal hierarchies that prevented new forms of professional practice were influencing their ability to be the teacher they were trying to be. Further negative experiences with issues of work intensification and losing prep time were combined with positive views by some teachers which created a mixed experience of work for about a quarter of permanent contract teachers. The one positive experience with work from a permanent contract teacher, Catharine (Perm), was because her story suggested that she felt a sense of job security and professional autonomy which allowed her to create a dividing line between work and her homelife that then allowed her to regularly go to the gym after school and have a sense of freedom in her personal life. The mixed and negative views of permanent contract teachers reflected the opposite scenario Catharine (Perm) described and contained instances of overwork, workplace conflict with colleagues over pedagogy, and concerns about the safety of the learning environment.

Looking at LTO teachers, many had negative sentiments about work and like the permanent teachers there was one LTO teacher who expressed positive feelings about work. However, unlike Catharine (Perm) who had a positive experience with work, Steven's (LTO) positive feelings towards work were not regarding the life that it enabled outside of work, but how he felt regarding the success of the students in his board. But Steven (LTO) was in the

minority. About a quarter of LTO teachers expressed mixed feelings towards work. The mixed feeling ranged from disappointment about needing to use personal money to buy things like tech and having an LTO end early, to believing that things can get better, or things are as good as they can get. Over half of the LTOs had a negative experience with work. The LTO contract shaped a work relationship that had similar pressures as the teachers with a permanent contract that were teaching related. However, The LTO contract added another layer that influenced the work of most of these teachers. This layer can be seen in the comments about feeling insecure, helpless, unsure what to do to get hired, and spending out of pocket money for resources. The LTO teachers' feelings towards how they worked as teachers was often connected to personal issues and concerns around employment. For the majority of LTO teachers that had mixed or negative feelings, issues of security involving their contract seemed to prevent them from having a positive experience with work and from feeling like professionally autonomous teachers.

Teachers with OT contracts that had negative experiences came across as though they felt they lacked professional autonomy as teachers and a sense of autonomy in life. For some of these OTs, their contract shaped an experience where there was a concern around surveillance by administrators and feelings where administrators were unaware of the inequities within the contract status hierarchy. When there were mixed responses, they were because the OT had either chosen to work as an OT, or saw the possibility for change in the workplace, but still expressed concerns around job security or workplace safety issues. The insecurity of the OT contract seemed to prevent comments about work, either positive, mixed, or negative, from overly relating to professional practice.

A secure permanent contract allowed for feelings about work to be directed towards the work. This was either in the positive about being able to turn off work at the end of the day or in

the negative in that aspects of work are preventing one from teaching students in a certain type of environment. Many of the LTO contract teachers were more often concerned about their own ability to find secure work over issues of actual teaching. Even the OT teachers who chose to work as OTs had mixed experiences at best and the ones that wanted permanent contracts made minimal comments about pedagogical issues and instead focused on their employment concerns. A secure contract allowed talk on teaching conditions to focus on teaching conditions whereas the more insecure the contract the more the talk on work was a talk on work and life insecurities.

## Chapter 6 - The Union

### 6.1 - Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses the responses to the interview questions related to the second half of the first research question, the part on ‘the union’:

*How do teachers with different labour contracts feel towards their work and their union?  
How do these differ?*

To help frame the discussion I start with Figure 8 that summarizes the interview participants' views about the union before the COVID pandemic.

**Figure 8: The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards the union before COVID from the teachers under different contracts.**

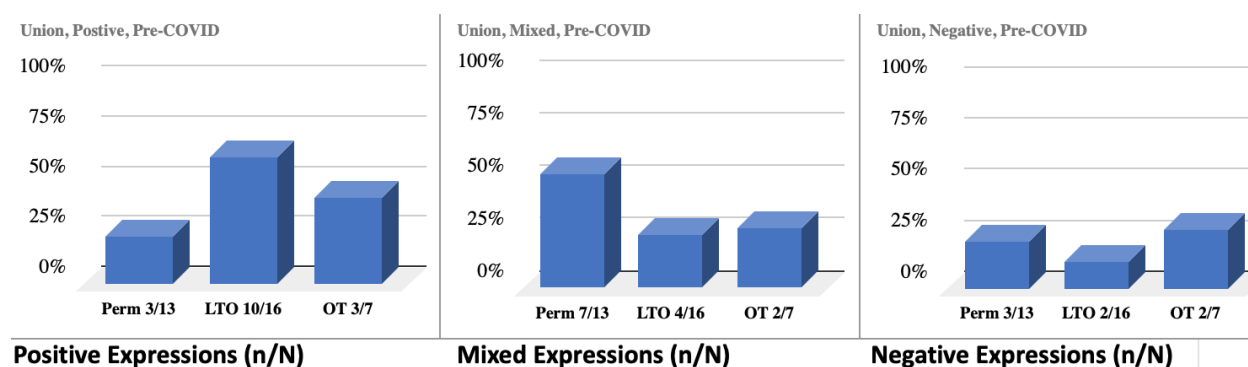


Figure 8 suggests that the experiences of teachers with their union overall were generally more likely to be positive or mixed and less negative compared to their work. The teacher's union operates at multiple organizational levels and below we explore in somewhat more detail varying attitudes to local and provincial unions. Somewhat surprising teachers on LTO and OT contracts were more likely than teachers with permanent contracts to view their union positively.

Assessments regarding the feelings of teachers about their union were drawn from the responses to the following questions:

*12) Do you feel your type of labour contract impacts how you feel towards colleagues, students, the union, the board? If so, how so?*

*13) In what ways might your work environment impact how you feel towards the union or the board? Do you feel listened to, validated, confident in your job security, empowered in your profession, comfortable expressing yourself and raising questions? Do you feel comfortable questioning administrative decisions/policies?*

## **6.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Views on Their Union**

### **6.2.1 Teachers under different contracts with a positive view of their union**

There were a few teachers with permanent contracts who had positive views about their union. Interestingly, for permanent teachers like Roger (Perm), he seemed to separate his positive feelings towards his local union with more critical views of the provincial union. I thought of maybe classifying Rogers' (Perm) feelings towards the union as 'mixed'. However, his apparent appreciation for his local union "I think they're doing the best they can. I really do" seemed largely positive.

I emailed the head of my union this year because it was only the second time, I was not school surplus...I didn't get a letter this year. I actually phoned up or emailed the union and said, what if I haven't got a letter by now? Does that mean that I'm actually good this year? And he said, 'crack that beer, buddy!'...I think they're doing the best they can. I really do...here we had some really, really good union leaders.... I'd be encouraged about radical action at the provincial level...the local stuff, the way that our board deals with our union...I don't think I could do any better. (*Roger has a permanent contract*)

Roger (Perm) was one of a few teachers with a permanent contract to express positive feelings towards the union and it took Roger (Perm) 15 years of teaching with various long term occasional contracts before he received a full-time permanent contract. Roger (Perm) seems to feel that his local union has been helpful throughout that process "I think they're doing the best they can. I really do". The 'union help' that Roger (Perm) received was also code applied to Roger's (Perm) answer. The 'union help' that Roger (Perm) experienced was a factor considered

when classifying his feelings towards the union as positive. The union member who Roger (Perm) contacts seems supportive and comes across as happy for him when he gets informed that he will be full time permanent for the next school year, “crack that beer buddy”. However, this is Roger’s (Perm) *local* union.

When Roger (Perm) references the provincial level of the union, he feels that he would “be encouraged about radical action...”. Roger’s (Perm) feelings about wanting more leadership in collective action at the provincial level was shared by some teachers within all contract types, although those teachers were in the minority within their contracts. Even if Roger (Perm) had some interest for more political action at the central<sup>36</sup> level of his union, that did not change his favourable opinion of the local level. Cheryl (Perm) also separated her feelings for the local from the provincial, “I’m in a great relationship with my district executive, because I’ve been around for so long and been doing the work for so long”. Cheryl (Perm) and Roger (Perm) both emphasized their feelings of support towards their local union which they seemed to be able to separate from the provincial union.

For Roger (Perm), his differentiation between the local and the provincial levels, and his separate feelings towards each convey somewhat of a mixed response. Yet, Roger (Perm) was still generally positive towards his local union. Even though he wished for forms of political action at the provincial level, he still had a favourable view of his local district. Roger’s (Perm) story highlights possible divisions between local and provincial which can influence union operations, restrict political action, and limit union democracy (Mancini, 2020).

Roger’s (Perm) perspective could also be related to his own experience as a teacher who worked with some form of occasional contract for 15 years and found the local union helpful

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Central’ is another term for the ‘provincial’ union.

throughout. However, there were also teachers like Eve (Perm), who, when she was an occasional teacher, felt “in the dark” about the workings of the union. When she got a permanent contract, she then got more involved with her local. I felt Eve’s (Perm) comments show an appreciation for the union as a source of community, as well as a source for professionally relevant and labour specific information.

I [got] pretty involved in the union just as far as attending meetings. I wanted to be when I was hired, because I just wanted to know what was going on, because the second year after my first year as a permanent teacher, the new government came in and slash, and I got bumped, and so, I lost half my contract, so for me it was important to be a part of it...I think as an LTO, I just didn't really have a very good understanding of the union in particular...it's separate union representation for OTs and for permanent teachers. And so, I think that I just didn't have a very good understanding of the union's role and what they could do for me or how they would protect me or defend me as an OT and as an LTO, so in that way, I felt a little bit on my own and in the dark...when I was hired permanently...I became involved in the union...I was probably the youngest person in the room. But that was appreciated by other union members...they were like, ‘we need you to be here because we have to make sure that the next gen of long-term teachers is also involved in the union’. (*Eve has a permanent contract*)

Eve’s (Perm) quote highlights that she saw the benefits to having a union and getting involved. Eve (Perm) wanted to get involved so that she could be better informed about the union and learn how they could “protect” and “defend” her. When teachers discussed involvement with the union, even if it was solely attending meetings, this was coded as ‘union work’. In addition to her union work, Eve (Perm) also points to the union as a useful resource for helping her to get a better understanding of her rights as a teacher. Eve’s (Perm) comments reveal potential hierarchies and divisions within her local union between educational labour contracts if occasional teachers are less likely to feel comfortable attending meetings. Eve (Perm) did not start participating with the union until she had a “permanent” contract.

Roger (Perm) and Eve’s (Perm) comments show that unions can function as important sources of workplace, social, and political information as well as support. Eve’s (Perm) desire to

“know what was going on” and to “be a part of it” was a result of not knowing what was going on as a teacher with an LTO contract. She became involved in her local district after experiencing getting “bumped” because the “new government came in and slash”, she “got bumped” and lost “half “of her “contract”. Concerns over politics and labour rights helped influence Eve (Perm) to get involved with the union.

However, support for the union did not always entail being involved with the union for occasional or permanent teachers. For some LTOs the underlying idea seemed to be that once they got a permanent contract, then they would be able to participate in the union more and be transparent about their participation. A few teachers with LTO contracts expressed concerns that getting involved with the union in various ways could make them look like a less desirable candidate to hire from the perspective of administrators. Experiencing this type of fear suggests that occasional contracts could partially function as management control mechanisms that can limit union participation and disrupt movement towards solidarity. Despite certain fears, there were still some teachers with LTO contracts who were very involved in their local unions, like Sabrina (LTO):

I don't think enough teachers, especially OTs and LTOs, voice their concerns because they are afraid of repercussions, of not being hired permanently...And that's the majority of who I've spoken to...it's a fear of not being hired because you are the one who is going to voice your opinion on a matter that should be brought up, but people just kind of sweep under the rug. So that's my concern, especially being part of the executive. I feel like I have to be careful about what I say and what I do, because in the end my goal is to get that permanent position. But I want to see what else can be done and where else OTs and LTOs can kind of stand up and be like, this is not OK. (*Sabrina has an LTO contract*)

Over half of LTOs had a positive view of their union. Many of the LTOs expressed positive views similar to Allison's (LTO), “The union, I feel very in sync with... So, I'm happy with that relationship. And I also appreciate that they look into things like how LTOs get hired and things like that that the board may not be looking for”. Like Allison (LTO), Sabrina (LTO),



is also representative of this positive union view and she saw the union as a possible space for political mobilization, social justice, and worker advocacy. Sabrina (LTO) did have concerns about negative “repercussions”, but she still chose to be involved with the executive. What seems to motivate Sabrina’s (LTO) involvement is that she sees the union as a space where “OTs and LTOs can...stand up and be like, this is not OK”. I felt Sabrina’s (LTO) work with the union executive and her belief in its potential were examples of positive feelings.

When Sabrina (LTO) says “I feel like I have to be careful about what I say and what I do, because in the end my goal is to get that permanent position” she’s revealing two contradictions within educational labour sectors. On the one hand, there are social perceptions that teaching jobs are “cushy” (Pulsford, 2019), but Sabrina’s (LTO) testimony suggests the opposite, she is unsure when she will attain secure work as a public secondary school teacher. On the other hand, there are progressive views that educational sectors should work towards promoting democratic practices and critical thinking (Giroux, 2010), which could connect to open, transparent, and non-fearful union involvement, however, this is limited in Sabrina’s (LTO) experience. Stemming from a belief in democratic practices and critical thinking would probably be the act of raising attention to inequities in the workplace, but Sabrina (LTO) does not feel completely safe doing that and the “majority” of OTs/LTOs she has spoken with, feel similar. Even if Sabrina (LTO) feels that there may be some limitations to what she can say while she is an occasional teacher, she still sees the union as a space where teachers could hopefully mobilize, support one another, and “stand up and be like, this is not OK”. Sabrina (LTO) had favourable views of the union because it is a space that gives her hope. Without the union, Sabrina (LTO) would not have an executive to sit on and not have a space where she thought

teachers with occasional contracts could “stand up”. For Sabrina (LTO), the union provides a space for her to advocate for herself and believe in collective possibilities.

Another teacher with an LTO contract, Barry (LTO), mentions the union fondly in how it treats him in comparison to the relationship with the school board he works for.

I found the union stewards in those schools to be really supportive and really helpful. Sometimes I've been able to ask them a question that's really not union related, and they can point me in the right direction simply because they just know everybody in the school. So, I do feel listened to and validated. You know, I'm not confident in my job security. But that's just simply because I'm an LTO, right? Nobody owes me anything. My contract for summer school expires at the end of this week, and then the board doesn't owe me anything at all, ever...I don't feel very secure at all. (*Barry has an LTO contract*)

Barry (LTO) finds the union stewards to “be really supportive and really helpful”. Barry (LTO) appreciates the ‘union help’ and seems to feel that his relationship with the union feels more constant because it exists between contracts, compared to his relationship with the board and his LTO and summer school contracts. Barry (LTO) feels that with the union there is a supportive network to help him navigate work which appears to provide a sense of solidarity.

Barry’s (LTO) experiences with getting ‘union help’ are evident in a few ways. First, Barry (LTO) feels some of the union stewards are “really supportive and really helpful”. Barry (LTO) also sees the stewards as “helpful” when it comes to specific school site information, “Sometimes I've been able to ask them a question that's really not union related, and they can point me in the right direction simply because they just know everybody in the school”. Barry’s (LTO) comments show that when union representatives are communicative and helpful, specifically about “not union related” but professional issues because “they just know everybody in the school” this can improve member perceptions. Ultimately, Barry (LTO) feels “listened to and validated” by his union which differs to how he feels about the school board who “doesn’t owe” him “anything at all, ever”.

Despite Barry (LTO) having a precarious contract, the ‘union help’ and his positive interactions with the union seemed to create a sense of solidarity that provided a positive counterbalance to feelings of insecurity with the board. Along with any sense of solidarity, Barry’s (LTO) local union offered a feeling of security, both of which were lacking in his relationship with the school board. In Barry’s (LTO) interview he also highlighted his support for social justice issues, and he was aware of the overlap between the history of the labour movement and social justice struggles. When teachers of any contract type expressed awareness of these historical, cultural, and political-economic connections with their union, they tended to be more favourable of their local union and unions in general. Mandy (OT) and Shelly (OT) also saw the connection with their union and “social justice” struggles and Mandy (OT) in particular felt that the past victories of the labour movement had created a semi-secure job, even for occasional teachers.

I really liked doing the union work and got involved in a whole bunch more social justice stuff. (*Shelly has an OT contract*)

You have a union, and you have a contract and so unless you really, really, really do something egregious, they can't just say goodbye. (*Mandy has an OT contract*)

Just under half of OTs had a favourable view of the union. When there were positive expressions from teachers with an OT contract, like with Shelly (OT) and Mandy (OT), it was largely because of their ‘union work’ and their comfort interacting with the union and feeling like they were a part of something bigger. Shelly’s (OT) statement reveals that ‘union work’ brought her personal enjoyment, a sense of involvement in an organization, and feelings of pride that the organization she is “involved” with, intersects with matters relating to “social justice stuff”. Shelly (OT) “liked doing the union work” and one of the reasons why she did it was because she was able to work on “social justice” causes. The general ‘union work’ and the specific “social

justice issues”, seemed like they provided Shelly (OT) and Mandy (OT) forms of support and purpose outside and inside their workplace. Doing ‘union work’ as an OT and having regular meetings and connections with other teachers can provide greater continuity and an overarching connection with colleagues despite having an occasional contract. Working on “social justice” causes can also provide a connection from the workplace to current issues, historical processes, and the larger world while embodying social movement unionist values. Ideas around “social justice” and connecting to the history of unions and the union movement in general, were recurring topics in many of the interviews.

Quite a few teachers interviewed were generally supportive of the union’s connection to labour history and the social justice and intersectional values that overlap with that history. In general, unions can be oriented towards or drift between ‘social movement unionism’ near one end of the union spectrum or ‘business model unionism’ close to the other (Ross, 2007, 2013; Silverman & Garver, 2022). Chapter 4 showed that teachers unions in Ontario may have their origins closer to the business model end of the spectrum but at different historical moments they have shown signs of moving towards the social movement end. Whereas Chapter 2 showed that notions of teacher professionalism and teacher unionism have a long and interconnected history. It was when teachers felt their union was functioning in ways that connect with the values of business model unionism that negative feelings towards the union were expressed. When the perceptions were that teacher unionism and being a professional teacher unionist was aligned with and doing “social justice stuff”, then teachers of all contract types expressed positive feelings towards the union even if they did not participate in ‘union work’.

Shelly (OT), like Mandy (OT) also participates in ‘union work’ and mentions another aspect about unions that a few teachers expressed, and that is an awareness of the security that

union protection can provide through a collective agreement (CA). Mandy (OT) draws attention to a controversial issue with teachers' unions specifically and that is their ability to protect members of all contract types from being fired or wrongfully dismissed by highlighting the security benefits that can come from 'union help'<sup>37</sup>. The role of teachers' unions to protect teachers who have been accused of wrongdoing is something that a few teachers expressed negative feelings towards. This suggests that among those who felt this way, one of the duties of teachers' unions, member protection, may also reinforce negative teacher stereotypes. Another issue that arises from Mandy's (OT) comments is that member protections might not be applied equitably between contract types and may reinforce the contract status hierarchy.

An event in a southern Ontario school board at the end of the 2021/22 school year questions the perception that "they can't just say goodbye"<sup>38</sup> applies to teachers from all contract types equally. The incident problematizes Mandy's (OT) assertion that "unless you really, really, really do something egregious, they can't just say goodbye". The teacher had an LTO contract and the situation they experienced raises the question: if the teacher had a permanent contract would they have been said "goodbye" to?

Scenarios of union protection like the one Mandy (OT) mentions that contrast with the experience of the teacher with the LTO contract, illustrates two elements relating to concepts

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<sup>37</sup> Research shows that it is a myth that teachers unions overprotect bad teachers (Han, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Near the end of the 2021/22 school year a teacher with an LTO contract was removed at first temporarily, and then permanently from their job teaching an online grade three class. The teacher was accused of wrongdoing by one parent for showing a video during class about gender identity. The film is on the National Film board list for educators and is approved for the age group that the teacher was showing the film to. The teacher was cursed at and misgendered on social media by the parents of a student in their class and was also visited by the police and warned not to post anything about the parents on social media even though the teacher said that they never posted anything. This teacher was not protected from being removed from their class or the school, however, they were protected from removal from the board. (McCullough, K. July 20, 2022, The Hamilton Spectator)

stemming from Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy'. On the one hand, Mandy (OT) paints an image of an organization within society whose members are protected from false accusations and/or the whims of management which also comes with negative stereotypes. On the other hand, the teacher who had the LTO contract might not have received the same degree of protections as a teacher with a permanent contract, or an inner group member. Pollock (2009), Chalikakis (2012), Mindzak (2016), and Yearwood (2021) have all argued that there is a teacher labour contract status hierarchy with occasional contracts below permanent contracts. If there is a status hierarchy based on contract type, then it is possible those at different levels of the hierarchy experience different levels of protection. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, having teachers with different contracts represented by the same union could have benefits in size and strength but also have divisive aspects like when groups lower in the hierarchy do not feel like equals, which limits union solidarity.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a positive view of their union**

More teachers with LTO and OT contracts had positive views of the union than teachers with permanent contracts. Out of the permanent contract teachers, three had a positive view of the union, but they all focused on their local union. Roger (Perm) even differentiated his feelings between his local and the provincial or central union. These teachers found their local union to be a supportive community, an organization that looked out for their interests, and a resource for information about their rights and employment contract. These were also some of the reasons why more than half of the LTOs and just under half of the OTs had positive views of their union. Along with feeling positive towards their union because they were a resource for information and a protective body for their work, a few of the LTOs and OTs also mentioned that they associated the union with social justice issues and that added to their positive view. The more favorable

views of the union from precarious teachers run counter to Standing's (2011) points about precarious workers being critical of unions and Mindzak's (2016) participants that had a "deep mistrust" or "flawed understanding" (Mindzak, 2016, p.179) of organized labour. In addition to the OTs and LTOs positive views of their union because of the association with social justice causes, many of their positive views came from seeing the union as a helpful resource to help them through their career as professional teachers and to eventually get hired as a permanent teacher.

### **6.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a *mixed* view of their union**

There were similarities in the mixed views across the different contracts. In the mixed views towards the union there were frustrations along with ambivalence. The teachers with mixed views from all contract types felt that there were communication issues with their union, concerns that the union could not do much to help their individual situation, and that maybe the union was not working in their best interest. However, unlike the teachers with negative views about the union who expressed similar issues, the teachers with mixed views seemed to balance their criticisms with a passive acceptance, some union engagement, or a willingness to engage, and/or an openness to seeing how things could be better.

I pitched in to support us staying on strike... A few times when things would happen, I would go to ask the union and they essentially just felt like they never really were solving any problems. But I guess, again, like the whole hiring system is supposed to be fair and it's actually more the union than the board. I don't know. They always blame each other. (*Alyssa has a permanent contract*)

I have a love-hate relationship with the union, I think it's important that they exist. I don't necessarily want to be super involved... I've never really gone to the union about anything. I've asked my union rep questions, but more about employment stuff... I guess nothing's ever come up that I felt was significant enough that I needed to address somebody other than just kind of gripe about it. I think my instinct, it would depend on the issue, I guess my instinct would typically be if it's not about another teacher, my

instinct would just be to go to my admin. If it's a concern with another teacher, I guess I would go to my union rep. (*Nadia has a permanent contract*)

Nadia (Perm) and Alyssa (Perm) saw the benefits of being in a unionized workplace, however, they also had criticisms. Their mixed expressions reflect some uncertainty regarding the role of teachers' unions in their local area and how exactly they worked with or against the school board and larger system policies. Alyssa (Perm) seemed like she supported her union in labour action, "I pitched in to support us staying on strike", but "felt like they [the union] really were never solving any problems" and Nadia (Perm) expressed a "love-hate relationship with the union".

Alyssa's (Perm) uncertainties about her local unions ability to solve "any problems" may reflect a lack of awareness of the power imbalance between labour and management, in favour of management, that has been getting more one sided over recent decades. The historic labour-management imbalance within public sector education has been exacerbated in the neoliberal era with the help of New Public Management (NPM) which is an approach that favours management objectives within public systems (Tolofari, 2005; Wilkins et al., 2019). However, Alyssa's (Perm) comments may also connect to a militant expectation regarding a proactive role that unions could play when fighting for members' interests. For example, during labour action Alyssa (Perm) did "support...staying on strike". Yet, aside from this statement, Alyssa (Perm) did not express a desire for militant labour action but had what seemed like more of a general frustration with the union. Alyssa (Perm) was bothered that union and management "blame each other", but possibly places more blame on the union when she says that "the whole hiring system is supposed to be fair and it's actually more the union than the board". Alyssa's (Perm) frustration that the union is supposed to oversee a "fair" "hiring system", but she feels they do not, could reflect two lines of decontextualized thinking. The first is that of the historical state



sanctioned origins of the public education system, teachers' unions, and notions of teacher professionalism on the one hand, and on the other hand is the generally limited union negotiating powers within a neoliberal capitalist political economy. School boards in Ontario are part of the governmental system that creates and allocates resources, this form of state power is the framing and influential context that public sector teachers unions negotiate and make demands within. For example, if the Ministry of Education were to increase funding and set a policy to lower class sizes to no more than 10 students per class province wide, this could greatly improve the union's ability to oversee a "fair" "hiring system".

Turning to Nadia (Perm), her explicit appreciation of unions, "I think it's important that they exist ", could connect with an awareness that they historically have helped to 'raise the floor' (Keune, 2021) for workers. Still, Nadia (Perm) does not want to "be super involved" with the union. Nadia's (Perm) sentiment relates with other teachers who valued the union but may not want to be actively involved. Nadia (Perm) sees the union as important but not something that is personally useful to her unless she has an "issue" with "another teacher". The perspective of her local as being personally useful to her in specific circumstances and not one she associates with being helpful for regarding curriculum advice, professional growth, community organizing, or political information, could point to a perception that her local has a 'business' unionist function as opposed to an 'intersectional' or 'social movement' one. Nadia's (Perm) lack of involvement might also indicate a lack of knowledge into all the activities, supports, and areas of involvement that her local might offer. Nadia's (Perm) lack of involvement does not prevent part of her from feeling "love" towards the union, but it could be related to her "hate" of certain aspects of the union which may prevent her from getting "super involved". Nadia (Perm) and Alyssa's (Perm) seemingly ambivalent feelings towards the union could be related to well

informed opinions, however, they may also be representative of a lack of knowledge into the specifics of their local union district, the history of their union, and its role in the larger political economy. If the latter, unions could mitigate a lack of member awareness with a variety of member communication initiatives, like informative workshops, movie and speaker nights, regular email contact updates, and daily social media posting that highlight historical, cultural, political-economical, and policy issues that unions in general and teachers' unions specifically overlap with. This could address some of the issues that Nadia (Perm) and Alyssa (Perm) raise along with issues brought up by Desiree (LTO) and Joseph (LTO).

The need for more effective union-to-membership-to-larger community communication and information strategies could help to not only increase awareness but also help with member engagement. Teachers with precarious LTO contracts, like Desiree (LTO) and Joseph (LTO) who are discussed next, might already feel detached from their employer and maybe even their union because of their temporary contract. Desiree (LTO) and Joseph's (LTO) statements could provide some insight into ways that their local union might not be living up to the expectations of some of their members. If so, this failure could be negatively influencing member solidarity and creating mixed feelings from teachers who might otherwise be actively involved with their union.

I sometimes think our union is trying, but it's not really trying, like, you know. It is what it is...I wish that I had got an email from our union explaining the situation<sup>39</sup> because we always get emails about every situation that happens. Right? But we didn't get anything from this. So, this is very unfortunate because...racism still happens. (*Desiree has an LTO contract*)

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<sup>39</sup> The “situation” was a disagreement that occurred during Desiree’s (LTO) local union virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) between some members who identify as racialized and their supporters, and some members of the local union leadership over what some members felt were problematic uses of Robert's Rules of Order. The union was accused of silencing one of the racialized members who was raising the issue. According to Desiree (LTO) there was no communication about the event afterwards to members that did not attend.

Desiree (LTO) was unsure if her union was “trying” to represent the interests of all members or if it was “not really trying”. A lack of communication from her union left uncertainties for Desiree (LTO) about their commitments to anti-racism and equity issues. Desiree (LTO) had a mixed response about her union because of her uncertainty with the union's efforts to address a racist incident that was mixed with thinking that “sometimes” the “union is trying” but “not really trying”. Desiree’s (LTO) uncertainty was reinforced when her local union left the allegedly racist incident unacknowledged in communications to the membership.

Rhetorically, the secondary teachers’ unions in Ontario, specifically the OSSTF, support the concept of anti-racism and their social media communications indicate that they are supportive of decolonization, diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. There have also been some groups created within the teachers’ unions, provincially and locally, to help address these issues. However, some of the teachers that I interviewed who identified as racialized, like Desiree (LTO), questioned the authenticity of these initiatives and the reality behind the rhetoric. Some of the codes applied to Desiree’s (LTO) response were, ‘iron law of oligarchy’, ‘role of unions’, and ‘racism’ because those represented some of the stronger underlying issues that influenced her response.

Desiree’s (LTO) points about the regular union emails but the lack of response to issues of racism highlight an intersection between the ‘role of unions’, ‘union help’, and member/community communications. If Desiree’s (LTO) union was aligned firmly to the values of social movement unionism, then issues of racism would be addressed in a transparent manner and communicated to members. Yet, the issue Desiree (LTO) describes was not addressed sufficiently for her and this was unusual because as Desiree (LTO) says, “we always get emails about every situation that happens...But we didn't get anything from this”. The lack of

communication around a racist incident or even a perceived racist incident during a union meeting might point to Desiree's (LTO) union as functioning like a 'business union' that is primarily serving management and human resource goals, as opposed to an intersectional 'social movement union' that connects the union with broader systemic and cultural issues.

In addition to comments around racism within the union from Desiree (LTO), there were some related issues that surfaced over the course of my research for this project that were discussed in Chapter 3. The first issue was when I inquired about obtaining data related to the membership from one of the Ontario secondary teachers' unions, the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation (OSSTF). When I asked the union for data into the numbers of racialized members, I was informed that as of 2020, that data did not exist. When there is limited or no data on racialized members and communications do not address issues of racism when they occur, then the social movement unionist language that OSSTF uses in support of anti-racist, decolonization, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts might sound superficial to some of the members who identify as racialized, like Desiree (LTO). Additionally, this also connects back to the history of educational labour in Ontario discussed in Chapter 4 where some teachers who identified as racialized did not always have the same levels of access to the certain areas of the educational system nor have the same degree of employment protections that other white members benefited from.

The second issue came from my online survey and questions regarding levels of precarity amongst teachers. Of the teachers that finished the survey, there was a higher proportion of teachers who identified as racialized who were precarious and working with either an LTO or OT contract, compared to teachers who identified as racialized who were not precarious and had a permanent contract. Both issues along with Desiree's (LTO) comments suggest there may be a

form of polarization in the union between members who identify as racialized and are maybe more likely to be precarious and those members who have secure permanent contracts and are more likely to be white. A polarization between workers with secure and insecure contracts that also involves issues of racial and socio-economic identity that is not explicitly addressed by the union might also influence efforts towards solidarity and political mobilization. Turning to Joseph's (LTO) comments, they represent another example of polarization between local union leadership and teachers with a permanent contract on one pole and teachers with an occasional contract on the other that could possibly be addressed with better communication methods.

I've always kind of looked askance a bit at the union. There have been times where it's been helpful. There've been times which are less helpful. I've kind of come to... feel like the union's number one priority is the union... someone who taught high school when I was a student now works full time for the union and they encouraged me to come out to meetings and check stuff out and get involved and things like that. And I have never been in a room with people who so palpably disliked each other as when I was at the union meeting. I could feel it like if I stood between this person and that person, I was going to get hurt...I've never felt confident in job security...one thing they would always ask me, what do you want as a teacher? What is it you're looking for? I said I want to get a contract; I want to get a full-time job. But it seemed to be that, well, if I was getting LTOs consistently, then the occasional teachers union was satisfied, like, well, 'you're getting LTOs, you know, it's the same as a full-time job.' No, it's not. It's not the same as a full-time job. (*Joseph has an LTO contract*)

Joseph's (LTO) comments may seem more negative than mixed. However, his semi-regular attendance of union meetings and his close relationships with active members did not make it seem that Joseph (LTO) was entirely negative towards the union. Joseph's (LTO) comments point to issues around the 'role of unions', his feeling of a lack of "security", and how his local union official communicates with him. Joseph's (LTO) conversation with the union representative also highlights how the 'iron law of oligarchy' and insider groups can function as a polarizing organizational dynamic within unions. Joseph (LTO) seems to experience this type

of dynamic when he talks with the official who he feels is dismissive and possibly because of experiences like this, Joseph (LTO) has “always kind of looked askance a bit at the union”.

Joseph (LTO) has found the union “helpful” at times but has not overly enjoyed the times he attended meetings or the responses he has received for his questions about how to attain permanent contract employment. When Joseph (LTO) says, “I have never been in a room with people who so palpably disliked each other as when I was at the union meeting...”, he could be drawing attention to a lively democratic culture within the local district where differences are allowed, communication is open and honest, and lively debates happen. However, it could also point to a union culture where disagreements and inequities are not addressed, and status hierarchies are left unquestioned. Joseph (LTO) does not specify which one of these scenarios he experienced in his local, but his experiences do suggest that he may have experienced the latter and felt like an outsider to various active ‘insider’ members of the union.

As a teacher with an LTO contract who wants a permanent contract Joseph (LTO) has “never felt confident in job security”. Joseph (LTO) expressed frustration that a local leader of the union he talked with, felt that occasional contracts which were precarious but full time, were equivalent to a permanent contract, “it seemed to me that, well, if I was getting LTOs consistently, then the occasional teachers union was satisfied, like, ‘well, you're getting LTOs, you know, it's the same as a full-time job’. No, it's not. It's not the same as a full-time job”. Joseph’s (LTO) situation with the union raises the issue that there may be problems in local union districts whose leadership is fine with the current status quo for their occasional membership, even if those members want a permanent contract.

Joseph (LTO) also makes the distinction that his local has a separate bargaining unit for occasional teachers. If an occasional teachers’ local, or even a combined permanent and

occasional teachers' local, were to take the status quo position that Joseph (LTO) describes, then that could create divisions within the union between those teachers that are okay with working occasional contracts indefinitely and those teachers that want a permanent contract. This matter could be made worse when the positions of all parties are not clear to each other. This dynamic is discussed further in the section on negative expressions towards the union.

Most of the teachers with an OT or LTO contract who I interviewed wanted a permanent contract. This raises questions like, what is the 'role of a union', specifically a teacher's union, if some of the local leadership is okay with the status quo of teachers that want permanent contracts working with occasional contracts? If more teachers are working with occasional contracts than in the recent past in Ontario secondary public education, do their local districts recognize this trend? If so, to what degree? Joseph's (LTO) experience raises the possibility that some teachers in his local district are somewhat unsympathetic to his full-time work with LTO contracts and equate that with a permanent contract, but Joseph (LTO) clearly states his disagreement on that matter, "No, it's not. It's not the same as a full-time job". In addition to matters relating to the polarization between teachers and the role of unions, Joseph's (LTO) relationship with his district local, also raises questions around 'bargaining units' and if occasional teachers are better served with separate or combined bargaining units and how either or, would shape their experiences with their union. Shoshanna (OT) is involved with her local and along with Debbie (OT), whose specific local union membership dynamic is unknown, provides an example of mixed feelings towards the union from OTs.

I do a lot of things in the union. I'm a part of a racialized group and the health and safety representative in the union...I became a part of the BIPOC advisory group, and I am a part of the environmental advisory work group. So yeah, I'm doing a lot of things so that, you know, I get more and more information about policies and procedures. And that way I become a lot more competent...I personally feel that we need to change...the older people, the people who are sitting on the union board. Yeah, we need to bring them down

and change them. We need to have teachers who can really influence the board because these people are not able to influence the board members. (*Shoshanna has an OT contract*)

Shoshanna (OT) expressed negative feelings about some union members, but she also expressed positive feelings towards the union throughout the interview, which I felt created a mixed response from her. Her negative feelings were mostly towards executive union members who are not having enough “influence” on school “board members”. Shoshanna (OT) had criticisms of the union that possibly point to an ‘iron law of oligarchy’ situation where an older ‘inner’ group is not acting in the interests of the membership, or if they are, they are ineffective at it. But Shoshanna (OT) also saw the union as a place where teachers can “really influence the board”. Like the positive responses by other teachers, it was often when the union was seen as a place to struggle for social justice and change in the workplace and/or the larger world that feelings were positive or mixed, but not negative.

Like Shoshanna (OT), Debbie’s (OT) comments below show that she felt that having a union to represent her was a benefit to her as a worker. Unlike Shoshanna (OT), Debbie (OT) was skeptical about her union’s ability to be used for self-advocacy or to pursue justice for aggressive behavior towards her from a colleague. However, she did seek union guidance about her issues with quadmester scheduling. Debbie’s (OT) first comments (a) are in relation to the union help she sought at the start of the pandemic where she had issues about working conditions. However, her second comment (b) is in relation to an incident with a colleague where she was reluctant to go to the union.

(a) I've contacted the union before actually. So, like especially just with the stuff going on this year... (*Debbie has an OT contract*)

(b) I knew that going to the union...maybe at some point they'd have to take it to administration, I guess, or like you think that the admin would find out. And then it's like maybe someone doesn't want to hire you because it looks as if you can't work well with...other teachers, I guess. (*Debbie has an OT contract*)



Debbie's (OT) awareness that she could turn to the union about the quadmester issue was seen as positive, but her fear that her union rights might not be looked upon favourably by management if she reported the issue with her colleague, led me to classify her expressions about the union as mixed. Debbie (OT) does not hesitate to contact the union over a labour issue that does not involve a colleague, however, she does not feel the same when the issue relates to a colleague who is higher in the contract status pyramid than she is. When Debbie (OT) wanted to seek 'union help' for an incident where a colleague yelled at her, she was concerned "that the admin would find out". Debbie (OT) thought that if she went to the union it might end up where "someone doesn't want to hire you" and administrators might think that it "looks as if" she "can't work well with...other teachers". This raises the question: Could Debbie's (OT) cautious feelings towards seeking help from her union be reduced if she was not concerned that "someone doesn't want to hire" her and she had a permanent contract instead of an occasional one and there was no contract hierarchy? For Debbie (OT) and Shoshanna (OT), the union, and the type of contract they have appear to influence their experiences with colleagues in different ways. Despite having an occasional contract, Shoshanna's (OT) belief in the possibilities and potential strength of the union created a different sense of possibility when compared to Debbie's (OT) concerns about negative repercussions if she were to pursue what was possible against a colleague higher in status. However, she did not feel this way when the issue was the quadmester hiring and it did not involve a more secure and higher status contract colleague.

Shoshanna's (OT) occasional contract did not prevent her from getting involved in the union and discussing issues that concerned her. However, Shoshanna (OT) never indicated that she experienced being yelled at by a colleague, which is a harmful and traumatic act and may have influenced her in similar ways that it did Debbie (OT). Even though Shoshanna (OT) was

involved with the union and Debbie (OT) was not, there were similar ways that she and Debbie (OT) both felt towards the union. For example, they both felt forms of marginalization as individual outsiders from either the union as a whole (Debbie) when it related to fellow members, or groups within the union (Shoshanna).

To help members not feel marginalized, improved forms of communication with members could help Shoshanna (OT) know whether or not her local is trying its best as well as give Debbie (OT) some ideas as to how she can seek justice for her experience with workplace harassment without facing retribution from her employer, the school board. These efforts would also most likely help Shoshanna (OT) and Debbie (OT) feel more solidarity with their union. Occasional teachers like Debbie (OT) and Shoshanna (OT) could possibly feel more supported by their locals if the locals were maybe clearer and more accessible about their functions and capabilities.

**Summary of teachers under different contracts who had a mixed view about their union.**

Within the mixed views, many of the teachers from all contract types were generally supportive of the idea that they had a union. However, I also inferred from these stories that some teachers felt the union could be clearer, more accessible, more empathetic, or more regular in its communication and more open when listening and communicating to members, especially members with occasional contracts who may already feel disconnected from the union, or like lower ranking members. All the teachers with LTO and OT contracts that expressed mixed feelings towards the union wanted to be hired for a permanent contract and saw the union as a possible obstacle or enabler towards these goals. The teachers with permanent contracts did not have those concerns. However, one permanent teacher, Alyssa (Perm), did have the perception that in her board the local union influenced hiring for jobs within the board. Opposite to Alyssa's

(Perm) views, there were a few permanent and occasional teachers who questioned the unions' ability to pursue matters and its power in relation to the board. Issues of communication seemed to prevent some of these teachers from feeling more engaged with the union and maybe not always aware of all the effort it makes to address systemic inequities or the obstacles preventing it from doing so.

### 6.2.3 Teachers under different contracts with a negative view of their union

Approximately a quarter or less of teachers in each contract group had negative feelings towards their union. Permanent contract teachers like Maureen (Perm) and Melissa (Perm) had significant concerns that their union was not working in their best interest which influenced the solidarity they felt with the union. Maureen's (Perm) comments suggest she has somewhat of a social movement unionist perspective as to how she feels her union should operate but she feels that it does not.

I'll be honest. I'm beyond fed up with our union. I went to our [annual meeting] a couple of years ago. I could not believe the amount of alcohol there...if you're in a voluntary position for the union, you have pizza dinners, whatever, you're going up to the office once a month. But if you're like the school rep for the union, it's like dinner plus wine...I cannot tell you, like, how much money is spent on alcohol...I have a colleague, she's a single mom of four kids...how amazing it would have been if the union had a little fund for people who are financially struggling, another colleague with two autistic children had to sell their house. (*Maureen has a permanent contract*)

Maureen (Perm) feels that her union should avoid spending money on “alcohol” and instead have “a little fund for people who are financially struggling”. Historically, there have been organized teachers that have worked to help with the financial resources of their members. Organized teachers in Ontario fought for the establishment of the Ontario teachers' superannuation fund in 1917 (Lamoureux, 2008; Reynolds & Smaller, 1996, p. 47). However, those resources would not help teachers prior to retirement and Maureen's (Perm) concerns

connect with teachers struggling while they are working in their careers. Another issue that overlaps with Maureen's (Perm) concern is the recurring issue of social movement unionism compared with business model unionism. The origins of public sector teachers' unions, or federations, in Ontario appear to be more towards the business model of unions and as discussed in Chapter 4, were created with state approval (Smaller, 1997; 2004; 2015a). However, they have also had organic and radical activist moments in their history too (Hanson, 2021).

For effective member information and public relations purposes, public sector teachers' unions should be more explicit and vocal about the historical contradictions and tensions that they exist within. Connecting this to Maureen's (Perm) story for example, there could be an organizational interest for the union to function like a neoliberal professional association that encourages socializing and networking among members at events which may involve alcohol. On the other hand, there may be a perception that because historically unions provided many welfare functions (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 1999) that this should be their primary function, as Maureen (Perm) might think. It is possible that both functions could also co-exist. Communication strategies might be able to show how both can possibly function together. Addressing member and community concerns about the contradictions like this, could open up conversations as to how unions may find ways to make events more inclusive and that maybe the two types of functioning are not mutually exclusive. Maureen (Perm) seemed to feel a lack of solidarity towards her union because she had different perceptions about what values and practices it should follow. Maureen's (Perm) negative feelings towards the union came from not feeling in line with the values she felt they were representing. Likewise, Melissa (Perm), who worked with an LTO contract after having a permanent contract and moving boards, felt the union was not representing the values she felt that it should.

I have never felt so disempowered...I felt like the union plays a huge role in that disempowerment... I've had a couple of principals who were like 'I want to hire you, but I can't because the union won't let me...Once you resign [from one board], that's it. No more job security. You're out...And the union [at my new board] was like, 'the board is not in a position to hire, you're not going to get hired... 'you're just going to be playing these rotating LTOs until the board is in a position to hire' ... Yeah, but not once did I feel like the union had my back...there's nobody sticking up for occasional teachers and LTOs. (*Melissa has a permanent contract*)

Melissa's (Perm) feelings of being "disempowered" and feeling that "the union plays a huge role in that disempowerment", encouraged me to classify her experience as a negative one. Melissa's (Perm) experience as a teacher with a permanent contract who worked as an occasional teacher offers extra insight into her statement, "there's nobody sticking up for occasional teachers or LTOs", which appears to include the union. Melissa's (Perm) comments suggest she feels there is a lack of union solidarity with occasional teachers that influences their job security and feelings of professional autonomy. When Melissa (Perm) says, "not once did I feel the union had my back" she is showing that she doesn't feel the union cared that she was insecure and that influenced her feelings of solidarity towards them.

Melissa (Perm) also discussed an issue in her interview that was left out of the above quote and touches on issues around solidarity and security between newer and more senior occasional teachers. Prior to the recent contract negotiations in her district, Melissa's (Perm) board required teachers with LTO contracts to work continuously from one LTO contract directly to the other for them to retain their seniority. If a teacher had a break between LTO contracts, they would lose their seniority. Addressing this issue in bargaining created tensions and polarization amongst colleagues within the union. When the option to end the continuous service requirement came about, it came with the caveat that all previous continuous service would be erased. For example, a teacher with LTO contracts who had amassed a few years of seniority, would start over again with the new contract and lose their years of service. This

created two interest groups within the teachers that had OT/LTO contracts. One group being newer teachers to the board who would benefit because they would not lose any seniority. They were against another group of “one hundred and seventy-five other voices” who stood to lose years of seniority that they had accrued. If more members in precarious positions are competing for permanent contracts this could lead to divisions over future collective agreement adjustments like the one Melissa (Perm) described where some members benefit from maintaining the things as are and others stand to lose by continuing with certain practices and norms.

Meredith (LTO) and Michelle (LTO) are two teachers with LTO contracts that could also be disadvantaged if their districts were to continue with the status quo.

For my board, our branch of the bargaining unit, I won't lie is kind of crap... because my branch of the union I feel is useless. I feel the board actually listens to me better than any of my union reps... there's this group of cronies...career OTs, and it's very much catering to them...they want all the benefits of contracts without the actual workload of the contract. And if you're someone that's working towards a [permanent] contract, they kind of just dismiss you or don't answer your questions. Like I had questions about maternity leave about a year ago and I actually had to email them five times for them to just send me the documents and say I 'have a read'. Like, that's great. I thought that's the whole point of having a union rep to help me decipher this. (*Meredith has an LTO contract*)

Meredith (LTO) points out that there are divisions within her local bargaining units, and that she is not overly approving of her branch, “our branch of the bargaining unit, I won't lie is kind of crap”. Meredith (LTO) has a concern that the OT branch representatives are not always representing their members who do not want to work as occasional teachers. About a quarter of all occasional teachers (both LTO and OT combined) felt that there were times when the group representing OTs in their district, were upholding an outdated status quo. This perspective is one where union leaders saw OTs as people that wanted to be OTs, or even if they were getting regular work, that was then considered “the same” as secure work, like in Joseph’s (LTO) experience.

Meredith (LTO) addresses the issue of divisions within her local that arise from different perspectives about OTs and how permanent contract seeking OTs can be ‘dismissed’, “if you're someone that's working towards a contract, they kind of just dismiss you or don't answer your questions”. Looking at government data, there are more teachers with LTO contracts in the late 2010s than in the early 2010s, so there is an increasing number of teachers working with occasional contracts from ten years earlier (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022). In Meredith’s (LTO) district it comes across that there is a more established group in her OT branch that may see the OT (and LTO) contracts functioning the same way in the present as they have in the recent past, where people want to be OTs or if they were LTOs who wanted permanent contracts, they would eventually get them. According to Meredith (LTO), in her local, there is a group with this outlook and they have formed somewhat of an inner circle of “cronies” who are supposed to help members with navigating the bureaucracy of the school board and gaining familiarity with their contract and benefits, but Meredith (LTO) feels they are “useless”. The ‘iron law of oligarchy’ and ‘role of unions’ codes were applied to these comments by Meredith (LTO). Questions around the role of the unions are raised when Meredith (LTO) describes how she was treated when she sought information about maternity leave:

I had questions about maternity leave for about a year. And I actually had to email them five times for them to just send me the documents and say that I ‘have a read’. Like, that's great. I thought...the whole point of having a union rep was to help me decipher this?  
*(Meredith has an LTO contract)*

Stemming from Meredith’s (LTO) experience with her union that she feels is not working in her interests, are two recurring questions that arose from analyzing the interviews: what is the role of public sector teacher unions in a neoliberal political economy? And especially, what is the role for occasional teachers’ locals, combined or separate, if the role of occasional teaching is changing and many occasional teachers want a permanent contract? The different interests of the

teachers with different contract types and the polarization that can occur from this dynamic within a union could create challenges for union solidarity, particularly during times of labour action. An example of polarization within the membership that can create challenges to solidarity can also be seen with Michelle's (LTO) comments.

The way that the union has treated a lot of occasional teachers is despicable...They only cared about the contract teachers...they only look out for themselves, and they have this image of, I don't know, a professional with some false professionalism? Because they're so bureaucratic...With the strike in February of 2020, they [OSSTF] were telling occasional teachers who haven't worked...and have no money to meet at random places across [The School District] ...they're asking my boyfriend to go to a place... And while he's able to do so, I was thinking about other OTs that wouldn't be able to do that because they wouldn't be able to afford it...when I brought this up to the union President, he said, 'well, when I was your age and there was a strike...I was counting change to get onto the GO train'. And I laughed. And he's like, you think this is funny? And I said, well, were you ten thousand dollars in school debt? And he was like 'what'? I said, were you living at home with your parents? He's like, 'Oh'. And I was like, 'oh, no, sorry, were you at home taking care of your parents?' ... I'm not bringing this up because I'm a spoiled thing...all I suggested to him was a bus. I said, could they go to the schools that they're closest to? Maybe be a nice person and offer a bus? (*Michelle has an LTO contract*)

Michelle's (LTO) quote shows she might feel disconnected from individual union members, like her local President. Michelle's (LTO) experiences entering the teaching profession seemed quite different from those of her local President. Michelle (LTO) felt her experiences with precarity as a newer teacher who is recently out of school in "ten thousand dollars" debt and "living at home" with her "parents" were not the same as those of her President who "was counting change to get onto the GO train". Michelle (LTO) felt that her precarious experience was different from that of teachers who entered the profession years before her, and she questioned the type of "professionalism" that her union may be oriented towards.

Like other teachers with OT or LTO contracts who expressed negative feelings towards the union and felt that the union should play a different 'role' than it currently does, Michelle (LTO) felt that her district should be following a different model of "professionalism". As



discussed in Chapter 2, the term ‘professionalism’ has many meanings and Michelle (LTO) was not specific in clarifying her use of the term ‘professionalism’. However, based on some of her responses, Michelle’s (LTO) version of union ‘professionalism’ might align with ‘social movement unionism’ (Ross, 2013).

Some of Michelle’s (LTO) criticisms of the union were that they are “so bureaucratic” and “they only look out for themselves”. This language relates to negative union stereotypes, and it could be possible to infer that Michelle (LTO) felt that she and her partner were abandoned by a larger “bureaucratic” system that the union was a part of (Keskula & Sanchez, 2019). Also, when Michelle (LTO) says that “they only look out for themselves”, this could point to the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ concept and “themselves” is the inner privileged group. As much as these are negative union stereotypes, they also resonate with some of Michelle’s (LTO) direct interactions with her district. Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT) also have negative feelings toward the union that similarly connect with feeling like an outsider to an insider group.

Job security, this should be in the forefront of OSSTFs concerns, but instead, all I've gotten so far is lip service to the point that I'm super frustrated...I find it ridiculous that the union supports people making more money when they have more experience, because the suggestion is that experience matters. But when it comes to job security or hiring or anything, not only does it not matter, but it's the opposite. If you give special consideration to newer teachers, the more I do for the board, the more of a detriment it is...that's sickening. That's disgusting...The union, the union? I feel as though they've failed me grossly... When Regulation 274 came out, I was upset and... I talked to somebody in the union...They said, ‘send an email with all of your concerns.’ And so, I...just hashed out a good list of ideas to bring to the table. And I sent it off...a week or two later the union happened to be at the school. So, I said, ‘hey, were you able to look at that list I sent you?’...the response I got was ‘some people think we have a magic wand’, it wasn't ‘no, we weren't able to help you’, it was ‘you're a moron to think that we could or would do anything to help you’. (*Melvin has an OT contract*)

The union has said that they can't do anything about the hiring process because whatever happens, happens in the interview... And the permanent teachers are never going to go on strike for the occasionals...but it is expected that the occasionals are to go on strike for the permanent teachers.... I saw the union as ineffective...I was very disappointed. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT) both expressed frustrations around the hiring process. Some of Melvin's (OT) concerns involve what he sees as contradictions around job seniority. These issues emerged while Reg. 274 was being used to guide school board hiring practices<sup>40</sup> that led him to feeling “super frustrated” with his union. Layla’s (OT) feelings that her local district was “ineffective”, also relates to some contradictions that she feels are present in how teachers with permanent contracts view issues of solidarity when it comes to their interests that may not carry over in their support of OTs interests. Connecting comments by others who had negative views towards their union to Layla (OT) and Melvin’s (OT) criticisms about forms of polarization within their locals, helps to shine some light on a degree of inequity within a rhetorically equity seeking organization.

Melvin (OT)) also has a concern over what he feels is a contradiction. The contradiction is around what he feels is the unions support for the idea that years of professional “experience” should result in higher wages for teachers with a permanent contract because that means they are a better teacher, but similar logic is not used for occasional teachers who want a permanent contract. If more years of experience translate to a material reward reflected in a salary with benefits for teachers with a permanent contract, why do OTs who want permanent contracts, who have received good evaluations, have not had any professional complaints, and have been teaching for years, not receive more recognition or access to some form of job security and benefits?

One possible answer to the question could exist within a stereotype. From some of the interviews it seemed that there is a negative stereotype around teachers who were working with

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<sup>40</sup> In 2020 the Conservative government in Ontario removed Reg. 274 because they claimed administrators were saying it prevented them from hiring the best candidates for the job.

occasional contracts for many years and that they were doing so because they were ‘not good enough’ to get a permanent contract. Shane (Perm) expressed this sentiment when he suggested that the people not comfortable as OTs or in LTO because they feel they might not get hired permanently, compared to those that are comfortable and believe they will get a secure contract, was for a good reason, “I find people get comfortable if they've gotten a couple LTOs...And the people that weren't...there's a good reason, right?” Shane (Perm) seems to be implying that teachers who are not happy in LTOs are because they know they will not get permanent jobs and that is justified because they are not good teachers, “there’s a good reason for that, right?” However, this perspective becomes questionable when you consider that some of those teachers who go back and forth between LTO and OT contracts have been working with them for years consistently. In that time, they have been grading students, writing letters of recommendations for students, signing official report cards, engaging with parent communities, and have been vulnerable to professional liability in the same way as a teacher with a permanent contract, but without the benefits, job security, and possibly same level of union support. Melvin’s (OT) expressions suggest that he questions the union's efforts towards fighting for OTs and representing all members equally or equitably.

Layla’s (OT) comments also suggest that she may be skeptical regarding issues of equitable representation and the union's efforts at building solidarity. What Layla (OT) saw as contradictions within the union’s stance towards member advocacy and who the union might advocate more for, was a factor that I saw as influencing a negative expression towards her union. Layla (OT) points out a couple of issues that suggest her district might be more representative for teachers with a permanent contract than for teachers with an occasional contract. First, Layla (OT) mentions that “the union has said that they can't do anything about

the hiring process because whatever happens, happens in the interview”. If her local has accepted this position without asking certain questions or advocating in a way that they would for their members with a permanent contract who were being interviewed, this could be inequitable to their members with occasional contracts. The local district could ask the board and administrators questions like, how exactly is the interview graded or scored? Are members getting questions ahead of time? Are members able to read aloud their pre-written answers? Are there any conflicts of interest with those doing the interview and those being interviewed? Are schoolboard administrators democratically putting pressure upwards on their superiors for ways to hire more teachers into secure contracts if there is a push from below them? What are other boards doing that could be considered more equitable in their hiring processes and employment practices? These questions could be asked to encourage boards to find ways to increase equity and fairness in the hiring process and employment relationship.

Layla (OT) also raises the issue of labour action and striking. She feels that “the permanent teachers are never going to go on strike for the occasionals...but it is expected that the occasionals are to go on strike for the permanent teachers”. Like Melvin (OT), Layla (OT) is pointing out what she feels are unfair practices and what seems like a higher status regard for teachers with a permanent contract over teachers with occasional contracts by her union. When Layla (OT) alludes to ‘who leads who’ when labour action is required, she is pointing out a double standard regarding striking. Partially because of this double standard around striking, Layla (OT) “saw the union as ineffective” and she was “very disappointed”. If members from one group within a union feel that members in another group would not support them in a strike, this could be very problematic if at certain political moments higher levels of solidarity are needed for collective action.

Melvin (OT) and Layla's (OT) negative experience with their union was like the teachers with permanent and LTO contracts who had negative experiences in that they felt like outsiders, felt some level of disconnect, and felt a lack of solidarity with the union or certain groups within it. Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT), along with about ten percent of LTOs, questioned the degree to which their unions were looking out for the permanent contract teachers over the insecure teachers with occasional contracts. These experiences were in line with the findings by Standing (2011) and Mindzak (2016) that showed feelings of dissatisfaction and mistrust with unions from precarious workers and occasional teachers.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a negative view of their union**

There were negative feelings towards the union from a minority of teachers in each contract group. Just under a quarter of teachers with a permanent contract had negative views and about half of that number of LTO teachers had negative views. About a quarter of OTs had negative views, which was the most for any contract type, and the LTO group had the least number of teachers with negative views towards their union.

For both occasional (LTO and OT) and permanent teachers with negative views they felt like outsiders but for different reasons. For some of the occasionals their contract status along with their different opinions from union representatives made them feel like outsiders and for permanent teachers it was their different expectations, opinions, or values that made them feel like an outsider. In both instances there were negative influences on feelings of solidarity with the union. All the teachers who expressed negative feelings towards the union highlighted issues that their unions (both local and provincial) will need to address in order to help build feelings of solidarity and encourage engagement amongst a greater number of members.

### **6.3 Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and How They Viewed Their Union**

Teachers from all contract types were more likely to have favourable views of the union when compared to their work. Surprisingly, more occasional teachers than permanent teachers expressed positive views. Only a few teachers with permanent contracts had a positive view of their union. Some of the permanent teachers also indicated that it was generally their local union who they felt positive towards and either did not mention the provincial union or specifically mentioned a less favourable view of the provincial union compared to their local. The teachers from all contracts that had positive views of the union generally had them because they saw the union as a source of information, a space for community, representative of social movement unionism, and connected to issues of teacher professionalism like rights protection and worker advocacy.

Teachers with mixed views from all contract types had issues over ways in which the union communicated or failed to communicate. They expressed similar positive views about the benefits of a union along with concerns around communication issues that made them feel like outsiders either from the union as a whole or groups within, which created mixed responses. The permanent contract teachers had the highest number of mixed responses which could reflect their appreciation of having a secure job that they associate with the union movement while also feeling secure enough to express negative feelings and be openly critical of the union. This combination could account for the number of mixed responses from permanent teachers compared to the occasional teachers who might be more oriented to a positive outlook to counterbalance uneasy feelings from their insecure employment situation.

However, as a group, OTs had the highest percentage of negative union views pre-COVID, but this was only a couple of people, number wise. This discrepancy between

percentage and the actual number of teachers is important to keep in mind, however, it does not negate the testimony of the teachers nor the idea that in relation to the teachers that I interviewed, a certain proportion of one group potentially felt a certain way that opened up to analysis and discussion. Those OTs with negative views had been working as OTs and LTOs for approximately 15 years each, so it could be that their efforts to counterbalance any uneasy feelings around their precarity have gone away which allowed them to express what seemed like honest yet negative views about their union. When there were negative sentiments, either explicitly or combined into mixed comments they tended to point to the teacher feeling like an outsider. Often the feeling like an outsider had to do with a difference in opinion or values, however, for occasional teachers with this layer of difference, it was then added to with their difference and lower status in the contract hierarchy. When teachers felt secure or believed that they would one day have a secure job, and/or felt that they had a certain degree of ideological agreement and professional autonomy, there seemed to be less criticism of the union and more frequent expressions of solidarity.

## Chapter 7 - Individual Health and Household Well-being

### 7.1 - Introduction

Chapter 7 discusses the responses to the interview questions that connected with the second research question:

*When comparing teachers with different labour contracts, how do their experiences and feelings towards the influences that work and their contract have on their individual health and household well-being, differ?*

To begin the discussion, I start with Figure 9 that summarizes the interview participants' views about their experiences with their individual health and household well-being prior to the COVID pandemic.

**Figure 9 – The positive, mixed, and negative expressions regarding the individual health and household well-being of teachers under different contracts before COVID**

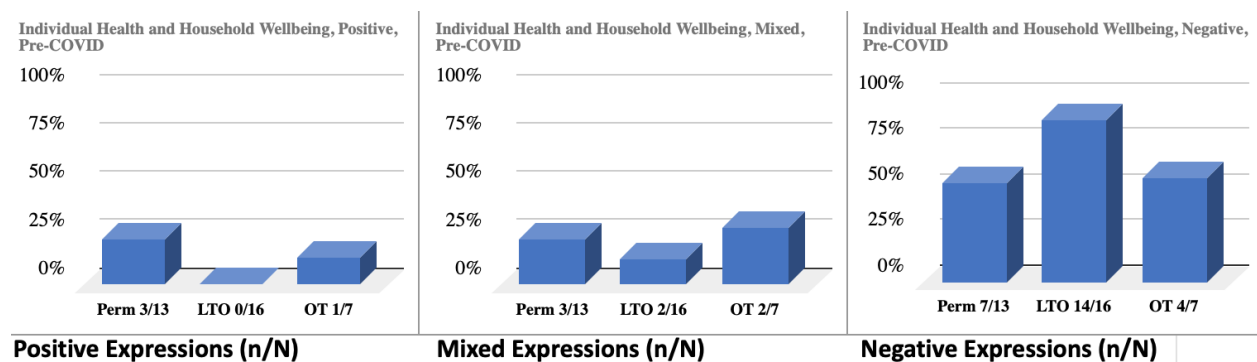


Figure 9 shows that at least half of the teachers in each contract type had negative feelings regarding how work and their contract affects their individual health and household well-being. There were no positive feelings expressed by any LTO teacher about their individual health and household well-being and only one OT who expressed positive feelings and they were an OT by choice. The group of permanent teachers had the highest number of teachers with positive views about their individual health and household well-being. However, that was still only a few



teachers and was equal to the number of permanent teachers with mixed feelings. Not having contract security created a negative experience of life outside of work for most occasional teachers, both OT and LTO, but having a secure contract did not guarantee that life outside of work would be a positive experience for permanent teachers.

The assessment of teacher views about their individual health and household well-being were drawn from the responses to the following questions:

*14) Are your working conditions influencing your individual health and household well-being? If so, in what ways?*

*15) Is your labour contract influencing your individual health and household well-being? If so, in what ways?*

## **7.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Individual Health and Household Well-being**

### **7.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with positive expressions towards their individual health and household well-being.**

Three permanent contract teachers had positive feelings about their individual health and household well-being. Two of the three teachers specifically referenced their contracts and job security. Jeremy (Perm) was one of those teachers that directly connected his positive experience of life outside of work to his labour contract:

I feel comfortable in the fact that, you know, I'm getting a good salary. I'm certainly not complaining about it. And you know that when it's time to shut things off and take the time with the family, that I'm able to do that without fear...that, you know, this is going to impact my performance review or whatnot. Like I want to do the best job possible for my students and my school. But at the end of the day, you know, I'm working to live. I'm working for my family. ...And being able to know that I have a job next year...allows me that confidence to be able to say, OK, let's go have a bit of fun...an important thing of my contract is when I'm sick or when my children are sick, that I have the time to say I can take care of them at home or take them to a doctor and, you know, my life will carry on... because my children are such an important part for me. (*Jeremy, has a permanent teaching contract*).

Jeremy (Perm) feels a permanent contract has enabled him to have a more secure family life where he can ‘work to live’ for his life outside of work and “have a bit of fun”, which I considered positive. Jeremy (Perm) points to his “good salary” and his “contract”, as enablers of feeling “comfortable”, being able to take care of his family, and providing economic security. Adding to this connection between income security with feelings of “comfort” and a sense of autonomy, Jeremy (Perm) describes that “when it's time to shut things off” and “take the time with the family” he can do that without any ‘fear’ that it will influence his “performance review”. The feeling that income security enabled a secure homelife was evident in a few of the interviews with teachers that have permanent contracts.

Jeremy’s (Perm) situation reveals a level of comfort and predictability that also came from the ‘family wage’ (Cooper, 2017). The ‘family wage’ was a wage that allowed for a single household breadwinner, yet one who was usually male, hetero, and white. For those that it helped, primarily white males in heteronormative marriages, it allowed them to plan life events, such as getting married, purchasing a house, and buying a car. Although the ‘family wage’ was not available to all workers, it was something that could have been expanded to them. Instead, the ‘family wage’ and the standard employment relationship (SER) have been on a steady decline for decades. This decline in the ‘family wage’ has been alongside the rise of neoliberal policies and their promotion of precarious and flexible labour contracts which is the opposite of what teachers like Jeremy (Perm) and Cheryl (Perm) have.

Cheryl (Perm) is another example of a positive response regarding her individual health and household well-being. Interestingly, Cheryl (Perm) specifically mentions that having a collective agreement (CA) is a factor in her being able to put her “personal life kind of ahead”.

Has my collective agreement made it easier for me to put my personal life kind of ahead...or allowed me to focus on my family life? Yes. Before COVID. (*Cheryl has a permanent contract*)

Cheryl's (Perm) comments are important because they point to the idea that underlying labour gains like the family wage are often union supported workplace collective agreements (CA). The CA can provide job and income security as well as feelings of solidarity with the union and forms of professional autonomy and life autonomy, when it is legally upheld. Jeremy (Perm) and Cheryl's (Perm) positive expressions relate to how feelings of security through the family wage and a sense of solidarity through a CA, can help create positive feelings towards a person's sense of autonomy at work and at home. When the CA is not followed, like Cheryl (Perm) mentions that she feels it was not during the pandemic, the positive feelings about individual health and household well-being can become mixed or negative. Cheryl's (Perm) comments about the CA will be explored further in Chapter 8 Influences from COVID.

Unlike teachers with a permanent contract, there was not one teacher with an LTO contract who expressed positive feelings towards the influence that their contract has on their individual health and household well-being. Generally, teachers with LTO contracts had workloads that seemed similar or larger than those of their permanent contract colleagues coupled with the insecurity and social anxieties that were like some of their OT colleagues. The combination of work intensification, 'employment strain' (Lewchuk et al., 2011) and financial insecurity were factors that seemed to shape an experience of life outside of work that was not a positive one for LTOs.

Joelle (OT) is a teacher with an OT contract by choice and appreciates the work hours that the contract allows. In addition to the work hours and the ability to leave work "at three o'clock", Joelle (OT) likes that an OT contract fits her "lifestyle right now":

I have been offered many LTO's and I just turned them down because they don't fit my lifestyle right now. I remember...it was my second day at \*\*\*\*\*, and they're like do you want this job? And I'm like...I just want to come in and then at three o'clock I want to leave. (*Joelle, has an OT contract*)

Joelle's (OT) comments highlight the importance of feeling 'in control' and some degree of autonomy over the influence a person's work has on their homelife. Feeling 'control' over one's work hours could allow for feelings of autonomy in one's personal life and provides a sense of security that could allow for feelings like 'comfort' and 'confidence' that a teacher with a permanent contract like Jeremy (Perm) might experience. For the teachers that wanted to teach with an OT contract, larger contexts outside of work such as the material support of a partner or family member, income from another job, or some other unique factor was essential to mitigate the income insecurity from precarious work. In situations like Joelle's (OT), when there is no material need to seek secure work, then life outside of work can be lived in a more "confident" way. When the material needs are secured either through a permanent contract or an insecure contract with outside support, this allows the time away from work to be experienced with "comfort" and allows people to "shut things off" so they can spend time with their family or in other ways that they choose.

Feeling 'comfortable' and 'shutting off' when one chooses to, enables feelings of autonomy over one's use of time. When Joelle (OT) expresses the desire to go home "at three o'clock", this connects with Jeremy's (Perm) positive expression of being able to "shut things off" when he chose to. Ciulla (2000) references G.K Chesterton to show how one's control over their own leisure time is a key part of leisure. Ciulla (2000) writes that Chesterton saw three "parts to leisure" (Ciulla, 2000, p.193). The first part was just being "allowed to do something". The second was being "allowed to do anything". Finally, the third part was being "allowed to do

nothing” (Ciulla, 2000, p.193). Joelle’s (OT) positive expressions connect with these sentiments in that she appreciated being “allowed” to spend her time outside of work not doing schoolwork.

Joelle (OT), Jeremy (Perm), and Cheryl’s (Perm) experiences highlight how feeling “confident” about one’s own material well-being allows them to “shut things off”. Being allowed to do this enables a worker to feel the positive experiences related to feeling “comfortable” while outside of work and while at home. For Joelle (OT), her specific contexts of support allowed her to limit how her contract and work influenced her homelife. Joelle (OT) did not seem to feel the need to earn a ‘family wage’ because she had support outside of the income opportunities her contract provided. For Jeremy (Perm), it was the ‘family wage’ along with and provided by his contract, that allowed him to “shut things off” and “be with the family”. For Cheryl (Perm), it was the “collective agreement” which supported her contract that let her put her “life kind of ahead”. In all three scenarios, material support, either through a permanent labour contract and the security entailed within it, or unique personal context, is what empowered the workers to feel confident in their life outside of work.

The responses from Jeremy (Perm), Cheryl (Perm), and Joelle (OT), show that there is an interdependent relationship between the experiences of work, of home, relationships outside of work, and personal perceptions of control and comfort. In various ways, the contexts a person experiences in one place resonates and influences the experiences they have in other places. A labour contract can bridge the gaps between places and influence the experiences and their resonances within them which then help shape a person's perceptions of themselves and their life. This resonance stays with the person even when they have left the contexts of one place, while they are having experiences in another place, or moving between a variety of places. The positive experiences help highlight how a permanent contract supported by a CA can positively

influence a teachers household well-being and how an insecure contract can too, but this depends on if there are supports in the life outside of work to allow the insecure contract to be experienced in a positive way.

### **Summary of the positive expressions towards individual health and household well-being**

A few teachers with permanent contracts expressed positive feelings about the influence their contract had on their life outside of work. All of them relate their positive feelings to their contract and Cheryl (Perm) specifically related her feelings to the CA that underlies her contract. No LTOs expressed positive feelings about the influence that their contract had on their experience with their individual health and household well-being. One OT had positive feelings related to her life outside of work that her contract helped shape, but only with a supportive context.

For the teachers that had a positive view around the influence of their contract, issues of security and autonomy seemed to be the commonality beneath the secure and insecure contracts. For the permanent teachers they could choose to “shut things down” or put their personal life “ahead” which was enabled by secure contracts that allowed them to feel somewhat autonomous in their actions. For the OT, it was their secure support network outside of their job along with their flexible contract that let them “leave at three o'clock”. Feeling security either through the contract or support outside of work allowed for feelings of autonomy. Feelings of security and autonomy helped create positive responses from the teachers discussed.

### **7.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with mixed expressions towards individual health and household well-being.**

The teachers that had mixed responses indicated some of the positive aspects around feelings of security either through the contract or other supports as well as forms of autonomy

that were enabled by their different contracts. However, they also touch on some issues that I felt were negative, like when they did not feel secure or that their personal autonomy was being challenged either with workloads or in personal relationships, and this combination created mixed responses. Nadia (Perm) and Kim's (Perm) quotes are examples of this mixture:

The biggest change for me in getting a permanent contract is just like the amount of stress that I don't have now, especially this time of year. This is the first year since I started teaching, when, come August, I'm not worried about where I am going to teach next year. So that's kind of nice. That's a big load off. And having a paycheck every two weeks through the summer is also kind of nice. So that, you know, it impacts my stress level. And so, in that way it impacts my relationships...the only thing that I would say about my relationships with my friends and my labor contract, it's more just about being a teacher specifically. Like in general, I try not to have conversations with some people, there are specific friends that I just don't talk about, you know, job action or teaching, just teaching in general. I just don't talk about my job because all I get is like, 'oh, you teachers, you know, two months off in summer, you got it so good. Get paid so much'. And so, I just avoid those conversations altogether. (*Nadia has a permanent teaching contract*).

Being a teacher...does make having a life really challenging because the marking is endless. So, you know, Sunday afternoons I'm marking, every Sunday, like it's very rare that I could have a Sunday afternoon off, because I just have to get caught up and get ahead for the week...So definitely having a permanent contract has made my life easier. I'm somebody who needs to be organized and I don't like uncertainty. (*Kim has a permanent contract*)

Nadia's (Perm) statement that "the amount of stress" she does not "have now" because she has a permanent contract is another example of how the type of labour contract influences a person's health and wellness. Kim (Perm) also supports this idea when she says, "definitely having a permanent contract has made my life easier". Nadia's (Perm) comments had some positive aspects around her feelings towards less stress, but they also had some negative aspects relating to her avoidance of certain conversations in her personal relationships. Similarly, Kim (Perm) expressed positive sentiments about the security that her contract provided but also said that "life is really challenging because the marking is endless", which I considered to be negative. The combination of security from having a secure contract, or a 'family wage' but

having stress from long work hours at home and from self-censorship within personal relationships created what I felt were mixed responses from Nadia (Perm) and Kim (Perm).

It is important to note that like how ‘wind on plants’ can help them grow, or exercise can help build muscle through damage and repair, certain levels of stress in certain contexts may be beneficial and even pleasurable. However, Nadia (Perm) and Kim (Perm) were not associating positive attributes to the stress that their workloads or previous contracts caused them to experience. It is also worth noting that the “stress” for Nadia (Perm) often came in “August” when she was an occasional teacher, and this year was the “first year” she did not have that experience as a permanent contract teacher. For Kim (Perm) “every Sunday” was spent working, both August and Sunday are times that are technically not official work hours for many teachers in Ontario. August is typically associated with summer vacation and Sunday afternoons are generally considered to be a day off from school.

For many teachers with insecure contracts, the stereotypical down time of August is filled with “stress”. Nadia (Perm) expressed that because she was no longer experiencing some of the dimensions of ‘employment strain’ as a permanent teacher, like looking for work during non-work hours, she was now able to not feel “stress” around that issue and could enjoy her summer. Nadia’s (Perm) comments highlight the validity of the ‘employment strain’ model by Lewchuk et al., (2011).

Nadia (Perm) no longer experiences stress in August and the labour conditions of teachers with a permanent contract do not fit the ‘employment strain’ model. Teachers with a permanent contract can have an experience of homelife that is unlike their colleagues who have insecure contracts because they do not experience employment strain. Kim’s (Perm) comments



shows that she feels working with a permanent contract “has made” her “life easier” and Nadia’s (Perm) story sheds light on how different types of contracts shape different lived experiences.

Nadia’s (Perm) experiences as a teacher who has worked with an LTO contract in the past and now has a permanent contract speaks to two differing work and life experiences that are significantly shaped by one’s contract type. But these experiences may not be the same for every teacher with an LTO contract or a permanent contract. Solely having an insecure contract may not be the determinant of high levels of negative stress in one’s homelife. Even with a permanent contract, for Kim (Perm) it’s “very rare” to have “Sunday afternoon off”. Also, looking back at Joelle’s (OT) experience shows that not all workers who are insecure are having a negative experience with precarious work, “simply being employed in a relationship with high levels of employment relationship uncertainty was not consistently associated with poor health” (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p151). The most important factors for predicting health outcomes were ‘effort keeping employed’, ‘constant evaluation effort’, and ‘support’ from family, friends, and community (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.151). From this list, we can see how Nadia’s (Perm) comments emphasize the importance of these variables towards a person’s emotional well-being. Nadia (Perm) no longer had to look for work in the summer months which reduced her ‘effort keeping employed’ and this was “kind of nice”. However, although it was not work-related evaluation, the comments from her friends, about having it “so good” and getting “paid so much” suggests that Nadia (Perm) is experiencing a form of evaluation in her life outside of work and that some people think teaching is a “cushy” job (Pulsford, 2019). At certain levels, Nadia’s (Perm) and other teachers’ avoidance around discussing their job with friends and family, reflects research by Ehrenreich (2009) who has written on the importance of ‘positive thinking’, agreement, and avoiding conflict in certain settings for neoliberalism to function.

In addition to a status quo cultural preference for positive thinking and non-conflictual social gatherings, according to Eidelson (2018), there is also a politically motivated and media constructed distrust towards teachers within neoliberal societies (Eidelson, 2018, p.102). This may not be a recent phenomenon either considering the distrust towards teachers by the state in early Ontario that was discussed in Chapter 4. The current iteration discussed by Eidelson (2018) may not solely be in the United States (US). Even though Eidelson (2018) is discussing a US example, there are overlaps with similar interests and their political groups in Canada. For example, Doug Ford, the conservative premier of Ontario before and during the pandemic, was quoted as saying that he is “a big Republican” regarding his sympathies with American conservative politics (Ferguson, 2019). Ford has also indicated that he has interests to reform governmental and educational systems towards certain American inspired models (Press Progress, January 15, 2020). Therefore, when Eidelson (2018) mentions that American school reformers “try to persuade parents that public school teachers can’t be trusted” and that “the teachers motives and agenda don’t align with what’s best for their students...because all they really care about are personal matters like salary, benefits, and job security” (Eidelson, 2018, p.102), this type of politically constructed opinion can be considered as a variable negatively influencing Nadia’s (Perm) interactions with her friends and family. Nadia’s (Perm) negative expressions relating to her social life combined with her positive expressions regarding reduced levels of employment strain, is what informed my categorization of Nadia’s (Perm) response as ‘mixed’. Kim’s (Perm) comments that her contract made “life easier” I considered to be positive but her mentioning that she worked at least six days a week, I felt was negative. Kim (Perm) and Nadia (Perm) expressed a range of positive and negative feelings that lead me to consider their responses as mixed.

Like Joelle's (OT) story, Allison's (LTO) views support research by Lewchuk et al., (2011) that suggests when there is a support network, health benefits, or a personal lifestyle choice in place, some of the negative influences of uncertainty around work and income can be reduced (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.153). Allison's (LTO) experience also connects with some of the cautions and exceptions that Lewchuk et al., (2011) point out, in that as much as Allison's (LTO) situation may be technically 'sustainable', it is not ideal, and is possibly not sustainable over a longer unknown term (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.200).

One hundred percent, the labor contract affects my life because I live with my parents. I'm very lucky that they let me live with them, but I personally don't want to move out until I have permanent, because financially I can't afford a mortgage right now... So, there was one year where I didn't work three out of four weeks in September, and that's the longest I went without work...but personally, I don't feel comfortable moving out until I know for sure I can afford it...it's kind of put my life on hold a little bit because I've lived with my parents for three years and now, I'm coming up on year four...even when I get permanent, it's not like I can move right away because you have to find where to move and where your school is and all that stuff...I find work life balance is very important to me. And therefore, I told my friends this. I would not tell my employer this, obviously. But for me, it's more important to have a good work life balance than to be a perfect teacher.... I'm completely OK with being an OK teacher but having time to be with my family and go to the gym and have a life outside of school. (*Allison has an LTO contract*)

Allison's (LTO) experiences with her labour contract and how it is preventing her from pursuing home ownership is not unique amongst many millennials, precarious workers, and millennials who are precarious workers (Clark, 2019; Stroud, 2022). The restrictions preventing Allison (LTO) from home ownership and a sense of autonomy in life were considered as negative experiences influenced by the insecurity of her contract. On the other hand, a positive influence that could be shaped by the type of contract she has, was Allison's (LTO) personal lifestyle choice for a certain work/life balance that fits her specific needs and shows a concern for her own individual health and household well-being. Allison's (LTO) support network and

ability to draw a clear line between work and homelife were positive. Whereas her inability to pursue home ownership seemed to be a negative experience for Allison (LTO).

Research has highlighted some of the negative issues around certain types of stress and mental health issues that teachers can experience from their work which influences their homelife (Marko, 2015; Pyne, 2017; Oberle et. al., 2020). However, Allison's (LTO) ability to define a clear boundary between work and home could help her to partially mitigate some of the negative influences her work has on her homelife. Her ability to do this could also be connected to her contract in that she could decline certain assignments or apply to others that might fit her lifestyle, but this was unique compared to other teachers with an LTO contract. Many of the teachers with an LTO contract seemed to feel pressured to take on more responsibilities at work, such as extracurriculars or staying later at school, in the hope of getting a permanent contract which was negatively influencing their individual health and household well-being. Janice (LTO) describes that pressure, "I'll be so stressed out, I'm like trying to make...a good impression on new administration and really like putting in the extra effort at work, like staying a few hours after the bell, staying a couple hours before".

Allison's (LTO) ability to assert a certain level of work and homelife balance, is significant considering that, according to research by Marko (2015), "Almost 73% of the teachers surveyed reported to have experienced some form of mental health distress since becoming a teacher" (Marko, 2015, p.ii), and that was pre-pandemic. However, "Teachers also rated their Quality of Life as high, indicating there is some sort of resiliency factor associated with this relationship" (Marko, 2015, *ibid.*). In Marko's (2015) study there was no specifying if the respondents had LTO, OT, or Permanent contracts. The word 'contract' does not appear once. It would be beneficial for researchers to be able to decipher what the contract type

breakdown of the research participants were. For my research it would be helpful to know: how many of the participants had LTO contracts like Allison (LTO)? Allison's (LTO) personal choice to draw a line between work and homelife was a perspective that most teachers with an LTO contract did not share. Allison's (LTO) feelings of empowerment to assert a work and homelife balance was more in line with the levels of homelife autonomy expressed by some of the teachers with a permanent contract as well as with Joelle (OT), who chose to work as an OT so that she could “just leave at the end of the day”.

As much as Allison (LTO) was able to assert some autonomy over her personal life, her lack of a secure contract along with larger structural factors such as the real estate market and the political economic zeitgeist, are preventing her from having some autonomy over where she lives. It should also be noted that in Ontario, educational funding, and policy creation - such as lower-class sizes - is a provincial matter that helps influence the number of teachers school boards can hire into permanent contracts. Given this, Allison's (LTO) insecure labour contract may also be a by-product of neoliberal political economic policies. Indeed, Jaffe (2021) calls schools “the hinge point of neoliberalism” (Jaffe, 2021, p.101). As functions and symbols of public goods, public schools and public teachers' unions represent a counter ethos to the privatizing tendencies of neoliberalism. Limiting the number of permanent contracts available and preventing a reduction in class sizes by decreasing or just maintaining the number of permanent contracts, while offering incentives for parents/guardians to send their children to private school or learn fully online, is one way that a neoliberal privatization agenda could partially be facilitated. Another method for normalizing and expanding neoliberal policies into all facets of social life is to encourage home ownership as primarily an investment for landlords instead of primarily a place to live for owners or tenants (Forrest & Hirayama, 2014).

Neoliberal economic policies are not only influencing educational labour sectors and the types of contracts available to teachers, but neoliberalism has also encouraged policies that have created levels of asset inflation within the global housing market (Gertten, 2019; Clark, 2019). For teachers like Allison (LTO), the combination of a lack of secure contract along with rising housing prices, are creating a situation that makes it difficult for her to move out on her own. Considering these limits on Allison's (LTO) freedom and independence, the type of individual freedoms that proponents of neoliberal policies claim it creates, should be questioned by commentators and researchers. Researchers are indicating that for many who are in younger generations to be able to purchase a house, they will need to be dependent on the help of family members:

Only with income transfers has it been possible for many young adults to enter the housing market. A report for Canada, from the Bank of Montreal which conducts annual surveys of first-time home buyers, has found that nearly half of young potential buyers expect a loan or gift from family over the past half-decade. This year (2016), the bank found that 44% of millennials expect to depend on parents or family for some or all their first home purchase. (Clark, 2019, p.14).

When those income transfers are not available for interested home buyers like Allison (LTO), this then leads to greater numbers of people cohabiting in arrangements they would rather not be in, like living at home with their parents or guardians longer than in the past (Bialik & Fry, 2019). Bialink and Fry (2019) report on the results from a PEW research study and show that for every level of educational attainment, from high school graduate to bachelor's degree or higher, more millennials are living at home with their parents than any previous generation going back to the 'silent' generation (Bialink & Fry, 2019, p.6) and a time before there were standard permanent teaching contracts in Ontario, as was seen in Chapter 4.

Millennials and younger, like Allison (LTO), who can live at home with members of a support network are privileged in comparison to those without such support (Lewchuk et al.,

2011). However, research by Lewchuk et al., (2011) also showed that some participants they interviewed formed a category they called, ‘sustainable less permanent’, and they might not feel secure in their privilege,

A few did acknowledge that they could be negatively impacted by changes taking place around them. A few workers felt that their support structures were not as secure as they once had been, and others worried about the long-term consequences of eroding support (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.200).

This dynamic, where current support could erode in the future, is one that Allison (LTO) did not speak of but could possibly be inferred from her expressions about eventually moving out.

Allison’s (LTO) mixed experience was like Agatha’s (LTO), the only other teachers with an LTO contract to have a mixed response. Like Allison (LTO), Agatha (LTO) also had a supportive family outside of school that made teaching with an insecure contract less of a negative experience.

My significant other makes enough that we don't have to worry, that's fine. That's a different scenario. But if you're someone who wants a permanent job, then it's really hard because you put things off because you're not permanent. Right. You put off buying that house because, well, what if I'm not working in September? You put off maybe starting a family because, you know, maternity leave and all that stuff. Like, it's just, it's hard. And so, I think as an OT or LTO who wants permanent, it absolutely impacts your life choices, especially if you're single, if you're in a relationship, it's different. (*Agatha, has an LTO contract*)

Agatha (LTO) is aware of her privilege, “we don’t have to worry” and points out that for teachers wanting to start “a family” without a permanent contract, “it’s really hard”. But like Agatha (LTO) mentioned, she is in a “different scenario” because her “significant other makes enough”. Without the support of her partner, Agatha (LTO) might be in a “really hard” situation. For Allison (LTO) and Agatha (LTO), the context of their contracts is what made them “flexible” in a beneficial way for the worker. With a different context where outside support is missing, things would be “really hard”, and the flexibility of the contract would be more beneficial to

management than the worker. Mandy (OT) was another occasional worker whose context outside of teaching allowed her to get involved with the union, work a second job, and work as an occasional teacher by choice, but not without some sacrifices in her personal life.

Mandy (OT) seemed content with having an OT contract. It allowed her to get involved with the union and to work in other industries outside of public education which she expressed in a positive manner. But her busy schedule also prevented a social life which seemed to be negative, and this variety created a mixed response. Unlike Allison (LTO), who was concerned about moving out of her house and focusing on a healthy work and homelife balance, Mandy's (OT) involvement with the union, working a second job, and not indicating a similar support network, seemed to prevent her from being able to create the same work life balance. Mandy's (OT) commitments during her noncontract working time influenced her homelife in mixed ways. This was reportedly by choice and working with the union was something that Mandy (OT) seemed to enjoy doing, but she also said that she cannot "participate" in social events and that has been "difficult".

Even still with the executive, we don't necessarily socialize... We'll work together more, but we don't necessarily socialize. And I think with permanent teachers, same deal because you're not part of that school on a regular basis. With me, just because you're working the OT plus you have a second job, you don't necessarily have that ability to, frankly, socialize as much in that respect and just kind of fall back with what you can do. Because, I mean, there's been so many times for so many years where I've had to say, 'no'...or negatives in terms of 'I can't participate in this' because I'm doing whatever it is...with school or my second job. And that's been difficult. (*Mandy, has an OT contract*)

Despite some explicitly negative sentiments such as "negatives in terms of I can't participate in this", Mandy (OT) also expressed an appreciation for her ability to work with her local union and some of the connections that came from it. She also liked being able to have a job outside of teaching working at a bookstore. Yet, these events were still obstacles preventing a greater social life because they prevented her from having certain social experiences outside of



a workplace. Therefore, with a quick surface read of Mandy's (OT) interview, some of Mandy's (OT) comments could appear to be solely negative expressions, such as her own use of the term "negatives" to describe how she "can't participate in this". However, despite clear negative expressions about how her life is shaped by her contract which prevented her from attending social functions, Mandy's (OT) work in the union and her second job provided levels of another type of sociability that Mandy (OT) seemed to appreciate. Unfortunately for collective purposes, this may be a sociability based on commercial relations via the bookstore and individual networking in the union if the union is not also active towards larger structural changes.

Mandy's union involvement could be because unions are uniquely situated to help enhance social networks (Nissan & Jarley, 2005). However, a primarily social and networking function may reduce their political and structurally transformative potential. Critics of solely emphasizing the social networking potential of unions, point to the need to emphasize their political making potential (Banks & Metzgar, 2005). As much as unions could be strengthened through social networking, there are depoliticizing risks with overemphasizing the individual networks which could possibly include oligarchic groups in the union and status quo hierarchies, which could then alienate others. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, a union can have multiple functions aside from professional networking and one of those is a potential for radical social transformation.

Mandy's (OT) mixed experience stems from being part of a group with this radical potential that gave her a sense of belonging outside of work which seemed positive. Yet, her busy life outside of school made turning down other social engagements "difficult" which seemed like a negative. Mandy's (OT) experience with the relationship she has with her union created a sense of solidarity that may have made up for her lack of security and autonomy in her

life outside of work and her inability to socialize more often. Looking now at Shelly's (OT) experience there are some positive and negative feelings around a healthy conception of autonomy and individualism that created a mixed experience:

The biggest factor...is the personality of the teacher. There's no question that teaching remains a job where to a very significant degree, you can close the door. And again, there's differences depending on the parents and the students and the communities. Some places there's more attention to what's going on and there's more reaction perhaps. (*Shelly has an OT contract*)

When asked if her contract has any influences on her feelings about her health and household well-being, Shelly (OT) used a work example and said, "the biggest factor...is the personality of the teacher". Although there may be positive personal empowerment as well as emotional and psychological benefits to de-emphasizing the influences of the structure on agency, there might also be negative detriments to overemphasizing agency. This mixture influenced me to see Shelly's (OT) comments as mixed. This mixture also speaks to a similar paradox discussed by Sennett (1998) regarding the emphasis that laid off IBM employees put on their own individuality and responsibility for being laid off, which could be a coping mechanism for precarious workers. The perspective that one's circumstances are primarily shaped by their individuality and not the other way around, connects with neoliberal conceptions of agency and structure. The problem with this conception is that many researchers have argued that the neoliberal worldview is decontextualized and tends to miss larger insights into the human condition (Chomsky, 2015; Callero, 2018; Prasad, 2019).

Chomsky (2015), writing about the various scientific perspectives into culture and the human condition argues that "Social frameworks such as capitalism that stress self-interest, hinder rather than encourage the development of individual capacities" (Chomsky, 2015, p.xxi). Callero (2018) traces the cultural emphasis on individualism originally back to the ancient

Greeks, however, Callero also points out that modern notions of individualism “took hold” during what came to be called ‘The Enlightenment’, in 18th century Europe (Callero, 2018, p.4). Originally, the move to emphasize individualism was “democratic in origin” to limit aristocratic powers and the rule of monarchies. The idea that the role of government and society was to help empower and protect the rights of individuals was also a counter force to the rise of 19th century industrial monopolies, slavery, robber barons, and exploitative capitalist social relations. There have been radical and transformative moments in history because of certain conceptions of the individual.

Chomsky and Herman (1988) have argued that in America in particular, prior to World War Two and during the 20th century Cold War, capitalist interests utilized the power of mass media technologies to normalize capitalist values, including individualism, anti-labour views, and a de-emphasis on the social levelling abilities of the state and unions. It is these larger structural, conditioning, and causal forces that problematize sentiments such as “the biggest factor...is the personality of the teacher(s)” and point to the ideological functioning of those sentiments. Supporting this emphasis on structural factors is Prasad (2019) in their review of Christakis’s (2019) book, *Blueprint: the evolutionary origins of a good society*. Prasad (2019) writes that “the evidence shows that good people can do bad things, and bad people can do good things simply as a result of the network they find themselves in, regardless of their convictions”. The notion that context is more formative than individual personality is not something that aligns with the individualized logic of neoliberal worldviews and their supporting private interest backed mass media messaging. The pervasive power of the mass media industry could be a factor encouraging unionized public-school teachers, like Shelly (OT), to believe that individuals

and innate personalities are what frame experience and not the larger social structure and political economy.

Mandy (OT) and Shelly’s (OT) experiences suggest that one way in which teachers can potentially offset negative experiences is to interpellate ideological narratives of individualism. Social Learning Theory provides some ideas into how they may have internalized the external values promoted through neoliberal policies. The insights into human observation and mimicry provided by Social Learning Theory<sup>41</sup> suggest that if, “schools are the hinge point of neoliberalism” (Jaffe, 2020), then having school workers ideologically aligned to the values of neoliberal individualism as well as having them normalize working with precarious labour contracts in a contract status hierarchy, is beneficial for larger neoliberal socialization processes where there are winners and losers from the competition.

### **Summary of the *mixed* expressions towards individual health and household well-being**

There were at least the same or slightly more mixed responses than positive ones from all contract groups. This was still low compared to the number of negative responses about individual health and household well-being from all contract types. Less than a quarter of participants from each contract expressed mixed views. LTOs had the least number of mixed responses and OTs had the most with permanent contract teachers in the middle.

The permanent teachers expressed an awareness and appreciation of the security that their contract brought them, however, they also had negative experiences with work intensification that carried into their homelife and talking about their job with non-teachers outside of work.

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<sup>41</sup> Social Learning Theory was developed by Bandura (1986). Bandura believed that subjects make meaning and learn cultural norms by observing others and representations of others in the larger society and their interactions, and then recreate or attempt to mimic those actions and relations based on either conscious or subconscious awareness.

Some of the LTOs who had mixed experiences were because they had support networks that helped to mitigate the insecurities that came from their contract. Yet, even with the support networks they still had concerns about planning a life which was influenced by their contracts. Similarly, the OTs with mixed views were also in unique situations that allowed them to appreciate some of the benefits of having a flexible contract while also experiencing some of the negatives of insecurity, like missing out on social events or developing a primarily individualistic outlook on human experience.

For all teachers the type of contract they had shaped their experiences outside of work. Some permanent teachers had concerns about work in non-work hours or relationships outside of work but did not express concerns about security. Whereas for the occasional teachers discussed, to mitigate negative experiences around job insecurity and have some positive counterbalance, they either needed some support outside of teaching or a worldview that they felt provided a rationale for their experience for them to feel a sense of positivity.

### **7.2.3 - Teachers under different contracts with negative expressions towards individual health and household well-being**

Most teachers from all contracts had a negative view towards the influence their contract had on their individual health and household well-being. The teachers with negative views all experienced some form or combination of ‘strains’<sup>42</sup>. For occasional teachers they experienced three forms of strain: job, employment, and relationship. For teachers with a permanent contract their negative responses came from experiences with job and relationship strain, like Alyssa (Perm) and Barb (Perm).

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<sup>42</sup> These will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

When people move [into town], I never tell them I'm a teacher. They usually find out, you know, through other people because small towns gossip. But I don't actively promote I'm a teacher. (*Barb had a permanent contract*)

Barb's (Perm) comments about her life outside of work were negative. Barb (Perm) mentions something in her homelife that was like Nadia's (Perm) experience with her friend group, and that was not being able to talk about their job outside of work. Nadia's (Perm) story about not being able to talk about being a teacher because her friends thought she "got paid so much" and "had it so good" is not much different than Barb (Perm) feeling that she had to be somewhat secretive about being a teacher when around new members of her community. Nadia (Perm) and Barb's (Perm) comments, where they mention that they minimized talking about their work life in their social life because of perceptions that they "had it so good", is interesting when they are contrasted with comments by Alyssa (below). Alyssa's (Perm) comments about feeling helpless and not having time to develop social networks, suggest that she might not have it "so good" even though she has a secure contract.

I don't feel like we get that much support as far as our mental wellness. Well, any wellness really...we all care about our kids...we want to help them. I think that's the biggest thing, I can't, the majority of the time I can't [help the kids] ... As far as who I befriend, I don't know. I don't know if that's because it's so hard to make friends as an adult, so who knows? (*Alyssa, has a permanent teaching contract*)

Alyssa (Perm) raises two issues that she is experiencing in her health and homelife and both are negative. Codes like 'neoliberalism is about schooling not education' were applied to the first issue and 'cultural changes' to the second. The first issue is that Alyssa (Perm) and other teachers are experiencing negative influences on their health and wellness due to larger systemic issues. Some of those systemic issues influence schools to function within a militarized political economic 'Complex' (Turse, 2008). Turse (2008) in *The complex* details numerous ways that mainstream American consumer culture overlaps with a military oriented political economy

where many of the jobs available are somehow related, directly or indirectly via ownership and investments, to a larger military industrial complex which helps support the pro-privatization geopolitical goals of U.S foreign policy and has a heavy influence on Canadian culture and political economy (Grinspun & Shamsie (Eds.), 2007). Other authors have also written about this larger context to the American and global political economies (Chomsky 2003b; Hudson, 2021; Johnson, 2004; 2006) and its relation to public education systems (Chomsky, 2003a; Giroux, 2005; 2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2016; Kershner, 2013). Adding to the idea that education systems are oriented to capitalist objectives is the work of Bowels and Gintis (1976), Willis (1977) and Giroux (2010). All these authors discuss ways in which the k-12 and higher education systems are less about education and more about schooling for jobs in the larger political economy. Sears (2003) and Blacker (2013) have suggested the type of political economy students are being schooled for is also a “neoliberal” (Blacker, 2013) “lean state” (Sears, 2003) that prioritizes the private sector over the public sector. Prendergast, Hill, and Jones (2017) argue that education is a battleground for a “class war from above” (Prendergast, Hill, & Jones, 2017) that wants to defund public education. However, like Turse’s (2008) arguments, Hartman (2022) has highlighted that with neoliberal policies, the public sector is actually favoured in two areas: national security and policing (p.106). Both of these are needed to support neoliberal socialization as well as the development of ‘fortress North America’ (Grinspun & Shamsie (Eds.), 2007).

“Fortress North America” and the idea of the continent being one national security zone in an effort to prepare to deal with the climate crisis and a world in social turmoil (ibid, p.428) is an important piece of political economic, cultural, and public educational context. In a social environment with limited jobs or with jobs directly or indirectly related to the security and

carceral sectors, systemic factors of discrimination influence schools to somewhat function as “prison pipelines” where disciplinary measures can influence life outcomes that are often inequitable for marginalized communities (Mallet, 2016; Hermez, Brent, & Mowen, 2020).

When considering the security-oriented world of work that students are entering after school or working within during their school years, the type of education they are receiving, the number of and type of jobs available to them, and the overlaps with national security interests, this may create anxious, depressed, and conflictual learning spaces that influence the labour process and emotional well-being of teachers, like Alyssa (Perm).

The second issue, having challenges meeting friends, might not be related to issues stemming from work, and may just be “because it’s so hard to make friends as an adult”. With the first issue, Alyssa (Perm), despite caring for and wanting her students to succeed, expresses that she felt she “can’t” help her students. Research into the larger political economy and the role of schools within it suggest that there significant influencing variables that shape the world of work that students enter that are far beyond the control of the teacher, like business cycles (Teppe & Vanhuysse, 2008), geopolitical economic planning, and national security issues (Grinspun & Shamsie, 2007). When a teacher feels helpless in relation to what they can provide their students, it can negatively influence their emotional health (Rosslyn-Pyne, 2017, p.45-46). Some teachers came into teaching with the intent to improve the lives of students and to help them succeed, but according to Alyssa (Perm), “the majority of the time I can’t”. Feelings of inadequacy could have a strong influence on a teacher's emotional health that can affect their levels of anxiety and anger. Any resonance from these emotional influences would at some level, arguably carry over into the teacher’s individual health and household well-being.



Lacking control at work during the job and an inability to change things there is also one of the elements of the ‘job strain’ model (Lewchuk et al., 2011), that can have a negative influence on the labour process of teachers from all contract types even if in different ways. Alyssa’s (Perm) permanent contract does not shield her from these feelings or the ‘strain’ this may cause on her own health and wellness. Lewchuk et al., (2011) show that job strain is something that influences workers, regardless of contract type, “there was no clear pattern on measures of physical work risks or ‘job strain’ between those in less permanent employment and those in permanent full-time relationships” (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p.136). Although this is a workplace issue, the feelings of helplessness carry over into life outside of work. Indeed, Alyssa (Perm) expressed this sentiment and made these comments in an interview that occurred outside of work hours and during her summer vacation.

Interestingly, there is research that shows Alyssa’s (Perm) feelings of helplessness and a lack of autonomy at work that influence her feelings in her homelife can possibly be mitigated through struggle and solidarity with her union (Sheih, 2021). This also connects with the findings from Chapter 6 The Union where teachers from all contract types expressed positive feelings towards the union when they associated it with social movement unionism. Workplace struggles over workers’ rights and making connections with other justice movements could help teachers witnessing the cruel influences of capitalism upon their students’ lives, overcome what economist Albert Hirschman has criticized as the “futility thesis”<sup>43</sup> (Eidelson, 2018, p.152).

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<sup>43</sup> In *‘Political mind games: how the 1% manipulate our understanding of what’s happening, what’s right, and what’s possible’*, Eidelson (2018), references Hirschman’s critique of the ‘futility thesis’ (Eidelson, 2018, p.152) The ‘futility thesis’ is the idea that change is impossible, and that “certain problems can’t be solved” (ibid.). This argument has been used in various forms to justify conservative and neoliberal status quo policies and to prevent or limit radical as well as progressive change.

However, Alyssa (Perm) is not alone and Sheih's (2021) work shows that teachers can feel helpless in their jobs, yet there are some strategies to help with those feelings. Sheih (2021) argues that teachers can find ways to counter feelings of helplessness about their work by fighting for policy changes, which can help them feel more supported, even if the policy struggle is not successful.

There may be a need for teachers to struggle for policies that address issues influencing students because those issues also influence the well-being of the teacher and their overall experience of life. More students are coming to school with forms of PTSD because of issues outside of the classroom (Putnam, 2016; Wilson, 2015). According to Putnam (2016), there is a growing number of students and youth whose teachers will have a challenge being able to help them. These youth may also find that the society they live in may not have a job for them – and this would be due to no fault of their own, but because of ideological structural and policy issues (Zilber, 2022). If teachers like Alyssa (Perm) feel helpless in their ability to help these students now, their experiences of work and homelife could become increasingly negative in the future.

In *Our kids*, Putnam (2016) discusses multiple examples of young people in crisis compared to youth of previous generations. Putnam (2016) highlights how the deteriorating living conditions of working-class people<sup>44</sup>, are creating households and life experiences outside of school that are “chronically stressful” and lead to high levels of “toxic stress” (Putnam, 2016, p.111). If young people are experiencing “toxic stress”, the teachers' work experiences with students might have significant influences on their own health. Oberle et al., (2020) point out that this can also function in the opposite direction and the stress of the teacher can influence the

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<sup>44</sup> The deterioration has been largely brought on by neoliberal economic policies like privatization of public services, offshoring of jobs, deregulation of industries, deindustrialization, automation, and precarious flexible work.

experience of the student. Alyssa’s (Perm) comments suggest that the “job strain” that arises from dealing with students who are struggling with toxic stress is negatively influencing not only her work life, but also her life outside of work because she thinks about her students not only during school hours and her experiences resonate in her personal life.

If issues with student ‘toxic stress’ and teacher “job strain” combine, this could add further negative influences on issues related to the teacher’s individual health and household well-being, such as their relationships with others, which Alyssa (Perm) also alluded to.

Kirmayer (2016), writes in *How to make friends when you don’t have play dates: the importance of friendships in adulthood*, that having friends is important for one’s health. Friendships can help adults lead healthier and happier lives, protect against loneliness and depression, and provide “emotional support, practical help, and problem-solving strategies” (Kirmayer, 2016, p.2). Kirmayer (2016) acknowledges Alyssa’s (Perm) concern that “it’s so hard to make friends as an adult” and says, “The busyness and structure of adulthood does not always allow us to make friends, let alone invest in the friendships we already have” (Kirmayer, 2016, p.3).

However, taking further context into consideration points to research which says that this ‘busyness’ is not an inevitable part of adult human life and may instead be a result of ideological norms influenced by capitalism (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). But these norms are not absolute. Policies can alter them, and it is worth remembering the positive experiences earlier in the chapter. It was a combination of a secure contract like Jeremy (Perm) had, along with personal and material support like Joelle (OT) had, and a certain personal outlook like Allison (LTO) had, that helped to shape their experiences outside of work. When these variables are also provided to community members and the families that teachers work with, this could reduce the negative

experiences at work that resonate with Alyssa (Perm) and improve her work and life experiences during her time off work.

The job strain for teachers like Alyssa (Perm) who may be working with students and community members experiencing toxic stress could be felt by teachers of all contracts, albeit in different ways. For teachers with an LTO or OT contract, there are additional layers of ‘employment strain’ on top of the job strain that can compound to influence the experiences of their homelife. Most of the occasional teachers were constantly putting effort into finding work, either daily or at various points throughout the year. This effort could lead to normalizing the situation and trying to make the best of a certain amount of strain brought on by precarity. From this, states of cognitive dissonance could develop which can have both positive and negative influences on a person's well-being (Dilakshini & Kumar, 2020). Teachers with an LTO contract, like Kathleen (LTO), touch on issues relating to employment strain and always being ready for the next job as well as cognitive dissonance which could arise to help minimize the former.

So, this question actually, when I first read it on the survey, I was in the car with my sister. I'm like, 'hey, do you think it's having an impact on my life?' And she looks at me. She's like, 'obviously it has'. And I was like, 'oh', she's like 'you never are doing anything but working'. And I was like, 'OK, that's fair. I do work all of the time'.... I have been working a lot and not really doing stuff. And then in terms of the contract, yes, my best friend actually asked me to go on a trip.... I was like yeah sure, but the only time that kind of works for us to go is when I know there's going to be LTO interviews. I'm like, I can't go because they come out at the end of August... You don't have any say when your interview is going to be and if you miss the interview, you don't get a job. So, yeah, it's like, I need to have a job for next year, which means I need to be available during that time to interview. (*Kathleen has an LTO contract*)

Kathleen's (LTO) expressions about a regular search for employment and her subconscious minimization of the discomfort were seen as largely negative and related to larger systemic issues. For example, conscious or subconscious acceptance of, or ambivalence towards, neoliberal policies is helpful for hegemonic state and corporate interests that gain

influence through those policies (Chomsky, 2003b). Connecting this idea to Jaffe’s (2021) point that “schools are the hinge point of neoliberalism” (Jaffe, 2021, p.101), suggests that schools are important for neoliberal policy implementation and normalization, functioning in a way that Althusser claimed in his writings on ideological state apparatuses (ISAs)<sup>45</sup>. If schools are a “hinge point of neoliberalism”, then the socialization that takes place in them would be important for interests seeking to normalize neoliberal policies, such as changes in contract type from more secure contracts to less secure and more flexible contracts. It might not just be the socialization of students that is influenced by changes in schools, workers themselves can be influenced by changes, especially if those changes are affecting their material existence and social relations. When people experience changes that differ from what they anticipate, there are different types of reactions for them to respond to it with, such as: People can consciously accept them, consciously reject them, feel ambivalent about them, or exist within states of cognitive dissonance. Looking at Kathleen’s (LTO) interview helps show how she has been living and working within somewhat of a state of cognitive dissonance regarding the amount of time that she spends on her work as a teacher that her sister then brings her awareness to.

In the interview Kathleen (LTO) mentioned that it was her sister who helped her to become more consciously aware that she was working “all of the time”. Her sister pointed out that her job and her type of contract is influencing her life in an all-consuming way, “you’re never doing anything but working”. When this is mentioned to Kathleen (LTO), she is at first taken aback “oh”, but then agrees with her sister, “OK that’s fair, I do work all the time”.

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<sup>45</sup> Althusser, wanted to “expand and clarify” on the idea of ‘ideology’ as written about by Marx and Engels. For Althusser, ISAs helped “carry out the function of reproducing the conditions of production. Such apparatuses include religious institutions, the education system, the system of law, political parties, the media, and the family”. (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002, p.188)

Kathleen (LTO) is displaying some of the signs of a worker who has subconsciously developed a coping mechanism, such as fluctuating in states of cognitive dissonance. However, Dilakshini and Kumar (2020) argue that “cognitive dissonance isn’t necessarily a bad thing. It can be positive, if we make positive changes in our beliefs when we realize that our beliefs and actions are odd”. For teachers with an LTO contract, like Kathleen (LTO), when it comes to frequently applying for new assignments, switching schools, and searching for jobs “at the end of August”, these forms of ‘choice’ and change that are structured by her type of labour contract, might reduce the degree of discomfort that Kathleen (LTO) feels from any cognitive dissonance by creating a sense of agency.

The need to always be ready to interview or else you might not get any work was emphasized by Kathleen (LTO) and others:

You have no idea when they're actually going to be. You don't have any say when your interview is going to be and if you miss the interview, you don't get a job. So, yeah, it's like, I need to have a job for next year, which means I need to be available during that time to interview, get a job, all of that. (*Kathleen has an LTO contract*)

In Chapter 5, Maurice (LTO) also said he found the frequent interviews “exhausting” and Nigel (LTO) (who I discuss next) mentions the “stress leading up to September” regarding getting cover letters, CVs, and references to send out applications and attend interviews. These were added layers of work, worry, and stress that teachers with a permanent contract did not say they were experiencing with their contract but many LTOs did mention they were experiencing.

The layer of ‘employment strain’ that Kathleen (LTO), Maurice (LTO), Nigel (LTO), and other teachers with an LTO or OT contract experienced because of a frequent if not constant awareness that they need to think about where and when their next job might be, was a key difference between them and the teachers with permanent contracts. For teachers like Nigel (LTO), thinking about his next job was related to moving around between schools which has

prevented him from developing friendships outside of work. For Cathy (LTO), the lack of income security was only not made worse with a lack of benefits because she was able to obtain benefits from her job outside of teaching in her “part-time bartending job”. The first set of comments are from Nigel (LTO) and then Cathy’s (LTO) follow.

I've made a lot of friends in the board, but it's hard to go beyond sort of work colleagues cause, you know, I'm not necessarily going to be around. It's analogous, but nowhere near the same to what you see in sort of World War Two movies where there's this band of people that have been on the beach of D-Day for a long time. And, you know, they bring in the new guy and everybody's like, ‘well, don't be friends with them because they're not going to be around long enough to, like, be friendly with’. And the teachers are not doing that to me intentionally. But there is sort of a division. *(Nigel has an LTO contract)*

I get ten grand a year for dental and then an emergency... my teacher friends were like, ‘wait, what? That's better than [I am getting]’. Why am I trying so hard to get benefits if I get better from my part-time bartending job? *(Cathy has an LTO contract)*

Nigel’s (LTO) story relates to insecure, minimal, or non-existent social networks inside and outside of school that other teachers like Alyssa (Perm) mentioned when she said, “it’s so hard to make friends as an adult”. Cathy’s (LTO) quote raises another issue around individual insecurity but regarding health when she mentions “benefits”. Despite Cathy’s (LTO) comments maybe appearing positive, they were negative because her preference was for secure teaching work and was unsure how long the bartending job would last. Although she received benefits from her other job Cathy (LTO) still wanted a permanent teaching contract but had stopped “trying so hard” because she could not predict when that would happen. Kathleen (LTO), Nigel (LTO), and Cathy (LTO) all had negative experiences because of overlapping issues of insecurity. Teachers with permanent contracts like Alyssa (Perm) who had challenges making friends and Kim (Perm) and Nadia (Perm) who did not feel comfortable talking about their job outside of work also had certain amounts of social insecurity. However, the insecurity that Nigel (LTO) and Kathleen (LTO) feel about finding jobs and that Cathy (LTO) feels regarding keeping

her access to benefits through her part-time job, are issues that did not factor in the feelings of insecurity expressed by the teachers with a permanent contract.

Indeed, Nigel's (LTO) comparison of building friendships at work as being like in a war zone in "World War Two" and stating that "there is sort of a division", could be revealing of his lower position on the contract status hierarchy and the types of social relations between those in the hierarchy that are 'divided'. As much as Alyssa (Perm), Kim (Perm), and Nadia (Perm) had issues with social networks outside of work, Nigel (LTO) experiences social insecurity while at work, which the teachers with permanent contracts did not mention. There were forms of strain felt by teachers from all contract types, however, those with insecure contracts tended to have extra layers of insecurity that stemmed from the employment strain influenced by their precarious contract.

In addition to the employment strain of regularly searching for work and the uncertainty of income and benefits, there is another factor that can negatively influence the individual health and household well-being of some teachers with occasional contracts. The idea that teachers without a permanent contract are not living up to the expectations of friends and family members and are discouraged from expressing any frustrations or negative sentiments about their employment situation, is an added challenge outside of the workplace that teachers like Melvin (OT) (discussed below), who has worked with both LTO and OT contracts, have experienced.

Occasional teachers might have challenges socializing with those closest to them not only because they do not feel successful in their career paths, but also possibly because they are not following certain North American life norms, like buying a house. Earlier in this chapter, Allison (LTO) mentioned moving out of her house was not possible with an LTO contract and Debbie's (OT) statement that "there's no way you can buy something" with an occasional contract



reinforces that point. Not being able to talk with friends and family members about their job, or are not being able to pursue certain life norms, like buying a house, could be factors along with work intensification and employment strain, that limit the amount of socializing outside of work that LTOs and OTs like Melvin (OT) and Debbie (OT) engage in.

I know that this experience has affected me negatively. I know it's something that I have to meditate on in order to continue to be a happy person. When your unhappiness isn't totally internalized, then your relationship with friends and family are going to suffer. I've had times before where I think people are worried that I'm not doing OK, and I get pissed off whatever. But I'm fine. But yeah, I have found that, at the same time, it should go without saying as soon as you understand to what degree this is an injustice that many of us are experiencing, then. Yeah. How could it not? You know, we're not all Zen monks. (*Melvin has an OT contract*).

Melvin (OT) mentions that he feels a need to internalize his negative emotions, that the people he is close with are concerned about him, that he uses a certain amount of effort to navigate these issues, and that he is aware that other teachers with occasional contracts are also experiencing negative influences on their individual health and household well-being. Mindzak's (2016) research into the working lives of un(der)employed teachers in Ontario has found that Melvin's (OT) experiences are not unique and may be becoming more common for workers entering the educational labour market in Ontario. Referencing Lewchuk et al., (2011), Mindzak (2016) points out that employment insecurity does not only influence the worker, but it also influences their friends and family members, but in different ways:

Precarious employment and the resulting uncertainty may create a plethora of physical and mental health issues, as well as strained relationships for workers and their families, friends, and communities. Precarious employment holds consequences not only for individual workers, but rather carries with it broader social, psychological, and economic impacts. (Mindzak, 2016, p.47-48)

Some of the “consequences” that Melvin (OT) is experiencing from his precarious employment, include using energy to “surface act” (Hochschild, 2012, p.33) and hide his feelings to help ease his interactions with family and friends.

Hochschild's (2012) ideas on "surface acting" (p.33) seem relevant to Melvin's (OT) comments. Melvin believes he is experiencing an "injustice" and is not overly happy with his current employment situation, therefore Melvin is not showing signs of what Hochschild (2012) has referred to as "deep acting" (ibid.). In deep acting, "feigning" is "easy" because it is "unnecessary" (ibid.). Whereas, with surface acting, others are deceived but the worker is not. Hochschild (2012) uses the example of diplomats and actors as effective surface actors (ibid.). Melvin's (OT) experience with his family, although not at work, seems more in line with the awareness that comes from surface acting than deep acting. Nadia (Perm), who had a permanent contract also expressed an awareness of the need to 'surface act' in her social life and avoid certain conversations regarding teaching. Unlike Nadia's (Perm) experience, for Melvin (OT) the avoidance of conversations about teaching had less to do with the political and economic nature of the job and more to do with not wanting to discuss his precarious status.

In *The corrosion of character*, Sennett (1998) writes about the various influences that corporate downsizing policies have had on the emotional and psychological well-being of workers. Sennett (1998) focuses on the cyclical thinking that some laid off workers experience because of their circumstances. The back and forth thinking that Sennett (1998) describes goes between "I have failed" to, "no, you haven't; you are a victim". Sennett (1998) argues that if this cycle is not addressed and reconciled with, it gives way to a synthesis of self-blame, "I am not good enough" (Sennett, 1998, p.118). On top of these personal feelings, workers would need to negotiate how they display or do not display these feelings to others, while at work and while not at work. The degree to which the worker is conscious about these states of thought that Sennett (1998) mentions, determines whether they are 'deep acting' or 'surface acting', and Melvin (OT) seems to be aware of his 'representation' to others.

Importantly, Hochschild (2012) writes that a certain level of emotional management is “fundamental to civilized living” (Hochschild, 2012, p.21), yet also cautions against the extremes of emotional management, especially when not working. At times, Melvin (OT) is surface acting while he is not working, during his homelife. Hochschild (2012) writes that home can be considered a “relief zone” (Hochschild, 2012, p.69) from work, but that it may also impose “emotional obligations of its own” (ibid.). The gap between feelings of relief from something and feeling obliged to do something could create a problematic tension or strain in the subject if the feelings are being masked over through ‘surface acting’ related to work outside the house and coupled with employment strain. Melvin’s (OT) ‘surface acting’ indicates he is conscious that he is needing to “internalize” his “unhappiness”, to avoid negative interactions, or else he can “get pissed off”. Avoiding negative or painful stimuli, such as concerns about possible criticisms from family and friends, along with feeling that there is a lack of positive and valued stimuli creates forms of strain within a person (Garcia & Lane, 2012).

Garcia and Lane (2012) have written on forms of ‘relationship strain’, to describe “the strain resulting from stressful relationships”. Their work has been extended from general strain theory (GST) which has been used in Criminology discourse (Agnew & Brezina, 2019). However, I think their concept of ‘relationship strain’ can be extended to help highlight ways that ‘employment strain’ (Lewchuk et al., 2011) can lead to forms of ‘relationship strain’ outside of work that then further influences the individual health and household well-being of teachers with insecure contracts.

Next, Debbie’s (OT) comments show that with her insecure contract she too may be experiencing forms of relationship strain along with employment strain and does not get to socialize much during the school year. Debbie (OT) feels her lack of socializing is probably not

healthy but does not say why and she also indicates that her precarious contract is preventing her from buying a house, like Allison (LTO). Like Melvin (OT), I considered Debbie's (OT) expressions to be frequently negative and that her contract was a significant factor shaping those feelings:

I don't socialize as much during the school year as I feel like would be healthy...I do still see family quite a bit. But then there's times...when you're really stressed out, where you might be more short with family and then that can impact your relationships. And then also in terms of not being permanent, I think the biggest change or the biggest impact it's had on my life is that you can't...I guess I want to say millennials have had a really tough time with the housing market...In particular, like when you're not permanent, you just feel like you can't there's no way you could buy something. (*Debbie has an OT contract*)

Debbie's (OT) statement about not socializing "much during the school year" being 'unhealthy' points to areas of potential relationship strain, employment strain, work intensification, or some combination. In addition to the negative influence on her social life, Debbie's (OT) contract is preventing her from entering the "housing market" and buying a house because "when you're not permanent, you just feel like there's no way you could buy something". Debbie's (OT) insecurity is having a direct influence on her feelings of autonomy in life in relation to where she can live and when she can socialize. Her insecurity is also influencing her relations with others and when she does get to interact outside of work, "there's times" when she is "really stressed out" and she "might be more short with" her "family". Debbie's (OT) negative comments about her individual health and household well-being are representative of most other teachers with occasional contracts that wanted a permanent contract. Like many of the other occasional teachers, Debbie's (OT) comments suggest that she was experiencing elements of 'job strain' from work, 'employment strain' in general, and 'relationship strain' with her family. Debbie (OT) did not mention the need to 'surface act' in her homelife the way Melvin (OT) did, however, considering that she was aware that she could be

“short with” her “family” it is possible that there would be times were she might avoid being “short” and ‘surface act’.

Debbie (OT) and Melvin’s (OT) comments about their personal relationships, work uncertainties, and financial situations indicate issues of relationship and employment strain, which I considered to be negative and was reflective of many other occasional teachers, both OT and LTO. The added layers of insecurity influencing the life autonomy of many occasional teachers who move back and forth between OT and LTO contracts, like Debbie (OT) and Melvin (OT), that the teachers with full time permanent contracts may have never experienced, point to the contract status hierarchy being ordered not just on contract title but also at times by degrees of security and autonomy as well. Melvin (OT) and Debbie (OT) did not experience being able to “shut things off” like Jeremy (Perm) who had a permanent contract could or pursue Chesterton’s “parts of leisure” (Ciulla, 2000, p. 193) that Joelle (OT) who had an occasional contract but material support, was able to experience. Melvin (OT) and Debbie (OT), along with most of the other occasional teachers, both with OT and LTO contracts, who wanted permanent contracts, had experiences with insecurity that had negative influences on their individual health and household well-being which in turn influenced their feelings of autonomy in their personal lives.

### **Summary of the negative expressions towards individual health and household well-being**

Most teachers had a negative view towards the influence their contract had on their individual health and household well-being. The permanent teachers with negative responses did not express the same appreciation for what their contract enabled outside of work as the permanent teachers with positive and mixed views did and described situations that indicated they were experiencing aspects of job and relationship strain. The LTOs had issues with job and

relationship strain along with employment strain, as did the OTs. The job of teaching had a largely negative influence on the individual health and household well-being of most teachers, regardless of contract type. However, for most of those that wanted permanent contracts, the insecure OT and LTO contracts seemed to make their negative experience with work into an overall negative life experience.

### **7.3 – Summary: Teachers, Teacher Contracts, and Expressions About Individual Health and Household Well-being**

The few teachers with a permanent contract that expressed positive feelings about their contract were because it allowed them to plan and organize a life outside of work and that it allowed them to feel financially secure in their homelife. The one teacher with an occasional contract who expressed positive feelings towards work was because she had a support network and a lifestyle choice for the OT contract. When there were mixed responses from any contract type it was because some of the expressions that were considered positive, like personal lifestyle choices, work-life balances, or having support outside of work, were mixed with comments about the negative influence that various types of strain have on their labour process and life experiences.

Influencing the mixed and negative responses were issues of three kinds of strain: Job, relationship, and employment. Insecure and secure workers were both exposed to the first two ‘strains’. However, having a secure contract shielded permanent workers from the last type of strain, employment, and shaped how they experienced relationship strain differently than many occasional teachers.

Teachers from all contract types expressed how issues around job strain, like work intensification, or working around students in states of “toxic stress”, were influencing their

individual health and household well-being. Job strain issues were factors influencing the negative expressions from all teachers towards not only their work, but their individual health and household well-being as well. For most teachers with a permanent contract, they had issues relating to the demands from a job that carried over into their homelife and stresses from ‘surface acting’ with non-supportive friends, families, and communities. Teachers with insecure OT and LTO contracts, also had the workplace responsibilities that had aspects of job strain that carried over into homelife and they also experienced dynamics of relationship strain when socializing outside of work that teachers with a permanent contract experienced. However, for occasional teachers there were added layers about being asked uncomfortable questions by family members about why they do not have a permanent contract yet and if they were financially and emotionally okay. Teachers with an LTO or OT contract were also without the security of employment from day to day, semester to semester, or year to year that permanent teachers had and were exposed to levels of ‘employment strain’ that teachers with permanent contracts were not exposed to.

Differing personal contexts of the individual teacher and their available supports created differences *within* the contract types. A few teachers with insecure contracts were content in their occupational status because they either had material support and were not dependent on the wage and benefits that a permanent contract would bring, or it benefited their various lifestyle interests, like work-life balances, or greater involvement with the union. However, even for some of the teachers with an occasional contract who had support networks, like being able to live with their parents, family, or friends, they did not want to stay in this precarious position, and it was questionable how long their current arrangements were sustainable. Having an

insecure contract added a layer of employment strain that secure contracts did not experience and created an inequitable experience with the other forms of strain compared to permanent teachers.



## Chapter 8 - Influences from COVID

### 8.1 - Introduction

There were some influential changes to the work of teachers during the first year of COVID. Schools were first closed in March 2020 and then classes resumed a few weeks later in April for online learning. Permanent teachers and OTs working with active LTO contracts worked from home when they resumed teaching their classes through a variety of online platforms that differed by school board. OTs without LTO contracts generally had fewer options for daily work although in some boards there were options to pick up supply work online. However, when schools reopened for the 2020/21 school year, there was an OT shortage (Loriggio, 2021). Schools reopened in September 2020 and many of them had revised school day and school year schedules that varied by school board. A mixture of quadmester or other revised timetable formats<sup>46</sup>, fully online formats, and partially online hybrid formats were implemented across the province and varied by board and sometimes school<sup>47</sup>. The longer class times during the quadmester model, the different learning mediums like hybrid and fully online, along with the OT shortage added challenges to a public school system already in crisis.

Chapter 8 is divided into three broad sections that correspond to the three chapters just discussed: work, the union, individual health, and household well-being. These issues are now discussed in the context of the COVID pandemic. The chapter covers the different expressions from teachers with different contracts that related to the third research question which was a

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<sup>46</sup> At least one school board used, at least for a time, what was called an ‘octomester’ where students would take one course at a time for 20 school days (Dawson, 2020). But this model seemed less in use by school boards than versions of the quadmester.

<sup>47</sup> The quadmester will be explained later in this chapter on pages 20-21.

question created to build off the first two research questions and help compare feelings from before the pandemic to feelings during:

*How have these feelings changed since the start of COVID?*

The assessment of teacher views towards their work, their union, and their individual health and household well-being during COVID were drawn from the responses to the following interview questions as well as answers that were intermingled with the responses to the questions from previous chapters:

*4) How would you describe your working conditions prior to the COVID crisis?*

*5) How have your working conditions changed since the COVID crisis? What do you feel are the most significant changes that have influenced your personal feelings towards your work?*

*In addition to the responses to these questions, references to COVID occurred throughout the interviews, so the responses discussed are not always in relation to these specific questions.*

## 8.2 - Teachers Under Different Contracts Describe their Working Conditions During COVID

**Figure 10 - The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards work before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.**

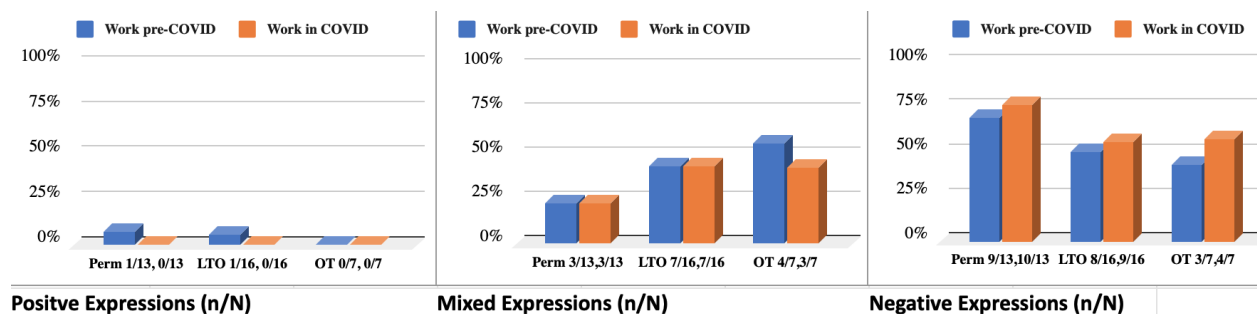


Figure 10 shows that the influences from COVID increased the number of teachers with negative responses, which was already a sizable number of teachers, pre-COVID. There were few

teachers with positive expressions towards work pre-COVID and none during. These changes will be explored further in this section following figures 10a, 10b, and 10c which show the difference in teacher responses from pre-COVID to during COVID.

**Figure 10a - Changes in permanent teacher responses about work.**

<b>Perm - Work</b>	<b>Pre COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Barb - Perm	neg	neg
Roger - Perm	neg	mix
Jeremy - Perm	mix	mix
Catharine - Perm	pos	neg
Kimberly - Perm	neg	neg
Shane - Perm	neg	neg
Maureen - Perm	neg	neg
Leslie - Perm	neg	neg
Melissa - Perm	neg	mix
Eve - Perm	neg	neg
Alyssa - Perm	mix	neg
Cheryl - Perm	mix	neg
Nadia - Perm	neg	neg

**Figure 10b - Changes in LTO teacher responses about work.**

<b>LTO - Work</b>	<b>Pres COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Desiree - LTO	neg	neg
Sabrina - LTO	mix	mix
Joseph - LTO	neg	neg
Maurice - LTO	neg	mix
Kathleen - LTO	mix	neg
Janice - LTO	neg	neg
Meredith - LTO	neg	neg
Anessa - LTO	neg	neg
Cathy - LTO	neg	neg
Agatha - LTO	mix	mix
Allison - LTO	mix	mix
Barry - LTO	mix	mix
Michelle - LTO	neg	neg
Valerie - LTO	mix	mix
Steven - LTO	pos	mix
Nigel - LTO	mix	neg

**Figure 10c - Changes in OT responses about work.**

<b>OT - Work</b>	<b>Pre COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Shelly - OT	mix	mix
Shoshanna - OT	neg	neg
Melvin - OT	neg	neg
Joelle - OT	mix	mix
Debbie - OT	mix	neg
Layla - OT	neg	neg
Mandy - OT	mix	mix

### **8.2.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a positive view of working conditions during COVID**

There were no teachers with primarily positive expressions towards work within any contract type, however, there were some that had positive expressions mixed in with negative expressions and these were seen as mixed responses and categorized as such. There were no primarily positive responses from teachers with a permanent contract because for many of them, as Cheryl (Perm) put it, “COVID and everything has just burnt me out”. Cheryl (Perm) and the other teachers in this project are not alone, there has been research during the pandemic that indicates many teachers from various countries and school systems also felt more ‘anxious’, ‘burnt out’, and ‘stressed’ during the pandemic (Hanover, 2022; Hirshberg et al., 2023; Kush et al., 2022; McIntyre, 2021; Robinson et al., 2022).

There were also no positive feelings expressed towards work during the pandemic for any LTO teachers. For most of them, they felt they were, as Cathy (LTO) said. “working all the time”. For many LTO teachers this was also the case before the pandemic. When the pandemic hit, teachers with LTO contracts like teachers with permanent contracts were “working all the

time”, however, the teachers with LTO contracts, like the teachers with OT contracts, also had employment strain and material security concerns.

For teachers with an OT contract the pandemic differences were like before the pandemic in that there were no primarily positive expressions towards work. It is possible that teaching with an OT contract for teachers that would like a permanent contract feels insecure even when there is not a pandemic. So, when the pandemic hit, the OTs that did not have another form of employment, as Layla (OT) describes it, “lost all...jobs”, or, as Melvin (OT) states, “didn’t have a choice” about losing income. The insecurity of the pandemic was not much different than the insecurity pre-COVID for some teachers with an OT contract.

**Summary of teachers under different contracts with a positive view of working conditions during COVID:**

There were no positive feelings towards work during COVID for any teacher regardless of contract type. This was in line with research from other school districts and countries (Hanover, 2022; Hirshberg et al., 2023; Kush et al., 2022; McIntyre, 2021; Robinson et al., 2022). It was also not a big change from pre-COVID feelings about working conditions. With the initial shutdown, OTs became more insecure with less access to work and when schools opened, they faced the risk of getting sick at work and lacked access to any benefits. LTOs also risked getting sick at work and losing access to benefits once the LTO was over. Although permanent teachers had access to benefits, the overall stress of the pandemic along with new demands regarding workloads, new teaching methods, schedules with longer class times, and a lack of support and resources, were factors that prevented work from being a positive space.

### 8.2.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a *mixed* view of working conditions during COVID

Jeremy (Perm) and Melissa (Perm) had mixed experiences towards work during the pandemic. I classified their experiences as mixed because they appreciated some of the changes that encouraged more connections with their students and their own family but also had a hard time fully enjoying those changes because of the increased workload, high levels of stress among students, and what felt like a lack of compassion from board officials. First, Jeremy (Perm) describes his experience as a teacher that visited other classrooms and the opportunities he had for a “walk” with students as well as that he “felt safe” which seemed positive, but his witnessing of “panic attacks” and knowing that students were in “unventilated rooms” and not safe, seemed to create negative influences on his work. The mixture of positive and negative influences created a mixed experience of work during COVID for Jeremy (Perm).

I felt very safe going into the schools...So any time we needed to talk to a student, we would take them out for a walk outside. And it was actually quite therapeutic...so that allowed for a bit more freedom in that respect because part of the challenge that they were facing with their panic attacks and anxiety was also around, you know, like [studying for] math and, you know, being stuck in a hot, unventilated room. (*Jeremy has a permanent contract*)

Jeremy (Perm) “felt safe going into the schools”. However, he was also aware that some students were in “unventilated” classrooms. Even when some teachers “felt safe” they were aware that others in the same building might not be safe. This awareness along with seeing the students have “panic attacks” and “anxiety” created what seemed like an emotionally exhausting year for Jeremy (Perm). Like Jeremy’s (Perm) experience of being able to take a “walk outside”, there were some positive improvements about work described by teachers. But when these positive views were expressed, they were accompanied with forms of criticism and concern, like being aware students were in a “hot, unventilated room” during an airborne pandemic (Ahmed,

2021; Jimenez et al., 2022; Greenhalgh et al., 2022) which I felt were negative feelings and related to the five factors<sup>48</sup> that could lead to teacher burnout during the pandemic (Sokal et al., 2020).

Two significant aspects of teacher work that improved for some of the teachers included reduced or no commuting time because of online learning, and more equitable classroom expectations for students which provided opportunities to try new forms of pedagogy and promote practices to encourage wellness, like going for a “walk outside”. The issue of reduced commuting<sup>49</sup> seemed like it made an improvement in some of the work experiences of teachers during the pandemic that might have helped offset feelings of stress and burnout. Melissa (Perm) was explicit in how not having to commute and being able to wake up later has improved her mental health, “For the last 16 months, I've been able to wake up with the sun. And my quality of life and mental health has improved greatly”. However, Melissa (Perm) also expressed that:

As much as they pay lip service to caring about teacher mental health. Not one policy in the bag of them has addressed the increased workload of the year, the increased stress of the year. The constant change has been crushingly difficult to deal with. (*Melissa has a permanent contract*)

So, as much as Melissa (Perm) liked not commuting, which was a positive influence on her work experience, the lack of administrative support, “lip service”, and “constant change” were negative factors influencing her mental health and did not seem to make her feel like a professionally autonomous teacher. On the opposite end of the ‘working from home’ spectrum is

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<sup>48</sup> The five factors are: 1. Concern for student wellness, 2. Increased emotional labour, 3. Lack of professional development (PD) support, 4. Lack of administrative support, and 5. Inequitable technological access and use. All these issues were raised in the interviews and were factors in there not being any primarily positive expressions towards work by teachers of any contract type.

<sup>49</sup> There is research that supports the positive experiences from reduced commuting. (Chatterjee et al., 2020)

Eve (Perm). Eve (Perm) felt that working from home was a negative experience for her mental health, “to have it all [work] in my house has been pretty brutal”. Some of the factors that seemed to influence a positive or negative work-from-home experience were: Having a space at home to work from, access to proper technology, and the unique dynamics with the other people they were living with. When those factors were challenged, the positive experiences that Melissa (Perm) describes about working from home were not as evident.

On top of the type of contract and the context of a teacher’s work from home space, the role of administrators<sup>50</sup> and the specific school board during COVID were important towards influencing the experiences of Jeremy (Perm) and allowing him to take students on walks, and Melissa (Perm) where they helped facilitate the “crushingly difficult” “constant change”. Chances for more humane interactions like going for a “walk” allowed for some positive experiences but experiencing “constant change” was expressed as a negative. How the administrators dealt with their staff during COVID was important. When teachers talked about administrators allowing them a greater level of professional autonomy by letting them decide if they can take students outside of the class for a “walk” or create progressive forms of assessment, the teachers seemed to have positive expressions. When administrators and board officials were seen as just paying “lip service” to issues of mental health and generally not supporting teachers, this then had a negative influence on the mental health of the teacher, even if they had the job security and benefits of a permanent contract.

However, Sabrina (LTO) and Valerie (LTO) said that the job security of an LTO contract over an OT contract made their year less stressful for them. Despite the temporary security and benefits of the LTO contract which was positive, it was still temporary and insecure, and these

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<sup>50</sup> The influence of individual administrators will be discussed further in the following sections.



teachers wanted a permanent contract, so I saw the limited security as negative. In addition to the insecurity, the feelings of reduced autonomy that came about from teaching quadmasters and losing prep time created a mixed experience of work for Sabrina (LTO) and Valerie (LTO).

Below, Sabrina (LTO) talks about “never” feeling “unsafe”, not liking quadmasters, and the logistical issues from teaching hybrid while Valerie (LTO) emphasizes the material benefits from having a more secure contract yet also having “eight straight days of [prep] coverage”<sup>51</sup>, because “you couldn’t get occasional teachers”:

What the schools have done, in terms of safety measures, I think they've done what they can. I've never felt unsafe going to school... the one thing I didn't like was the quadmaster system...at times I had like one student in class at a time and the rest were online. So that kind of made it difficult in terms of interaction, made it difficult for kids to kind of stay focused. I felt that my attention was a little bit more on the kids online than...in person. (*Sabrina has an LTO contract*)

I had an LTO, I was OK because we have like eleven sick days...But as an OT, how do boards expect occasional teachers to be able to financially support themselves when they're going into a different school every single day with different teachers or different students, and this virus is running rampant, but they don't have sick days? If they don't go into work one day, they're not getting paid. So, I don't understand how they wanted to stop the spread of COVID in schools, but [they weren't] willing to pay occasional teachers who get exposed to COVID? Like what do you want them to do? This is their life. This is their livelihood. It just blows my mind what they are expecting. You can't survive in a school without occasional teachers, they are so fundamental to the success of students... This year, I had eight straight days of coverage in my school, because you couldn't get occasional teachers... they were afraid to come in... they weren't being treated properly. So I was in a good position, but I wouldn't have if I was an occasional teacher. Would have been brutal. (*Valerie has an LTO contract*)

Valerie (LTO) and Sabrina (LTO) both said they felt safe going into work, however, that may have been because they had access to benefits like paid sick days while in their LTO contracts. They also expressed issues around having insufficient planning time for teaching in

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<sup>51</sup> By “eight straight days of coverage” Valerie (LTO) means that during her prep and planning time she had to ‘cover’ another teacher's class because there was a lack of OTs. OTs would typically be the ones that would be teaching those classes that Valerie (LTO) had to ‘cover’.

new formats, like online and hybrid learning. Sabrina's (LTO) statement is like the comments by other teachers from all contracts, in that she was concerned about the quality of education students were getting through hybrid learning. Hybrid online learning is where some members of the class are online while other students are in person. Not many teachers interviewed thought this was good pedagogy or that they were properly trained or equipped to deliver this mode of instruction and there is research that supports those sentiments about forms of online learning (Campbell et al., 2022; Farhadi, 2021). Teachers felt that having to focus on two groups of learners at once was distracting for them as well as the students. As Sabrina (LTO) describes, it was hard to give attention fully to one group:

At times I had like one student in class at a time and the rest were online. So that kind of made it difficult in terms of interaction, made it difficult for kids to kind of stay focused. I felt that my attention was a little bit more on the kids online than...in person. *(Sabrina has an LTO contract)*

In addition to what seems like questionable pedagogy, there were also concerns about privacy because of the computer camera filming students in their private residences as well as students in the classroom who may not have consented to being filmed. In the case of the latter, the teacher would have to take steps so that those students were not accidentally filmed when the computer laptop that was being used as a classroom camera, had to be adjusted or moved around the room. Teachers would also have to develop materials for both in-class and online students which required more prep time, but teachers like Valerie (LTO) were already losing their prep time, so this task created more work outside of school hours. Teachers of hybrid classes would often be in charge of setting up the computers and sound system in their rooms to accommodate the hybrid learning and this was something not all of them were trained for. Issues of privacy, a lack of training, poor equipment, and concerns about the quality of education were sentiments that teachers with LTO contracts like Sabrina (LTO) shared with other LTOs and permanent

teachers. Many of the teachers with LTO contracts expressed similar professional concerns around hybrid learning that many of the teachers with permanent contracts had. The LTO teachers also had concerns that most teachers with OT contracts had around job security once their LTO ended.

Valerie (LTO) expressed that she was aware of the security, or lack of, that an OT contract creates. Valerie (LTO) felt that without the LTO contract the year “would have been brutal”. Most of the teachers with an occasional contract, either OT or LTO, like Valerie (LTO), expressed that they were aware of the material differences that their insecure contract created and that having a bit more security with an LTO contract was beneficial during a pandemic because it provided some access to steady income and benefits, like paid sick days, while in the contract. The security of the contract as well as the benefits of “eleven [paid] sick days” helped shape Valerie’s (LTO) experience of work for the better during COVID. Along with her empathy for teachers in OT contracts, Valerie (LTO) expressed confusion around the treatment of OTs, especially considering their essential function in the school, “you can’t survive in a school without occasional teachers”:

Like what do you want them to do? This is their life. This is their livelihood...And like, you can't survive in a school without occasional teachers, they are so fundamental to the success of students...This year, I had eight straight days of coverage, because you couldn't get occasional teachers. *(Valerie has an LTO contract)*

Valerie (LTO) is pointing out that not only is the lack of job security not fair to the teachers with OT contracts, but that it also influences the workday and ability to plan for all the teachers in a school. She states, “you can’t survive in a school without occasional teachers”. Importantly, this was already a pre-pandemic issue as was discussed in Chapter 5 Work, when Cheryl (Perm) mentioned teachers were “getting hammered” by on-calls. In a pandemic, when there would be more people away sick, this would be a more significant issue. Not having OTs

influenced Valerie's (LTO) ability to have a prep period which could also influence the quality of her lesson planning which influences her experience of work as well as the learning of her students. Before and during the pandemic the mixed expressions towards work from teachers with LTO contracts tended to overlap into issues that teachers from each of the other contract types had. This was around issues of professional autonomy and the quality of pedagogy they shared with teachers that had permanent contracts and issues of job security and safety that they shared with teachers that had OT contracts, like Mandy (OT) and Melvin (OT) who also had a mixed experience with work during COVID.

I just finished an LTO where I was going to school's face to face and it's like I'm there because somebody has to do it, you know? Like almost everything when it comes to my career, it's job security. Why am I willing to put myself even potentially in harm's way? You know, 'what can I do to impress you [the school board]? You want me to come in and do this and put myself at risk? Sure. I'll do it. You need this. Yes, I'll do it'...I think the schools have been OK with COVID...I think schools at some point, just as whatever institutions of their nature tend to do, were a bit bureaucratic and over the top, but whatever, we were panicked, about a pandemic, so that's understandable...I think they did a pretty good job on COVID. (*Melvin has an OT contract*)

I think in terms of with COVID, I didn't feel not safe. I know it's a double negative, but I mean, I mask, I have my sanitizer. Then when they brought out shields and goggles, I brought in my own goggles the few times I actually had to use them...But for the supply teachers, all they basically had was masks. Whereas we were told that at any school, the school will provide you with a package of masks and either a shield or goggles. Well, shields or goggles came much later and we didn't get those because even the people in the office were saying 'we hardly even have it for our regular teachers', like, OK...And the number of jobs just dropped". (*Mandy has an OT contract*)

Melvin (OT) and Mandy's (OT) comments show that they generally felt safe as OTs and appreciated the opportunity to have some form of income during the pandemic. Yet, they also suggested at times they were aware that they were being exposed to forms of risk that teachers with permanent contracts were not and that "job security" was still a concern. Mandy (OT) and Melvin's (OT) comments suggest there is a contract status hierarchy between teachers with OT contracts and teachers with a permanent contract or "regular teachers", as Mandy phrased it.

Mandy (OT) and Melvin's (OT) comments suggest that forms of protection against the virus, like not moving between schools and different classes and having access to proper PPE, were not the same for teachers with OT contracts as they were for "regular" teachers with a permanent contract or teachers who had consistent LTO contracts at the same school and were somewhat "regular". Mandy (OT) and Melvin's (OT) income and safety concerns, along with their feelings around other safety issues and an appreciation for being able to work, created mixed responses.

As much as Melvin (OT) felt some protective measures were "over the top", he also felt he was putting himself "at risk". At points in the interview, he also expressed frustrations about colleagues who were unsympathetic towards the income disparities that exist between teachers with a permanent contract and teachers with OT contracts. Because of the income disparity that Melvin (OT) describes, "when people are making a hundred grand a year... and I'm making a quarter of that", then "job security" becomes "everything", the issues of job security could have possibly influenced Melvin (OT) to downplay his safety concerns which he alludes to when he says that he is "potentially in harm's way".

The "risk" Melvin (OT) would have been facing would not have been the same as his permanent contract colleagues if either of them were to get sick. A teacher with a permanent contract would not have the same "job security" issues that Melvin (OT) has because they would have access to paid sick leave and a job to return to once they were feeling better. Melvin (OT), as a teacher with an OT contract, would not have access to sick leave and if he was not able to work the minimum number of days annually that his board required to stay employed, then he may not have a job to return to once he felt better. Melvin's (OT) feelings that things were "over the top", his concerns for "job security" and feelings that he was putting himself "at risk" were

combined with his sentiments that “they did a pretty good job” and that he seemed to appreciate that he was working, to classify his experiences towards work during COVID as mixed.

Mandy (OT) had a similar mixed response. Mandy (OT) also felt safe going into different schools. Her expressions around feeling safe and appreciating being able to access work, along with the issues about delayed access to personal protective equipment (PPE), “they came much later”, and being treated inequitably when compared to the “regular” teachers, created what I felt was a mixed experience for Mandy (OT) during the pandemic. Like Melvin (OT), Mandy’s (OT) comments also connect with the idea of the contract status hierarchy. In the status hierarchy the lower status teacher, the OT, would be seen as lower status by school community members as well as colleagues. Being seen and treated as lower status could signal to school staff and board officials that an OT is not the same as a “regular” teacher with a permanent contract. This difference in status may result in not being able to access the same PPE or other work protections like work and safety rights, as a “regular” teacher, as was seen in Chapter 5 Work, when the teacher with the LTO contract was removed from the school. A dynamic involving possibly different forms of union representation between OTs, LTOs, and permanent teachers, suggests that office staff in schools may feel that an occasional teacher like Mandy (OT), may not have the same degree of union protection as a teacher with a permanent contract. This would create a different work experience for OTs and LTOs compared to permanent teachers. If this inequity exists there might be less of a need to ensure that OTs have the proper PPE, which even “regular” teachers do not always have access to.

Issues that stem from workplace hierarchies influenced mixed experiences for Mandy (OT) and Melvin (OT). Because of their insecure lower contract status and concern about jobs ‘dropping off’, they both seemed to appreciate having access to work which I felt was positive.

However, Melvin's (OT) concerns about his income compared to his colleagues and Mandy's mention about access to PPE compared to her permanent contract colleagues when she was told, "we hardly even have it for our regular teachers", also suggest they are aware, at a certain level, that they are in a lower status position compared to their colleagues, which I considered to be negative. Concerns about income security when "the jobs just dropped" for Mandy (OT) and "job security" for Melvin (OT) were interwoven with expressions that suggested they generally felt safe going into work and appreciated having access to income during the pandemic.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a mixed view of working conditions during COVID**

The number of LTOs and permanent teachers with mixed views towards work stayed the same during COVID. When there were mixed expressions about work during COVID they occurred when some of the permanent and LTO teachers indicated that they appreciated being able to work from home or practice new forms of pedagogy, which was considered a positive. However, these were also negative for some when the new practices involved poorly supported hybrid learning and longer class times, or the working from home was not in a space conducive for teaching. The number of OTs with mixed experiences decreased and the number of OTs with negative experiences increased during COVID. It could be that for the OTs, the insecurity of their contracts and the lack of sick leave benefits made work a negative experience during the pandemic and reduced the number of OTs expressing mixed views.

### **8.2.3 - Teachers with a negative view of working conditions during COVID**

During the pandemic, some of the permanent contract teachers, like Barb (Perm) had safety concerns that compounded the changes in the workplace. Additionally, as Shane (Perm) points out, the changes in the workplace were not adequately supported by the board or the

Ministry. Safety concerns, a lack of support, and overall work intensification created an overwhelming negative experience of work during COVID for permanent contract and LTO teachers. Like the OTs, for the LTOs, the security concerns around their contract were an extra layer that influenced their sense of autonomy that was already being challenged from having to work in what some felt were “unsafe” spaces and a “shitshow”. First, Barb (Perm) highlights issues with safety and then Shane (Perm) touches on issues of support and a lack of leadership from management.

So, I actually felt really unsafe going into my classroom. I could not open my windows... They didn't give me a ventilation system. And because I was the last person, I'm getting all the air from all the other people in my classroom. So, I felt incredibly unsafe”. (*Barb had a permanent contract*)

Barb’s (Perm) comments show that teachers with sick leave benefits still did not want to get infected with COVID. Even though the security of a permanent contract may have helped at a certain level in the event she was to get sick, Barb (Perm) still felt “incredibly unsafe”. Given the unknown nature of COVID and early signs that for many people it does long lasting damage to their immune system (Pender, 2022; Nikiforuk, 2022), Barb’s (Perm) fears seem warranted. However, despite the severity of the virus many permanent and LTO teachers seemed more concerned with the lack of support and professional development (PD) they were not being given to teach in new formats, like in quadesters or via online/hybrid, and new content regarding important issues about inequity in society, than they were about getting sick. Shane’s (Perm) comments highlight some of the negative issues around a lack of PD and the role of board and Ministry management in that lack.

During COVID it's been a shit show, it's brutal, I have nothing positive to say... you're not even rewarded for trying new things because it will inevitably go wrong. There will inevitably be a complaint. And because everyone is so angry, because it's COVID, complaints always go to the head every single time... individual principals like mine, for example, really tried, but there was just a fundamental lack of leadership at every



level...when they talk about Lecce in the media, about the training they provided for teachers, I'd like to know what he actually means because I haven't had any and neither is anyone else I know. So, if things have gone well, it's from casual conversations from one person or another. Nothing structured that's been done at all. I'm still frustrated with how little help we've gotten at all this year from higher ups in the Ministry and the board.  
*(Shane has a permanent contract)*

Shane's (Perm) comments were seen as generally negative. Part of Shane's (Perm) negative sentiment is felt towards "higher ups in the Ministry and the board". Shane (Perm) does give credit to individuals like his 'principal', but individuals were not able to make up for systemic failings. Shane (Perm) felt that some individual administrators tried hard to make up for a lack of direction, planning, and material supports from the Ministry of Education, yet still lacked the ability to lead: "...COVID hit and...individual principals like mine, for example, really tried, but there was just a fundamental lack of leadership at every level". Shane (Perm) goes on to describe his frustrations: "I'm still frustrated with how little help we've gotten at all this year from higher ups in the Ministry or the board". Despite the efforts of some individuals who were helpful, a lack of organization and planning from "higher ups", had a stifling effect on leadership at lower levels. This awareness that some individuals were trying to compensate for systemic failings was a recurring theme in a few of the interviews. It also points to the influence of context and policy (or lack of), on individual actions and worker experience. An individual's actions, even a well-intended administrator, were still constrained to certain degrees by certain contexts shaped by policies or lack of. Taking insights from social learning theory that were discussed in Chapter 6, contextual framing and underlying social and personal ideologies are influential in organizational dynamics and have certain characteristics within neoliberal political economies. Therefore, despite the efforts of some individuals, the larger contexts and their underlying neoliberal individualist ideologies influenced a stressful work atmosphere that felt largely unsupported by workers like Barb (Perm) and Shane (Perm).

Another teacher with a permanent contract, Kim (Perm), had the worst professional year of her life and it was not made easier by her management: “this past year was by far the worst year of my career. Really stressful, awful. The demands on us from our school board, from our administration, were unreasonable, virtually impossible”. Things were so bad for Kim (Perm) that she feels many teachers will be leaving the profession or retiring early: “You’re going to see a mass exodus of teachers in the next five years...many people are planning to retire early”. There were teachers from all contract types who felt that the provincial government and the Ministry of Education should have done more in general to make schools safer. Teachers from mostly LTO and permanent contracts were also critical of what they felt was a lack of professional leadership from *all* the professional pillars during the pandemic: the government, the Ministry, their own school board, their own school, and sometimes even their union. Quite a few teachers expressed feeling unprepared for new board initiatives around equity issues and that was because they felt their board did not provide them with sufficient professional development (PD).

In addition to the pandemic, the 2020/21 school year occurred in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police in Minnesota, the global Black Lives Matter movement, the discovery of indigenous child graves in Canada, the inequitable pandemic response, and the intensifying climate crisis. Given this context, there was some push by boards to address these issues and many teachers expressed an interest and desire to engage and facilitate conversations with students around social justice, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. Teachers, like Shane (Perm), expressed an interest in these types of ‘courageous conversations’<sup>52</sup> with their

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<sup>52</sup> ‘Courageous conversations’ is partly the title of an educational equity textbook called, *Courageous conversations about race* (Singleton, G.E., 2014). The book discusses ideas around race as a social construct, the legacy of white supremacy in the school system, and the need for

colleagues and students, but felt that their board and/or the Ministry did not adequately offer the needed PD for teachers to facilitate ‘courageous conversations’ in a manner he felt comfortable with. Shane (Perm), who was ‘frustrated with the higher ups’, also details the lack of sufficient board provided PD: “The PD stuff that came from the board or Ministry that was mandated was just so terrible”. Shane (Perm) also mentioned there was a lot of momentum related to the Black Lives Matter movement in his board, but that the school provided PD was “terrible”. Shane’s (Perm) experience connects with the sentiment expressed by most teachers, that the provincial government and the Ministry of Education did not effectively provide sufficient support for school boards, whether in terms of financial, technological, pedagogical, or professional development support. A lack of professional support seemed to exacerbate feelings of stress related to teaching during the pandemic amongst teachers with permanent or LTO contracts. Aside from new equitable pedagogical goals, and the online/hybrid learning, some of the other changes to their work were the use of new learning block formats, such as longer daily classes and split semesters. For example, some boards used ‘quadmesters’ during the 2020/21 school year which some teachers enjoyed but many emphasized that they disliked for themselves and their students (Campbell, et al., 2022).

Debbie (OT) identified as a teacher with an OT contract, but she also taught with an LTO contract during the 2020/21 school year. Debbie (OT) noticed that in her board it looked as if administrators were using the quadmester format to get teachers with LTO contracts to teach four courses instead of the three courses that they would often teach if they took over the schedule of a teacher with a permanent contract pre-pandemic.

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educators to have ‘courageous conversations’- with themselves, colleagues, and students about these issues and embed them into their pedagogical practice.

I was noticing this year that schools were posting a single quad at a time so that basically... LTOs would have to teach like four courses in a semester instead of only three... I'm nervous, like, are they going to try to do that? Now that they've done that? Are they going to continue to try to do stuff like that? Because it's not fair at all. (*Debbie has an OT contract*)

A 'quadmester' is a semester split into two. Generally, in a quadmester, students take two courses for approximately two months with one course in the morning and one in the afternoon as opposed to four courses over approximately four months with two courses in the morning and two courses in the afternoon that they would take in a semester system. In a semester system full time contract teachers either with a permanent contract or LTO contract would teach the same three courses every day during the semester, their fourth period in the day would be a planning or "prep" period, but they do not always get this if the school is short on staff. If there are absent teachers in the school on a certain day and no available daily OT teachers, then a teachers' planning period might be taken away and they might have to cover another class.

In some forms of the quadmester system the morning class was in person and the afternoon class was online in order to reduce contact time and transmission rates of COVID. Some school boards kept this format for the whole quadmester and some boards switched which course was in the morning and which one was in the afternoon every other week to rotate the online and in person learning. Under this latter adaptation of the quadmester, a student would have one class in the morning and one class in the afternoon one week and then the next week the morning class from the previous week would be in the afternoon and the afternoon class would be in the morning. A teacher that was a full-time contract teacher would teach two courses one quadmester and one course the second quadmester. In the quadmester where they taught one course, during the other half of the day they would have their prep and planning time. But many teachers said that they did not always get their planning or "prep" time and would

have to do ‘coverages’, like Valerie and her “eight straight days of coverage”, because of a lack of OTs/daily supply teachers during the pandemic (Loriggio, 2021; Ordway, 2023; Rushowy & Teotonio, 2022).

Debbie (OT) suggested that in her board, administrators were hiring for LTO contracts by the single course. For example, instead of hiring an LTO who is replacing a full-time permanent contract teacher and will teach according to that teacher's exact schedule of teaching three courses in a semester, the administrators were allegedly breaking up the course loads the permanent contract teachers taught into single courses. According to Debbie (OT), this meant that the teachers in LTO contracts could apply to teach four courses, individually, over the span of two quads instead of being hired to teach the three courses over two quads that the permanent contract teacher would have taught. This model of hiring would require fewer teachers. It would also increase the workload of teachers by eliminating their planning time. One of the teachers who experienced an excessive workload because of the quadesters was Kathleen (LTO):

COVID was not a good time to be a teacher... We also had quadesters, which was just too much to get done and not enough time... I worked for like twelve, fourteen hours every single day. There was just no way to get it done. And part of that is being a brand-new teacher, I recognize that. But it was not just me. It was the veteran teachers who were also working all of the time. So COVID was really not great. Honestly, I thought many times I'm like, you know what, I'm one year [in] and I could just fold in the towel and walk away now, which is not actually true. I don't think that's what I wanted to do. I was just really exhausted and frustrated. *(Kathleen has an LTO contract)*

Kathleen's (LTO) workload and contract created an experience that was negative.

Kathleen (LTO) thought she might “walk away” from her job and that “COVID was not a good time to be a teacher”. Kathleen's (LTO) comments touch on her negative experience with the longer class time and shorter course completion time, “there was too much to get done and not enough time... honestly, I worked for like 12, 14 hours every single day. There was just no way to get it done”. Kathleen (LTO) does mention that she is a “brand new teacher” and she

‘recognizes’ that it was not just her, “veteran teachers... were also working all the time”. Valerie (LTO) also mentions that the work intensification was such that the length of time in-class did not allow teachers ample time for washroom breaks:

It was really hard...two and a half hours is a long time to be in a class with a bunch of students for learning, but also for you, like teachers need a break to go to the bathroom, like you need to be able to drink water...I did not drink enough water at all when I was teaching. (*Valerie has an LTO contract*)

Debbie’s (OT) comments about the quadmester show similar concern around workers’ rights, in her story it was teachers teaching an extra course. However, those teachers are paid for teaching the extra course, but it does set a new standard or workday norm of teachers teaching four periods a day instead of the current three periods, which can lower the labour standard for teachers. Such changes to the norms of the secondary teaching workday influenced some teachers to wonder why they even had a union or a collective agreement (CA) if those factors could be looked over and ignored. These issues will be discussed in the section on negative expressions about the union.

Other than Debbie (OT) who was an LTO for a time during the pandemic, teachers with OT contracts did not have many comments on the quadmester system which could be because reduced planning time and increased teaching time did not influence their day-to-day teaching work as much as it did for teachers with LTO and permanent contracts who had to revise their course programs for new course formats. For some OTs, the stresses that can typically occur during in-class substitute teaching were reduced with online teaching, such as in-person classroom management. Still, some of the teachers with an OT contract and many of the teachers with permanent or LTO contracts, indicated that there were new online classroom management issues, such as ensuring against ‘zombombing’ and that the screen avatars being used by students were not racist, misogynist, or offensive in other ways (Redden, 2020).

On top of the classroom management concerns that arose from online learning, there were also ergonomic ones (Choudhary et al., 2020) that Debbie (OT) experienced with her online work. Looking at students, research by Choudhary et al., (2020) focused on children's ergonomic issues from online learning, however, it is reasonable to infer that the teachers on the other side of the computer monitor teaching those students, might have similar health related issues from virtual school. Choudhary et al., (2020) argue that after only two months of online schooling, issues of back pain, eye strain, headaches, irregular sleep, and behavior changes occurred in the students to such a degree that many "have developed significant problems and this may increase the risk of many painful syndromes in future" (Choudhary et al., 2020, p.117).

If a teacher feels they must endure a certain level of physical discomfort that can lead to longer term health consequences this could reduce their overall sense of professional autonomy in that they are unable to control significant health and safety parameters around their working conditions. This situation could also normalize the management imperative in public education and lower working standards if management can make decisions that negatively influences the health of the teachers, like moving to online learning without best practice health and safety standards being implemented and if the union does not effectively challenge these changes.

Debbie (OT) mentions her concerns about arthritis and migraines from working online as an

LTO:

The desk where I'm using a laptop, I don't have a mouse... I had shoulder pain... spending so much time designing lessons and just using the trackpad on my computer or like marking using a trackpad. I felt like that took a lot out of my hand essentially. I was worried I was going to get like, early arthritis or something... then also just like migraines...because you're constantly staring at a computer screen... What I loved about teaching was how we don't just have a desk job where we have to sit and stare at a computer. *(Debbie has an OT contract)*

Debbie's (OT) comments highlight some of the health and safety issues that she experienced working online as an LTO, but this would also influence daily online OT teachers as well, albeit in different ways. Debbie (OT) pointed out that working in an online learning environment was not why she went into teaching and what she "loved about teaching" was that it was not a "desk job". Debbie's (OT) expressions towards online work were considered to be negative in that her autonomy was reduced, there were detriments to her health, and she was not doing what she "loved" about teaching and instead she was "staring at a computer screen". However, these issues with online learning would apply to online learning in general and not solely during COVID. The move online and the adoption of hybrid models has pushed public education into a virtual world where, as Dr. Beyhan Faradhi states, "we know virtually nothing about online learning" (Moore, S.M., & de Oliveira Jayme, B., 2022, p.20). Lack of support for online teaching, new professional development demands, unsafe workspaces for some, created negative working conditions for teachers under all contracts. However, for OTs who were not in an LTO when COVID hit, they had job security issues to deal with above the other concerns that permanent and LTO teachers were experiencing. Layla (OT) describes her situation early in the pandemic:

I lost all my jobs, I was no longer working... I was working for [one school board] and I was working for [another school board] ... they all shut down. Yeah, I was on CERB... I faced homelessness. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Layla (OT) draws attention to the issue that even with the help of CERB<sup>53</sup> she still "faced homelessness". However, as tough as Layla's (OT) situation during the pandemic was, Mindzak

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<sup>53</sup> The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was a program brought in at the start of the pandemic by the Federal government. It provided \$2000.00 a month for up to 28 weeks (7 months) to workers who qualified and lost work because of the pandemic shutdown. (King, 2022).



(2016) showed that there were OTs struggling with housing issues before the pandemic.

Mindzak (2016) shared the story of ‘Domenic’, an OT. Mindzak (2016) writes that “Domenic for instance, discussed how he has had to sell his house and even spent time at a shelter since becoming a teacher” (Mindzak, 2016, p. 103) and quotes Domenic (OT):

Not having a job and needing 20 hours of work to even get Employment Insurance... Ultimately that’s what happened, so I had to rely on some church members to help me survive economically and I was getting by living in the youth hostel with some very shady characters sharing the same room. (Mindzak, 2016, *ibid.*)

On top of security concerns, most OTs during the pandemic had the safety concerns that Barb (Perm) expressed about being in schools. At least one had ergonomic issues with online work. When OTs were able to get work, they also had variations of the frustrations with management about an overall lack of support that Shane (Perm) and Kim (Perm) mentioned. In addition to these negative experiences, OTs had financial security issues that were not the same for permanent teachers or teachers in an LTO, and were so extreme in some cases, like Layla’s (OT), that they may have also “faced homelessness”.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a negative view of work during COVID**

Along with the virus itself, an overall lack of financial and pedagogical support from the Ministry and school boards influenced the experiences of teachers from all contracts. The number of teachers from all contract types with negative feelings towards work increased during the pandemic. There were more permanent teachers who expressed negative feelings than LTO teachers or OTs. This could be because their curriculum responsibilities and secure contract allowed them to focus their comments on specific work-related issues more often and to be more open. LTO teachers would have also had similar concerns about changes in specific curriculum issues and long-term lesson planning via new technology formats like hybrid or completely

online for classes they previously taught in person. However, like OTs, more than a few LTO teachers also expressed concerns about job security issues that permanent teachers did not. Unlike OTs such as Layla (OT), those in LTOs had less immediate financial concerns because of the longer-term nature of their contract. The security of the longer-term contract, even if occasional, allowed for more comments on work and professional autonomy, even if negative, to be more focused on teaching as opposed to accessing the ability to teach. The more secure the contract, the more the negative comments about work had to do with specific at work issues.

#### **8.2.4 - Summary of the different expressions about work during COVID**

There were no teachers expressing primarily positive feelings towards work during COVID, but this was not much different than pre-COVID. When there were positive sentiments mixed in with negative sentiments, from teachers in any contract group it had to do with either enjoying working from home or practicing new forms of pedagogy. However, working from home and practicing new forms of pedagogy were also a negative for some teachers who either did not have a conducive home environment to work in or did not feel the new forms of pedagogy and practice, like hybrid learning, were properly supported. Individual administrators may have tried to compensate for some larger governmental neglect, however, many teachers felt generally unsupported by all levels of management. The number of teachers with mixed feelings towards work for permanent and LTO teachers stayed the same and decreased for OTs during the pandemic. Similar to pre-pandemic, the more secure the contract, the more the comments about work had to do with actual at work issues and the less secure the contract, the more work-related comments drifted into issues of job security. The more secure the contract the more the comments related to issues of professional autonomy and teaching issues, whether mixed or negative.

### 8.3 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Union during COVID

**Figure 11: The positive, mixed, and negative expressions towards their union before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.**

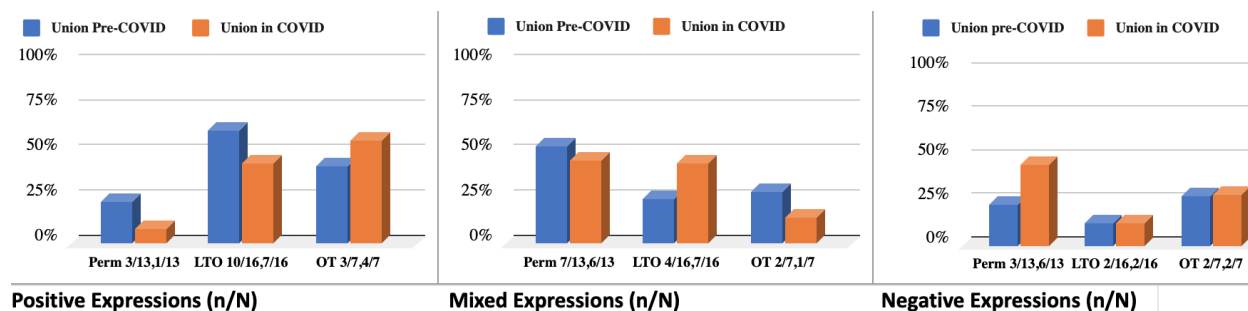


Figure 11 suggests that COVID resulted in fewer teachers in permanent and LTO contracts having a positive view of their union, but more teachers on OT contracts expressing positive views. I will explore these findings in more detail following figures 11a, 11b, and 11c, which show the difference in the types of responses from the different teachers.

**Figure 11a - Changes in permanent teacher responses about their union.**

Perm - Union	Pre COVID	During COVID
Barb - Perm	mix	neg
Roger - Perm	pos	mix
Jeremy - Perm	mix	mix
Catharine - Perm	neg	neg
Kimberly - Perm	mix	mix
Shane - Perm	mix	mix
Maureen - Perm	neg	neg
Leslie - Perm	mix	neg
Melissa - Perm	neg	neg
Eve - Perm	pos	pos
Alyssa - Perm	mix	neg
Cheryl - Perm	pos	mix
Nadia - Perm	mix	mix

**Figure 11b - Changes in LTO teacher responses about their union.**

<b>LTO - Union</b>	<b>Pres COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Desiree - LTO	mix	mix
Sabrina - LTO	pos	pos
Joseph - LTO	mix	mix
Maurice - LTO	pos	pos
Kathleen - LTO	pos	mix
Janice - LTO	pos	pos
Meredith - LTO	neg	mix
Anessa - LTO	pos	mix
Cathy - LTO	pos	mix
Agatha - LTO	mix	mix
Allison - LTO	pos	pos
Barry - LTO	pos	pos
Michelle - LTO	neg	neg
Valerie - LTO	mix	neg
Steven - LTO	pos	pos
Nigel - LTO	pos	pos

**Figure 11c - Changes in OT responses about their union.**

<b>OT - Union</b>	<b>Pre COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Shelly - OT	pos	pos
Shoshanna - OT	mix	mix
Melvin - OT	neg	neg
Joelle - OT	pos	pos
Debbie - OT	mix	pos
Layla - OT	neg	neg
Mandy - OT	pos	pos

### **8.3.1 - Teachers under different contracts with a *positive* view of their union during COVID**

There was only one teacher with a permanent contract who I classified as having primarily positive expressions towards their union during COVID. One of the early career teachers, Eve (Perm), appeared to be the most sympathetic to what their union was legally capable of in regard to job action during the pandemic:

We're not in a position to go on a legal strike... we would look so bad. And we already were being just crucified in the media because, you know, it's clear that for a lot of people, they either don't respect our profession or they don't see value in us. Or they think we're overpaid and lazy, so I think the union was in a really difficult position. (*Eve has a permanent contract*)

Eve (Perm) feels the union is in a difficult position regarding job action when she states, “We’re not in a position to go on a legal strike” and the public thinks teachers are “lazy” and “overpaid”.

The second point Eve (Perm) makes is interesting because as discussed in Chapter 7, teachers from all contract types reported having difficult experiences with friends and family who had negative perceptions of teachers, teachers’ unions, and public education. However, these sentiments do not align with reports and polling that indicates the majority of the public supported teachers in the pandemic (DeMello, 2020; Press Progress, 2020) and have also supported their right to strike in the past (Kamenetz, 2018).

Eve’s (Perm) support for the union during the pandemic and her involvement in attending meetings prior to COVID that was discussed in Chapter 6, influenced me to see her feelings towards the union during the pandemic as positive as she had no strong criticisms of the union. Many of the teachers with a permanent contract were like Shane (Perm) and “reluctant to criticize the union.”. However, even if some of the teachers with a permanent contract were sympathetic to union challenges, they were still somewhat critical of the union which often created mixed responses.

LTOs had a much more favorable view of their union during COVID than the permanent teachers, although there were still some negative feelings from some. Almost half of the LTOs like Allison (LTO) and Janice (LTO) expressed positive feelings towards the union during COVID. Allison (LTO) and Janice (LTO) expressed feelings towards their union that seemed to reflect a general appreciation of unions and the safety and advocacy they could provide which I

felt were positive sentiments. Allison (LTO) and Janice (LTO) expressed that they felt comfortable approaching their union with questions and liked that they were in a job with a union that was looking out for their safety and the quality of their working conditions. It seemed like these teachers felt the union enhanced their professional autonomy and protected them at work which allowed them to do their jobs. For example, Allison (LTO) liked that the union was looking out for her safety in regard to making sure that the “H-Vac” or ventilation system is turned on at night:

Sometimes the admin would say, ‘turn off the H-Vac at the end of the day’ and then the union would say, ‘oh well actually they're meant to be on overnight’. So, there would be little fights like that. But for the most part, I think they were on the same page. (*Allison has an LTO contract*)

On top of liking that the union helped keep them safe during the pandemic by being on guard of ventilation issues, many teachers with LTO contracts liked that they had somebody to turn to that was not management.

A few teachers with LTO and OT contracts did not want to be seen as ‘rocking the boat’ with school board officials and some permanent teachers, like Cheryl (Perm), also said that occasionals have expressed to them that they ‘don’t want to rock the boat’. These are Cheryl’s (Perm) words, “A lot of them don't feel safe. They don't want to rock the boat, they're afraid of not being hired again or whatnot...I feel for them”. ‘Rocking the boat’ or ‘not rocking the boat’, were phrases used by a few teachers interviewed in regard to raising critical questions about the workplace. Teachers with permanent contracts did not personally express concerns about ‘rocking the boat’, before or during the pandemic, which could point to the sense of security that their contract shapes. However, this security further enables a certain sense of professional autonomy that LTO and OT teachers might experience but not always feel to the same degree. If teachers with insecure contracts were aware of increased work and safety issues during a

pandemic but did not want to ‘rock the boat’, then having a union, even if symbolically, could provide a sense of security in a way that their labour contract and their relationship with their employer could not.

During and before the pandemic many of the teachers with LTO and OT contracts saw the union as a source that they could reach out to and ask questions while not being seen as somebody who was ‘rocking the boat’ by management. Janice (LTO) describes this dynamic about how she feels she might be viewed if she were to go to school administrators over the union with questions:

With everything that the board has been sending out and all their messaging, I just don't feel comfortable, being a person who, I guess I'd rather advocate to the union who would advocate to the board than going to the board directly, just in case. (*Janice has an LTO contract*)

Janice (LTO) feels that if she were to go to her administration with questions that something might happen, so she prefers to go to the union “just in case”. Janice (LTO) and Allison (LTO) saw their union as a source of protection from management and this was more so during the changes to safety norms, professional development initiatives, and work scheduling that occurred during the first year of COVID. At some level these teachers saw the union as helping to enhance their professional autonomy and came across as feeling greater solidarity with the union as a result.

Debbie’s (OT) experiences with work were considered negative because she felt that she was “largely alone”. However, her experiences with the union were considered to be positive because they seemed to provide her a source of solidarity that she was missing from her colleagues that left her feeling “alone”. Additionally, like the issues around ventilation, the union provided an outlet to report potential moves by administrators that could be seen as forms of health and safety and other labour rights violations. As was discussed in the section on ‘work

during COVID’, Debbie’s (OT) responses reveal that in her situation she came across administrators that might have been manipulating the course timetables, but that she felt she could turn to the union, “I’ve turned to the union before”, to report the issue, which was considered to be positive. No other teachers described the situation that Debbie (OT) described about quadesters and scheduling manipulation by management, but it appears theoretically possible that hiring could be carried out that way.

When teachers expressed that they could contact the union without hesitancy this was seen as feeling positive or favorable towards the union. Feeling like the union was welcoming or approachable or not, were important variables that influenced how teachers felt towards their union. A few of the other OTs like Shoshanna (OT), Mandy (OT) and Shelly (OT) did not reference a specific story about their unions during the pandemic, but their work with their unions and comfort getting involved were seen as positive. Because nothing specific was mentioned, I carried over their positive experience from pre-COVID to during COVID. All of them still worked with their union during the pandemic. It may have been that these teachers were able to still feel like professional teachers even if they were not working as regularly, because they had some sort of collective body to feel a part of with their insecure contract. And there is research that supports the valuable role unions played for some workers during COVID. A report by the Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) referenced a study by Ferdosi et al., (2021) which, along with other research, showed that being in a union helped “blunt” some of the impacts of the pandemic (WHSC, 2021).



### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a positive view of their union during COVID**

There were more teachers from all contract types that had positive expressions about their union during COVID than towards work during COVID. However, only one permanent teacher expressed positive feelings and that was because she felt her union were doing all they could during COVID, and she felt welcomed attending meetings. Just under half of the LTOs expressed positive feelings towards the union which was a decrease from pre-pandemic. Some LTOs would have liked to have seen their union take a stronger stance advocating for safety protections which created more mixed and negative responses towards the union during COVID. However, other LTOs appreciated that they had a union to help monitor health and safety issues and possible labour contract violations. The number of OTs with positive views of the union increased during COVID, but that somewhat accounts for the number of OTs who worked with the union and indicated union support without referencing their union specifically in regard to the pandemic. The general approval of unions by occasional union members, both LTO and OT, could also connect with research that shows unions helped “blunt” some of the impacts from COVID (WHSC, 2021). The lack of approval from permanent teachers could be because of certain expectations that they did not feel were met during COVID along with a secure contract that may have allowed for more criticisms, and these will be discussed in the section on negative feelings towards the union.

#### **8.3.2 - Teachers under different contracts with a mixed view of their union during COVID**

Shane (Perm) and Cheryl (Perm) came across as supportive of their union, however, it wasn't without some criticism and personal sacrifice, which influenced mixed feelings:

I'm hesitant to criticize the union because, like leading up to COVID, I think they used all our goodwill in those fights and I admire what they did. So, I don't think they had really

anything left with the public when it hit. So, I think they did the best they could with what they had. They didn't do enough, but I don't know what I would specifically say. (*Shane has a permanent contract*)

I've been a union steward for ten years...So this has really been a shift with COVID...when I think back to before [COVID], there were always challenges, there were always workplace challenges. But since COVID, it's almost like I've forgotten what they are because everything's been overtaken by COVID and how we've had to adapt...It's crazy...COVID and everything has just burnt me out and I feel as though I need to step back. (*Cheryl has a permanent contract*)

Shane (Perm) and Cheryl (Perm) had mixed feelings towards the union during COVID. Shane (Perm) was reluctant to criticize the union, “I’m hesitant to criticize the union” and Cheryl’s (Perm) “ten years” of union steward work suggest some degree of union support. Cheryl's (Perm) “ten years” and Shane’s (Perm)’hesitancy’ along with his belief that the union “did the best they could” suggest that these teachers had some positive or favorable views towards their union. However, they also made some comments that could indicate some negative or unfavorable feelings towards their union. For Shane (Perm), as much as he felt the union “did the best they could”, he also felt that they “didn’t do enough”, although he does not know what he “would specifically say” they should have done. The comments from Cheryl (Perm) that provide somewhat of a counter message to her work as a “union steward for ten years” were her statements about how, “COVID and everything has just burnt me out and I feel as though I need to take a step back”. After a decade of union work and full time teaching it could be that even without the pandemic that Cheryl (Perm) might have wanted to “take a step back”. However, her thoughts about taking a “step back” seemed to be specifically related to the influence that COVID had on her union work. Being the union steward meant that Cheryl (Perm) would have been the go-to person on her staff for any labour issues that arose. Considering that COVID placed “unprecedented strain on school systems” (Hirshberg et al., 2023, p.48) and that teachers were experiencing “high levels of burnout” (ibid.), and “considering leaving their jobs” (ibid.),

then the influences from COVID on Cheryl's (Perm) union work were probably felt as a negative. However, Cheryl (Perm) did not criticize her local union and it was this combination of negative and possibly positive sentiments from Cheryl (Perm) and Shane (Perm) that I felt created mixed responses. Similar ambivalent responses can be seen in the comments from occasional teachers like Agatha (LTO) who had an LTO during COVID and Shoshanna (OT) who identified as an OT.

I understand that the union can only do so much in this circumstance. Yeah, I would like to see them do more. One hundred percent. I would have liked to see them do more and not just say 'if you don't like it, do an individual work refusal'. I think that kind of makes it harder because I think a lot of us are less likely to do an individual work refusal because we don't want to piss people off and we don't want to face repercussions. It's like, 'oh yeah, that's the one who did the work refusal'... so 'we're not going to hire her permanently because she's a troublemaker' or whatever. Like, yeah, I know that they're not supposed to do that, but you still have that in your head that they could. And so, you're not willing to risk all of that hard work for that. (*Agatha has an LTO contract*)

Agatha (LTO) says she is 'understanding' and feels that "the union can only do so much in this circumstance" which I felt was a sympathetic and positive feeling. But she would have liked "to see them do more", which I considered to be a negative sentiment. Agatha (LTO) also doesn't like that the union left it up to members to "do an individual work refusal" because they "don't want to piss people off" and "face repercussions". Agatha (LTO) specifically references that because of her precarious contract she feels that if she were to exercise her labour rights and refuse unsafe work that administrators would remember what she did and then "not hire her permanently because she's a troublemaker". Agatha (LTO) fears that those actions might be held against her and even though they are not "supposed" to be, she is not "willing to risk all of that hard work [of trying to get a permanent contract]" and then not get it because she stood up for her labour rights during the pandemic.

Fears of workplace reprisal by management was also a concern for workers fearful to voice health and safety concerns or assert their labour rights prior to the pandemic (Detert et al., 2010). Yet, for teachers who were precariously employed in the pandemic, they may have wanted to appear as though they were not a “troublemaker”, that they were always ‘available to work’, and therefore “portray over-commitment” to “avoid the risk of job loss” (Hadjisolomou et al., 2022). A teacher with this disposition and an insecure contract could be taking risks that a teacher with a secure contract might not have to take, like moving between multiple schools and going to work feeling sick. Additionally, teachers with OT contracts, like Shoshanna (OT) whose comments are discussed next, do not have access to long term leave if they were to develop long-COVID, like Shoshanna (OT) did. Shoshanna (OT) wants a permanent contract and is involved with her union. She feels that challenging the practices of the union from within the union can help with challenging the practices of the school board.

I do a lot of things in the union... I personally feel that we need to change [the local], the older people, the people who are sitting on the union board. Yeah, we need to bring them down and change them. We need to have teachers who can really influence the board because these people are not able to influence the board members. What's the use of being a vice president, the president of this union? (*Shoshanna has an OT contract*)

Shoshanna (OT) was the only OT with a mixed response towards the union during the pandemic. Like Cheryl (Perm), Shoshanna (OT) is involved in the union and seems to believe in its purpose which was considered to be a positive feeling. Unlike Agatha (LTO), Shoshanna (OT) does not seem to be as hesitant to challenge issues she disagrees with in the union, which I also considered to be a positive feeling towards the union in that there is hope and a belief in different possibilities. However, what came across as a negative feeling towards the union was the issue that there are people who are “sitting on the union board” who Shoshanna (OT) feels members in her local need to “bring...down and change them”. This could also be a positive

feeling towards a strong democratic union culture that allows open dissent, however, I felt that Shoshanna (OT) expressed their situation with an inner union group as more of a situation that was causing some form of hardship in her life and union work. Shoshanna's (OT) comments do not reveal if her local is combined or separate, but they do point to a form of possible division and hierarchy within the union between more senior members and newer members. When teachers described this type of dynamic within their union it was generally considered to be a negative, and it was for Shoshanna (OT) as well. However, Shoshanna's (OT) belief in a democratic union culture where those positions can be challenged offered a positive perspective and the overall dynamic created a mixed experience with her union during COVID. Her experience also overlaps with Shieh's (2021) research into the solidarity building potential that fighting over educational policy can have. When teachers see educational labour sites as places of change as opposed to maintaining the status quo, they are more likely to have a mixed or positive experience of their work and their union than a negative one. Shoshanna's (OT) experience with getting long-COVID will be discussed in the section on individual health and household well-being.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with *mixed* views of their union during COVID**

LTOs were the only contract type that had an increase in the number of teachers with mixed views towards the union during COVID. There were fewer permanent teachers and OTs with ambivalent views towards the union during the pandemic. However, the number of LTOs expressing a mixture of feelings about their union increased. LTOs have the work responsibilities of permanent teachers and similar insecurity issues that OTs have. This variation during the stress of a pandemic could have had these teachers both aware of the benefits of

working with a union like some of the OTs while also feeling that maybe the union was not doing enough to address the changes to teachers' workloads, schedules, and safety concerns that they felt they should have been doing, like some of the permanent teachers. Even though the comments from the teachers were in a private interview for this study, if the sentiment of not wanting to 'rock the boat' was felt by any of these teachers, they may have been inclined to mix criticisms in with positive feelings which could have created an increase in the number of LTOs with mixed responses.

### **8.3.3 - Teachers under different contracts with a negative view of their union during COVID**

Looking at the negative teacher expressions towards their union during COVID shows that there are issues around feelings of solidarity with the union amongst teachers from all contract types. For permanent teachers the number of teachers expressing negative feelings doubled during the pandemic and for both LTOs and OTs, they stayed the same as pre-pandemic.

No, we were not happy. I have a friend group and we are constantly saying, 'we give the union a lot of money and those people are making a lot of money and enough with these strongly worded emails and social media messages. It's not doing anything'. We thought they needed a stronger message. We didn't feel particularly supported. You know, they [would say] 'Well, it's a pandemic. We have to do hybrid learning, or 'we have to do this'. So, no, we did not feel, I didn't, and I know I can speak for at least ten to fifteen more people confidently and say we did not feel like our union was doing what they should have been doing to help us during this situation. *(Leslie has a permanent contract)*

I don't know... how I feel about the union, because I feel like why do we even have a union if you can't protect us during a pandemic? I also said I think that we should be going into lockdown. I was concerned and they were like, 'yeah, but we have to represent everybody's feelings and some people are very against lockdown'. It's just politics, all of it, like admin and union. *(Alyssa has a permanent contract)*

Leslie (Perm) and her colleagues felt that during the pandemic the union was not doing what it should have been doing to "help" them and Alyssa (Perm) asked "why do we even have a union if you can't protect us during a pandemic?" Codes such as 'the role of unions',

‘polarization between colleagues’, and ‘union help’, were applied to Leslie (Perm) and Alyssa’s (Perm) comments. According to Alyssa (Perm) the union felt it had to “represent everybody’s feelings”. However, Alyssa (Perm) suggests that this response is more so based in politics than public health, “It’s just politics, all of it”. It may indeed be politics because in the case of pandemic public health measures which have significant influences on people's day-to-day lives and the diversity that would entail, it would be impossible to “represent everybody”. But by taking that stance the union is siding with certain interests over others and is not being neutral.

The vague yet clear response from the union could stem from the insights in LPT and the management imperative discussed in Chapter 2 in addition to the ideas in Chapter 4, where the state was the entity that officially recognized and helped establish the teachers’ unions. During the first few months of the pandemic in May of 2020, the teachers’ unions held online voting where many of their members voted to ratify their agreements which largely aligned with management interests of keeping schools open and accepting the precautions that were offered (Rushowy, 2020). When members like Leslie (Perm) and her friends were told that, “it’s a pandemic we have to do hybrid learning” and “we have to do this” it does not come across like they had much of a choice or were able exercise a form of autonomy that allowed them to assert their view on the changes to pedagogy. The expression around lacking autonomy suggests that it was not the interests of “everybody” in their membership that union leaders were acting on behalf of, even if there was a vote. Just under half of permanent teachers like Leslie (Perm) and Alyssa (Perm) had negative feelings toward their union during COVID, and their feelings were similar in that they felt the union should have done more to address the changes in health and safety as well as professional demands. However, their permanent contract may have provided some security in that they felt they could think through with their critical thoughts, express such

criticisms, and possibly ‘rock the boat’. Despite any issues with feelings of job insecurity and a possible hesitancy to criticize, there were still a couple of LTOs who expressed negative feelings towards their union during COVID.

Michelle (LTO) felt that siding with government interests and going into schools “violated OCT ethics and standards of practice” and that the union was just interested in “business as usual for teachers and OTs” while Valerie’s (LTO) comments show that she was informed by the union that they “couldn’t really help”.

A group of us felt that it was unethical to have kids come to school... There were solutions, to have smaller classes, to have classes in different buildings, to have filtration. There were answers that if the government and frankly, the union had the balls to push for, we could do it... It was just that they wanted to go on with business as usual for teachers and OTs... I'm going school to school and I could be carrying that viral pathogen with me... that's not OK... in my mind that violated OCT's ethics and standards of practice... our understanding was that the union didn't want to do any sort of political protesting because it was illegal, because they signed that fucking contract, excuse me. Like if they just did not ratify it, if they just said ‘no, we'll negotiate after the pandemic is done’. *(Michelle has an LTO contract)*

I emailed them and they basically said that they couldn't really help us. So, I didn't find the union very helpful this year. I also thought that all of the press or letters that they were sending to everybody wasn't very helpful. I think they could have done more... I felt like the union wasn't super helpful to me this year... they also didn't really know what was going on. Like finding out what's happening with your job on live TV... And then writing strongly worded letters about it, also not really what I'm paying you to do [with] my paycheck. *(Valerie has an LTO contract)*

The comments by Valerie (LTO) and Michelle (LTO) point to two areas outside of the union's direct responsibility to their membership and that is towards issues regarding the safety of the students and to communicating with the public. However, some of the arguments around social movement unionism argue that teachers’ unions must show a concern for the well-being of students and the communities they work in (Weiner, 2012). Weiner (2012) states that the “[Teachers] union has an allegiance both to its members as workers and to the protection of students”(Weiner, 2012, p.22). Not many teachers interviewed expressed the same concern



regarding protecting students that Michelle (LTO) and Alyssa (Perm) did. Michelle's (LTO) concern for the safety of students was like Alyssa's (Perm) concern that the union should have been supporting social protections like “lockdowns”. Both felt the teacher's union should operate at a certain ethical standard of care that was not just towards their members but to the larger communities as well. Michelle (LTO) and Alyssa (Perm) did not think their union met that standard. Valerie (LTO) also seemed to think that the union's standards were not sufficient, specifically regarding public communication.

In Chapter 2, I highlighted the difference between two educational labour struggles and the importance of public communication strategies for success (Weiner, 2012)<sup>54</sup>. In relation to the efforts put forth by her union for public communication, Valerie (LTO) mentions that she “thought that all of the press or letters that they were sending to everybody wasn't very helpful. I think they could have done more”. Valerie (LTO) did not share what she felt they could have done, but she does feel that their methods of “strongly worded letters” and what she felt was their slow speed of communication compared to the daily news reports, were not “super helpful”. Weiner (2012) writes that unions need to put out messages to their members and the general public that effectively “counter the news in corporate media” (Weiner, 2012, p.39). Michelle (LTO) and Valerie's (LTO) negative feelings suggest that they felt their union did not adhere to the research discussed by Weiner (2012) and this seemed to influence their feelings of solidarity with their union. Similar expressions towards feeling let down by the union that were read as reflecting negative feelings came from Layla (OT):

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<sup>54</sup> Weiner (2012) compared two separate educational labour struggles, one in Newark, New Jersey and one in Trinidad and Tobago. Weiner (2012) argues that the struggle in Trinidad and Tobago was more successful because they spread awareness in the community about their cause and also took to the streets, protested, and raised local media attention. Weiner (2012) asked, “what if the two groups had connected and offered one another mutual support? (p.63).

I saw the union as ineffective... I was very disappointed. It was my first time... working in a unionized workplace. And I felt way more comfortable, from my experiences... working without a union. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Layla (OT) expressed negative sentiments towards the union pre-pandemic and during the pandemic. Research into precarious work shows that for many it is a stressful existence (Bhattacharya & Ray, 2021; Lewchuk et al., 2011; PEPSO 2013; 2015; 2018; Standing, 2021). As much as the pandemic may have been stressful for many people, for people already in states of stress related to their work, like Layla (OT) and other OTs, the pandemic may have felt as a continuation of an already stressful existence. If a teacher does not feel supported by their union while they are having that experience it is possible that their experience feels more alienating. Layla's (OT) comments seemed like she felt alienated from her union.

Layla (OT) says that being a secondary public-school teacher was her “first time” in a “unionized workplace” and she “felt way more comfortable...working without a union”. Layla's (OT) negative feelings as a unionized teacher are counter to research that shows “Union members are also less likely to be stressed, worried, depressed, sad or lonely” (Blanchflower et al., 2022). But they are in line with Standing's (2011) research and Mindzak's (2016). Like Mindzak's (2016) participants, Layla (OT) is a precarious unionized teacher, and she is in somewhat of a two-tier dynamic with her fellow union members who have secure contracts. Research shows that two-tier dynamics, like the contract status hierarchy Layla (OT) works within, can divide unions, and turn workers against one another (Ken, 2009; Press, 2018; Garcia-Hodges, 2021). Her lived experience is also more in line with research into precarious workers that suggest they do not always trust or feel supported by their union (Mindzak, 2016; Standing, 2011). Despite having different contract types, the negative expressions towards the union during COVID from Layla (OT), Leslie (Perm), Alyssa (Perm), Michelle (LTO), and Valerie

(LTO) all suggest similar frustrations and disappointments around feeling unsupported and a lack of solidarity with their union. It is possible that certain expectations for union collective action or member engagement stem from how these teachers interpret popular union slogans like the OSSTF motto “Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another” (OSSTF, 2023). Failing to meet a standard that these teachers may have inferred from this motto seemed to create a gap between what they felt the popular rhetoric implied and how they felt teachers’ unions like OSSTF functioned during the pandemic.

### **Summary of teachers under different contracts with a negative view of their union during COVID**

The number of permanent teachers with negative views towards their union during COVID increased and they were the only contract type where this happened. The security of their contract and the level of expectations regarding union representation may have enabled them to feel more secure and be more vocal in their concerns. Their concerns were focused on issues of health and safety and changes in professional demands, like having to teach via hybrid online methods or in longer class times during ‘quadmesters’. The LTOs with negative comments had to do with issues of health and safety and union communication whereas the negative OT comments were critical of the union in general. Like before the pandemic, fewer teachers with occasional contracts had negative feelings towards the union compared to permanent teachers. This dynamic could speak to the level of solidarity that a union can provide for teachers with occasional contracts or it could be because of their insecure contract they may feel a personal and professional interest to be or appear less negative about their labour situation and not ‘rock the boat’.

### **8.3.4 - Summary of the different expressions by teachers under different contracts about their union during COVID**

Fewer permanent and LTOs had positive views of their union during COVID compared to before. Whereas for OTs, the number who had positive views increased. This could be because for permanent and LTO teachers they would have had to deal with more of the demands around changes in teaching like setting up classes for hybrid, learning new professional practices, and redesigning their programs to be taught online, and maybe they felt the union should have done more to resist or better accommodate these changes. These frustrations along with health and safety concerns could have reduced the number of teachers with positive responses that existed pre-pandemic. For OTs, there were a couple who expressed negative sentiments, but most OTs had positive feelings towards their union. A few of the OTs were actively involved in their union or at least felt comfortable communicating with them. Having a sense of belonging with an organization during a time of crisis, even if unemployed, could have helped increase the number of OTs with positive feelings towards their union.

### 8.4 - Teachers Under Different Contracts and Their Individual Health and Household Well-being During COVID

**Figure 12: The positive, mixed, and negative expressions about their *individual health and household well-being* before and during COVID from teachers under different contracts.**

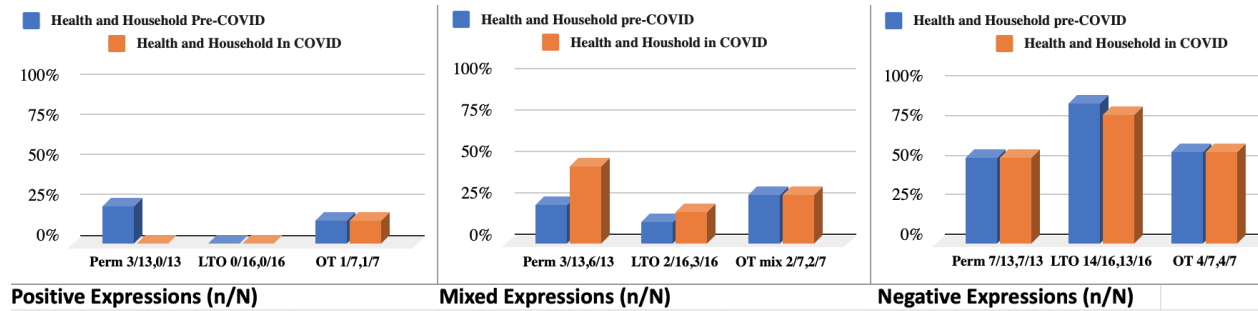


Figure 12 shows that before and during COVID the feelings from at least half of the teachers in each contract type were negative and over three quarters of LTOs had negative feelings. There were no permanent or LTO teachers with positive responses during COVID. There was one positive response from an OT, but they were an OT by choice. The number of OTs that had negative responses was the same during COVID as before. These findings will be discussed further following figures 12a, 12b, and 12c that show the difference in responses from each teacher.

**Figure 12a - Changes in permanent teacher responses about their individual health and household well-being (IHHW).**

<b>Perm - IHHW</b>	<b>Pre COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Barb - Perm	neg	neg
Roger - Perm	neg	mix
Jeremy - Perm	pos	neg
Catharine - Perm	mix	mix
Kimberly - Perm	mix	neg
Shane - Perm	pos	mix
Maureen - Perm	neg	neg
Leslie - Perm	neg	mix
Melissa - Perm	neg	mix
Eve - Perm	neg	neg
Alyssa - Perm	neg	neg
Cheryl - Perm	pos	neg
Nadia - Perm	mix	mix

**Figure 12b - Changes in LTO teacher responses about their individual health and household well-being (IHHW).**

<b>LTO - IHHW</b>	<b>Pres COVID</b>	<b>During COVID</b>
Desiree - LTO	neg	neg
Sabrina - LTO	neg	neg
Joseph - LTO	neg	neg
Maurice - LTO	neg	neg
Kathleen - LTO	neg	neg
Janice - LTO	neg	neg
Meredith - LTO	neg	neg
Anessa - LTO	neg	neg
Cathy - LTO	neg	neg
Agatha - LTO	mix	mix
Allison - LTO	mix	mix
Barry - LTO	neg	mix
Michelle - LTO	neg	neg
Valerie - LTO	neg	neg
Steven - LTO	neg	neg
Nigel - LTO	neg	neg

**Figure 12c - Changes in OT responses about their individual health and household well-being (IHHW).**

OT - IHHW	Pre COVID	During COVID
Shelly - OT	mix	mix
Shoshanna - OT	neg	neg
Melvin - OT	neg	neg
Joelle - OT	pos	pos
Debbie - OT	neg	neg
Layla - OT	neg	neg
Mandy - OT	mix	mix

**8.4.1 - Discussing *positive* expressions about individual health and household well-being during COVID.**

There were no positive comments from permanent teachers regarding the influences of COVID on their individual health and household well-being and this could connect with the negative feelings that were expressed about work during COVID. For teachers with a permanent contract, the negative feelings towards work seemed to create a negative experience that influenced their homelife and prevented them from feeling that their home was a place away from work. The feelings that home and work were not separate seemed more significant when teachers were working from home. Working from home made the year “brutal” for Eve (Perm). For Kim (Perm), the pandemic in general made it “the hardest year”. And for Barb (Perm), she was happy to have a job that kept her employed during the pandemic which was not always the case for members of her hometown and this difference created uncomfortable interactions with community members during her time off work. Along with the pandemic itself there were multiple reasons that prevented permanent teachers from having a positive experience of their homelife despite their secure contract.

Like the teachers with a permanent contract, there were no LTOs who had positive responses regarding the influence that COVID had on their homelife and individual health. In

addition to planning and assessment time that the permanent contract teachers would experience influencing their homelife, teachers with LTO contracts also often taught different courses every semester compared to teachers with a permanent contract who can often teach the same or similar courses over a period of time. This difference came out in the interviews and as the teachers with a permanent contract experienced increased amounts of work overlapping into their homelife because they had to design new online materials, incorporate new pedagogical ideas, or were teaching at home, the teachers with LTO contracts often had that same experience along with having to plan for new courses that they had not taught before and prepare for applications and interviews when their contract expired. The ‘employment strain’ in addition to the ‘job strain’ experienced by teachers with an LTO contract added to their negative experience of their homelife and health which were factors shaping the lack of any positive responses from them.

However, Joelle (OT), who is an OT by choice, is the one OT that seemed to have a positive experience regarding the influences that COVID was having on her homelife:

I didn't actually physically go into any schools... because if I didn't have to commute, I wasn't going to do it. And I well surpassed my days just teaching online. (*Joelle has an OT contract*).

Joelle’s (OT) work as an OT by choice, suggests some security or support through another job, resource, or network, outside of public-school teaching and she did acknowledge this privilege. Being able to choose to work as an OT because there is some form of security outside of teaching, as well as not commuting, and being able to work from home may have all factored together to influence a positive experience of homelife for Joelle (OT) during the pandemic. Joelle (OT) also indicated that she was able to get the work she needed when she states, “I well surpassed my days teaching online”. Which means that Joelle (OT) was able to meet the



minimum number of days worked that are required to stay employed in the school board(s) she works with by picking up online jobs.

Joelle’s (OT) ease of picking up assignments online from home raises issues around the deskilling or reskilling of teachers teaching online. Even though Joelle (OT) would generally not be planning lessons or marking assessments, she would need a certain skill set in classroom management that would be different online and as discussed earlier in the section on work and COVID influences, instances of ‘zoom bombing’ and racist or misogynistic avatar use were reported during the pandemic (Redden, 2020). These situations could have the potential for both reskilling via learning new tech protections and deskilling via reduced in person human communication. In addition to classroom management skills, there are issues with de/reskilling and course planning and the delivering of curriculum content. At the university level, there is also debate around online learning and if it is deskilling higher education teachers in order to eventually replace them with artificial intelligence software (Hughes, 2021). On the other hand, there are arguments that teachers are being “reskilled” (Krishnmaurthy & Keating, 2021) with skill sets that support working with tech and online work. Issues of skill aside and apart from the ability to at times work from home, teaching online did not seem to be viewed favorably by some teachers, like Debbie (OT), who stated that, “what I loved about teaching was how we don't just have a desk job where we have to sit and stare at a computer”.

### **Summary of the *positive* expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID**

There was only one teacher who had positive expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID and that was an OT. The OT chose to work as an OT and indicated that there was material support outside of work. They felt that being able to work from home and not commute was a positive experience, but this was also the case pre-COVID, so

there was no change. The only change from permanent teachers where there were a couple of teachers with positive expressions pre-pandemic, there were none during. Unlike the OT who had a positive experience, permanent teachers would have had increased workloads that carried over into their homelife and not all these teachers had space that was conducive for online teaching at home. The changing professional demands during COVID on the work of permanent teachers influenced a decrease to zero in the number that expressed positive feelings towards their individual health and household well-being. For LTOs who have the insecurity of the occasional contract along with the professional responsibilities of a permanent teacher there were also none that had positive expressions pre-COVID, or during which speaks to the lack of material security and lack of autonomy they feel as workers.

#### **8.4.2 - Teachers under different contracts with *mixed* expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID**

For teachers with a permanent contract the mixed responses evolved around seeing some benefits with being able to access online teaching and working from home while also experiencing increased amounts of planning time outside of work hours and during their homelife. Shane (Perm) is one example of this mixture. Shane (Perm) hoped to reduce his planning time for online work by being able to teach courses that he had taught over the past twelve years as a teacher, “six sections of the exact same course, grade eleven physics”. Despite being able to teach the same course online for all his classes, Shane (Perm) “still didn't have enough time to be a good teacher”. Most days it was “Taco Bell” for dinner because he was too busy to prepare food to eat at home with the increase in work that online teaching created, even if he was teaching multiple sections of the same course that he had previously taught. Similarly, Leslie (Perm) expressed mixed feelings as well. Even before the pandemic, Leslie’s (Perm) job

was “always impacting” her “homelife” and “made things difficult”, which I considered to be negative. But she also expressed appreciation that her job kept her employed and with access to income during a time when many people lost their jobs (Galea and Abdalla, 2020), which I considered to be a positive feeling.

I feel very fortunate that we've been able to work. There are so many people that have not been able to work through COVID. I can't even express how glad I am that I am not one of those people, being a single mom. My job is always impacting my home life or has made things difficult...especially when my kids were much younger, I wasn't able to start schoolwork or deal with what I had to do for school till quite late at night. And so having a job that is really almost always on your mind, makes all of those types of things more difficult to just manage even from a time perspective or a brain space perspective. *(Leslie has a permanent contract)*

Leslie’s (Perm) comments are an example of a mixed response that jumped around temporally between time before the pandemic and time during. In quite a few of the interviews, when the participants talked about their experiences during COVID and before COVID, the comments often blended together. For example, Leslie (Perm) mentions she is “fortunate” that she has been able to work during the pandemic in the first two sentences, and then moves into talking about being a parent pre-pandemic and the difficulties that arise from the amount of teacher work that occurs outside of school time that is “always on your mind”. Leslie’s (Perm) comments show that there was very little downtime, if any, after work on many days pre-pandemic and that this was similar during COVID, and these were considered negative.

The positive aspects of Leslie (Perm) and Shane’s (Perm) expressions were different. For Shane (Perm), it was that he was able to teach the same course for his entire schedule which reduced his work at home time compared to if he had taught a variety of different courses. For Leslie (Perm) it was that she was able to stay employed compared to the “people that have not been able to work through COVID”. But their shared negative influence on their household was that they were still feeling overworked. Shane (Perm) said he had little time to plan dinner meals

so some nights he ate “Taco Bell” and Leslie (Perm) was feeling that work was “always impacting” her “home life”. Admittedly both of these responses could have possibly been considered negative experiences in that the positive aspects might seem minor compared to the negative. However, in an effort to be cautious of my own biases I tried to consider how some readings might have considered some of their points, like Leslie (Perm) stating “I feel very fortunate that I’ve been able to work” as a major positive statement and not a minor one.

Because of this room for interpretation, I considered Leslie’s (Perm) comments as an example of ‘mixed’ expressions around individual health and household well-being. An example of a mixed response from an LTO can be seen in Agatha’s (LTO) comments below:

We were at home a lot and so, you're not driving...So, it wasn't horrible... At least my board...gave us all...some sort of computer or whatever at home...They gave us a camera to use as well, like they did give us a fair amount of tech stuff. Now, granted, I don't think we got that until way later than we should have. And to be perfectly honest, I think I ended up buying some stuff because it was like I can't wait for them to get it to me, you know? (*Agatha has an LTO contract*)

Agatha (LTO), like Shane (Perm), saw some potential for teaching online that could improve the experience of their individual health and household well-being but for a different reason, “you’re not driving, so it wasn’t horrible”. But Agatha’s (LTO) appreciation about not commuting was also mixed with negative feelings like having to spend money on technology for online work, “I think I ended up buying some stuff because it was like I can’t wait for them to get it to me”. Agatha’s (LTO) mixed response also shows how issues of material security can intersect with issues of teacher autonomy. As was discussed in Chapter 5 Work, Agatha’s (LTO) income insecurity as a teacher with an LTO contract was not something that prevented her purchasing her own tech equipment but that might not be the average experience for an LTO. Agatha (LTO) felt that she needed to purchase it because she could not “wait”. The urgency to purchase the tech seems like getting it may have helped her have an easier time online and

maybe gain some sense of greater autonomy when teaching online. However, it is possible that some teachers with an LTO contract might not be able to afford technology that would help with teaching online because of their financial insecurity. If school boards are not equitably providing technology to their workers or providing it “way later than [they] should have” and that leads some to pay with their own money, then that is inequitable. The issue of income security and how it can help with different aspects of planning and preparing for class outside of school time as well as how it can help teachers feel some autonomy over their lives and professional practice encouraged me to see this aspect of Agatha’s (LTO) comments as negative. As much as she was able to purchase the tech equipment, if public education is an equitable employment sector, she should not have had to spend her own money for technology that her work requires or enables her to work towards her best practice.

Another mixed response comes from Allison (LTO) whose comments show a significant experience that many permanent teachers would not have had to worry about; frequently moving between schools and a higher chance of getting sick. Allison’s (LTO) sense of security that came from working at one school and having a reduced risk of getting sick were considered positive expressions. However, the concerns that she may have had when worrying about when one LTO contract ended and if she would get another one at the same school after, seemed to create some worries for Allison (LTO) and I considered that to be negative. The security Allison (LTO) felt coupled with the concerns over her safety created a mixed response. I considered some of Allison’s (LTO) work related comments, below, as individual health and household well-being related comments because of their influence on her health and wellness outside of work:

I was really grateful to be in a full year LTO. Well, multiple LTOs, but at the same school, because I was frankly scared to go to another school with a new group of students and with the cohorting and seeing students all the time...So I was happy to be in one community the whole year. *(Allison has an LTO contract)*

Although Allison’s (LTO) comments might seem work related, because of the issues of job security and personal safety that are implied when she says, “I was really grateful to be in a full year LTO. Well, multiple LTOs, but at the same school... in one school community the whole year”, I saw them as health and well-being related. For Allison (LTO) the issue of job security appeared to help her sense of wellness but the fact that the job was still temporary and that Allison (LTO) was still “frankly scared” about having to go to another school if her LTO was not extended or she was not hired into a new LTO when one of her “multiple LTOs” ended, were considered to be factors that would have a negative influence on her health and wellness. When events happen outside of work or worries are on the teacher’s mind that create concerns about finding work, the teacher still feels a resonance of these experiences and sentiments while they are at work and for teachers this could influence those around them, like students (Obele et al., 2020).

Allison’s (LTO) security of employment at one school site improved her overall experience of life outside of work because her health and safety concerns were reduced. Allison’s (LTO) comments could arguably be read as negative, yet my own interpretation saw them as more mixed. Shelly (OT), like Allison (LTO) also had comments that could be read as not mixed, but in Shelly’s (OT) case instead of seeming negative, her comments might seem positive. Shelly’s (OT) comments in relation to COVID are brief. When asked about the influence that the pandemic had on her individual health and household well-being, Shelly (OT) responded with “COVID has given me more free time” but she seemed somewhat ambivalent about that statement as though it was maybe a way of seeing a ‘silver lining in the clouds’.

As much as Shelly (OT) stated, “COVID has given me more time”, the feeling from her tone and body language in the interview was that this was maybe not a solely positive change

given that having more time meant having less access to income. Shelly (OT) was working as an OT by choice and was also involved with the union, so it is possible that having “more free time” was experienced as having a positive influence on her individual health and household well-being and allowed her to be more involved with the union. However, when taking other contextual factors into consideration, Shelly’s (OT) response might be more layered and complex than just brief and simple.

From the Employment Precarity Index (EPI) questions that were in the online survey I could see that Shelly had an EPI score of 60. According to the EPI this meant she was technically “precarious”. Additionally, at another point in the interview Shelly (OT) mentions that she was looking for work and “wanted to work in the Fall” at a specific school but that school “never called”. From these factors I inferred that Shelly’s (OT) experience of the influences that COVID had on her individual health and household well-being was mixed and that income security might be a concern. Interestingly, Shelly’s (OT) job access issues did not seem to have a negative influence towards her feelings of solidarity with the union. This did not seem to be the case with the other teachers with an OT contract like Melvin (OT) and Layla (OT), whose material security issues did influence their feelings of solidarity with the union.

### **Summary of the *mixed* expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID**

For LTOs and OTs the number that expressed mixed feelings stayed generally the same during COVID, with a small increase in the number of LTOs with mixed expressions. The number of permanent teachers with mixed responses doubled during the pandemic while the number with positive feelings towards their individual health and household well-being decreased. It could be that for permanent teachers, the pandemic created a less positive

experience of homelife but one that still was more secure than that experienced by most LTOs and OTs and therefore not completely negative. Like some of the permanent teachers, some LTOs also appreciated being able to teach from home and having a reduced commute time, however, the insecurities around their contract and concerns about getting sick seemed to create a mixed experience of individual health and household well-being instead of a positive one. There were not any obvious mixed comments about individual health and household well-being during COVID from most OTs, so I inferred from their pre-COVID comments. The mixed feelings were not something that I wanted to leave blank, unaddressed, or only with one participant's experience, so I thought that looking at pre-COVID comments would give me some ideas that could be related, at a certain level, to during COVID. Admittedly, my inferring could also be wrong, which is a dynamic that could arise when interpreting any data. My inferences from the pre-COVID comments were to help provide some ideas for discussion and potentially open a window for future research and analysis. Despite this limit, Shelly (OT) did make a specific reference to her individual health and household well-being during COVID, but it was somewhat contradictory in relation to her other comments about wanting to work, so I felt it was a mixed response.

#### **8.4.3 - Teachers under different contracts with negative expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID**

Cheryl's (Perm) comments that she has "no energy" for family or friends reflect the comments by other teachers with a permanent contract that suggested a sizable amount of time in their home life was spent thinking about and spending time on tasks related to their work life. The teachers with permanent contracts that expressed more often negative views were concerned with the amount of their personal life that was spent on work either learning new curriculum



programming, revising courses, learning new technology, or general planning and assessing of current courses, which either got worse or stayed just as bad during COVID.

Once COVID hit... they went against my collective agreement. Yeah. And they have given me ten times more work... So, family life suffered in many different ways, you know, not simply I need to prep lessons now. It's taking me longer and I have to do this at night... I'm coming home and I have no energy for anybody, that impacts your family, your kids, your partner. (*Cheryl has a permanent contract*)

Cheryl (Perm) points out that she feels what was asked of her for her job during COVID went against her collective agreement (CA). Cheryl's (Perm) comments could also connect with the issue of workplace and homelife stress that might arise with the violation of a CA. The experiences of work are not excised from the worker when they leave the workplace. The roles and protections that unions can provide and norms they can help to enforce if they stand up for their rights, can benefit workers' household well-being and life outside of work too (Banerjee et al., 2021). The protection of the CA for wellness purposes was important to Cheryl (Perm). Teachers had revised schedules, classes were twice as long, some taught online or online *and* in person via hybrid teaching, all of which generally required many hours outside of work and at home in order to prepare and change courses that could be taught through different formats, including from the teacher's home. These changes created a substantial difference in the amount of work that teachers with a permanent or LTO contract had to do outside of work time compared to pre-COVID and this was reported in other regions globally (Phillips and Cain, 2020). Increased workloads took from teachers like Cheryl (Perm), time away from their families. Cheryl (Perm) states that because of the increased workload her "family suffered in many different ways" and that this influenced her "kids" and her "partner" which would in turn influence the relationships Cheryl's (Perm) "kids" and "partner" had with their own personal networks.

The negative responses from just over half of the teachers with permanent contracts often described forms of work intensification during the pandemic, and like Cheryl (Perm), they were doing “ten times more work” compared to before the pandemic. Many teachers with LTO contracts expressed similar feelings towards the increase in the amount of work that they were doing at home. However, in addition to issues of workload increases like longer classes and new course material, teachers with LTO contracts had to worry about things like finding their next contract when one ended, income security, and their personal health and any benefits that they would lose once an LTO ended.

With COVID...first quadmester. I had never taught either of the classes before. I was teaching both classes in person and I went from seventy-five minute classes to two and a half hours and having to figure out how to do the online stuff at the same time, because although I was teaching all day, I had to also prep all of the stuff online to make sure that it was OK so that they had stuff to work on that continued the learning for them online while the other group was doing the class portion. So, it was insane. I actually ended up having to go to the doctor and have to take vitamins and a whole bunch of other stuff because I ended up getting the beginnings of vertigo because I wasn't able to sleep as much. I was stressed to the nines. (*Meredith has an LTO contract*)

Meredith (LTO) is drawing attention to the amount of work she had to do outside of school time because of the quadmester model and also because the classes she was teaching she “had never taught”. Meredith’s (LTO) experience with the large amount of planning time she had to do is representative of many of the other teachers with LTO and permanent contracts during COVID. However, her experiences with “getting the beginnings of vertigo” and “having to go to the doctor” were unique and connected to certain issues that teachers with LTO and OT contracts would have that teachers with permanent contracts would not, and that is access to the same health benefits and sick leave options. Although Meredith (LTO) did not mention any concerns about developing a health issue that persisted past the time of the LTO she was working in, my own inference is, if that were to happen and Meredith (LTO) did not get another LTO

afterwards or hired into a permanent contract, then she may have to live with taking care of the costs for managing her illness without the access to benefits and potentially lost works hours where she does not have paid sick leave. There were also clear reported benefits of workers being able to access paid sick leave during the pandemic (Thompson et al., 2021), which would not have been available to an occasional teacher who needed extended medical leave, the same way it would for a teacher with a permanent contract.

Meredith (LTO) did not contract COVID from work, but she did develop vertigo “because I wasn't able to sleep as much” and from being “stressed to the nines”. This scenario of a worker getting sick as a result of work, and then not being able to access financial support has led to instances where workers who have suffered from Long-COVID, have been more likely to be unemployed as a result of not being able to work (Bach, 2022). During the pandemic this type of situation has been more pronounced amongst precarious gig workers (Yuko, 2022). Teachers with LTO and OT contracts are like gig workers in that they are only paid when they work and generally do not have access to benefits when not working. As of early 2023 the risk of getting COVID remains and school staff absences in the United Kingdom are “twice pre-COVID level” (Walker, 2023). For teachers without access to paid sick leave like OTs and teachers who are between LTO assignments, an infection with COVID that leads to Long-COVID, could put them at a higher risk for long term unemployment (Perlis et al., 2023). Long-COVID is turning into a significant problem that could influence the work of occasional teachers and regular school staff. As of June 2022, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States estimated that “as many as 20 million American adults - 1 out of 13 people over age 18 - have lingering COVID-19 symptoms that impact their lives months after infection” (Arnold, 2023). Contracting COVID will be an ongoing issue and cause for concern for educational

workers and uniquely so for those without access to sick leave. The insecurity and fears that teachers with occasional contracts have could possibly be reduced if they had access to social protections like paid sick leave, universal health care, and basic income. Layla (OT), whose comments are next, is an OT that may have felt more secure in her precarious situation if there were certain social protections in place. As was discussed earlier, as much as CERB was helpful, for some it was not helpful enough and was only temporary. Permanent, on-going, and sufficient basic income policies like CERB could have helped Layla (OT) feel that she did not face “homelessness” as well as encouraged other OTs to feel that if they were to contract the virus and get long-COVID, there would be material support and income security for them.

The board wasn't giving any kind of direction, none of the governments were giving any kind of direction, so I had to make that decision of selling my stuff...I faced homelessness. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Layla (OT) mentions that early in the pandemic she “faced homelessness” and she may not have been the only teacher with an OT contract who was in that position. Recalling Mindzak’s (2016) study and his participant “Domenic” who faced homelessness suggests that there may have been teachers in tough places before the pandemic. During the pandemic this may have been worse because secure forms of work, such as hiring teachers for permanent contracts, declined (Thompson, M., 2022). When teachers with OT contracts found work, they were potentially exposed to a greater number of staff and students compared to teachers with permanent contracts, and therefore, possibly more vulnerable to catching and transmitting the virus to others (Hristova, B., 2020; Pelly, L., 2020). Two important issues that influenced the experiences of teachers with OT contracts that were seen as negative influences were reduced access to work and income and an increased risk of exposure from generally being in more schools and seeing more students than teachers with LTO or permanent contracts.

Layla (OT), not knowing when she was going to have access to income from teaching, decided to move out of the province in fear of becoming homeless when the schools were initially closed in the spring of 2020. With schools closed and not yet online, working as a supply teacher was not an option. Layla (OT) also expressed concerns about her personal health from years of working with limited benefits and precarious contracts, “I’ve gone bankrupt...my teeth are rotting out of my mouth”. Teachers with OT contracts like Layla (OT) and Melvin (OT) had serious financial worries and no ability to access the benefits that their colleagues with permanent contracts could access, like taking a paid sick leave or retiring early. Layla (OT) discusses her situation in March 2020:

It's just, you know, this is a reality...Yeah. It never fucking dawned. I'm sorry for swearing, but it never it never dawned on the administration, the principals, and the VPs that this was a reality for their workers. (*Layla has an OT contract*)

Melvin (OT) describes experiencing a similar type of stratification from people he works with:

COVID hit, you're getting your CERB, five hundred dollars a week that pays for a fraction of your mortgage, but not all the bills. And you're going deeper and deeper, and it got to the point where when you talk about dealing with colleagues, I can't live on five hundred bucks a week, you know, and when people are making a hundred grand a year, let's face it, and I'm making a quarter of that. And then you go on Facebook and people are like the province needs to do more to protect teachers and blah, blah, blah. I don't want to go back and say, ‘OK, then step down for twenty-six grand a year and I'll take over for one hundred’. Because if I don't have a choice, why do you? You know, I'm willing to go there because I don't have a choice...It's unfortunate that things like job fairness and equity are driving colleagues apart. (*Melvin has an OT contract*)

Melvin (OT) raises an important insight, and that is teachers with all different labour contracts are all called “teachers” and they call each other “colleagues”, however, the “colleagues” in the highest income bracket are sometimes making upwards of four to five times what somebody working next to them might be earning, which could be even more divisive in a pandemic and tough economic time. Liu (2021), in their discussion on the professional managerial class,

provides an example that helps illustrate how Melvin's (OT) location on the contract status hierarchy is not just problematic from an equitable organizational structuring aspect, but is problematic for issues of union solidarity too. For example, it seems that Melvin's (OT) financial insecurity influences his feelings of professional and personal autonomy as well as his feelings of solidarity with his fellow union siblings, "when you talk about dealing with colleagues, I can't live on five hundred bucks a week...and when people are making a hundred grand a year, let's face it...I'm making a quarter of that". Liu (2021) references Cobb and Sennet's *The hidden injuries of class* (1972) to tell the story of "Ricca Kartides" (a pseudonym). The authors interviewed Kartides "who worked as a janitor, felt humiliated everyday by his job and its low social status" (Liu, 2021, p.32). However, despite the low social status, Kartides made a salary in which he alone was able to support a family and buy a home which could help to offset some of the feelings of low social status. Melvin (OT) is also in a lower status job compared to his colleagues but, despite CERB he is struggling to make mortgage payments, pay bills, and support himself because of the lower income and financial insecurity he faces, "I can't live on five hundred bucks a week". Indeed, Melvin's (OT) experience contrasts with Kartides' because, "Kartide's ability to buy a house and support a family on his wages is unimaginable today" (Liu, 2021, p.32). When I was analyzing Melvin's (OT) interview I felt that the low social status of his OT contract possibly felt even more challenging to him when the reality of economic insecurity and reduced personal autonomy were factored in and made worse during COVID. In addition to income security concerns, even if the teacher did not state it, I inferred that the possibility of getting sick and not being able to work might be on the minds of most of the teachers but especially the OTs who had no sick leave, and therefore create another negative element to their experiences related to homelife and health during COVID.

Shoshana (OT) was the only person interviewed to reveal that they had contracted COVID during the school year:

Unfortunately, in January, I got COVID...my son brought it in because he was taking care of groceries...So he brought it in and then we all got infected...I was so cautious...but I still got COVID. I am still in the long wave of long haul COVID. Yeah, I'm still having shortness of breath and fever. (*Shoshana has an OT contract*)

Shoshana's (OT) case also points to the issue that racialized, precarious, educational workers are at a higher risk of contracting COVID (Sandset, T., 2021; Cubrich, M., & Tengesdal, J., 2021).

Shoshana (OT) is in all three high-risk categories and contracted the virus. When some workers are more susceptible to illness because of a variety of demographic and systemic structuring factors and their employment contract encourages frequent travel between worksites, but they have little or no access to paid sick days, sick leave, or other benefits, this is inequitable and has a polarizing effect that can negatively impact those with insecure contracts. It also creates a more polarized workplace and exacerbates the contract status hierarchy which could reduce union solidarity. Shoshana (OT) had somewhat of a polarized view of her local union which can highlight how teachers with insecure contracts may feel a lack of solidarity with their union if they are insecure.

Next, Sabrina's (LTO) comments also highlight a stark difference in job security and benefits between occasional teachers and permanent teachers. These differences also would have an extra layer of inequity during a pandemic when human health is at greater risk. The differences between the levels of job security, ability to take extended sick leaves, assert workplace rights, and receive benefits that are shaped by the different contracts stand out with Sabrina's (LTO) observation regarding forms of sick leave available to teachers with permanent contracts during the pandemic, "I understand why a lot of permanents took the year off. But LTO's and OTs are the ones who stepped up. Right? And now next year, guess what? We don't

matter”. Sabrina (LTO), who had an LTO contract, touches on some issues that might arise from the differences within the contract status hierarchy that came about during COVID. Sabrina’s (LTO) comments along with Melvin’s (OT), Layla’s (OT), and Shoshanna’s (OT) show that some of the teachers with LTO and OT contracts see themselves as distinctly different from their “regular” colleagues with permanent contracts and that difference is largely based on issues around the economic security created by their contract. During COVID, for most of the teachers with OT and LTO contracts, economic insecurity and an insecure home life seemed to be significant factors that influenced the teachers’ negative perceptions of their personal and professional autonomy as well as their feelings of solidarity with the union.

### **Summary of the *negative* expressions towards individual health and household well-being during COVID**

Expressions relating to the individual health and household well-being of all teachers were generally negative pre-COVID and during. Similar issues for each contract influenced these feelings. For permanent teachers, issues of work intensification carried over into their home life except now with online teaching at home or planning for hybrid and longer class times. There were also still issues with letting people in their communities know that they were teachers and the difficult conversations that could follow, except now the divisive issue was that teachers did not lose their jobs in the pandemic and had it better than other workers who did. LTOs had similar negative feelings about the same issues as permanent teachers did. However, due to the nature of their insecure contract and often picking up different courses they may have never taught, many LTOs seemed to generally have more planning work than permanent teachers. Additionally, like OTs, the LTOs were also looking for work and taking time to interview, similar to pre-COVID. However, now, with the concern of getting sick, there may have been an interest



by many LTOs to stay at the same school as long as possible to avoid greater levels of exposure. The increasing use of online teaching without proper ergonomic support was also an added burden for LTOs, who could injure themselves or develop something like “vertigo” and then once the LTO ends, they lack access to the same benefits as their permanent colleagues. For OTs, their experiences relating to their individual health and household well-being stayed the same from pre-COVID and there was no change in the number who had positive, mixed, or negative responses. For many OTs, issues of financial insecurity and accessing work remained and for some, CERB was not enough to cover pre-existing bills and payment commitments.

#### **8.4.4 - Summary of individual health and household well-being during COVID**

There were only a couple of changes in the feelings around individual health and household well-being from pre-COVID. First, there were fewer permanent teachers with positive views and more with mixed views during the pandemic. Second, there were more LTO teachers with mixed views during the pandemic and fewer with negative views. For permanent teachers, who because of their contract security may have felt more open to express negative feelings, any benefits that existed in their homelife pre-pandemic were not present during the pandemic because of the extra work that inevitably carried over into the home, as well as working from home at times which was not always enjoyable if there was no space for work. At least one LTO who worked from home saved money from commuting and was representative of others who also liked working from home. For at least one LTO who was able to work a full year LTO or multiple LTOs at the same school, they felt safer and that their health was at less risk. The changes that improved the lives of these teachers could account for the reduction in LTOs who had negative feelings pre-COVID and the increase in the number who had mixed views during COVID. The number of OTs stayed the same in every category during COVID

with just over half of the OTs expressing negative feelings. For OTs that wanted to OT, working from home was a positive experience, but for OTs who needed access to work, the pandemic was very stressful if not traumatizing. The lack of change for OTs from pre-pandemic feelings could point to a dynamic where OT work in pre-pandemic times, because of its precarious nature within a hierarchical contract status profession, is not felt to be that much different than during an ‘unprecedented’ global public health crisis.

## **Chapter 9 - Policies and Conclusion**

### **9.1 - Introduction**

This final chapter will provide a summary of the key findings, discuss the limitations of this study, the theoretical implications, suggest policy ideas, and situate this study within the broader areas of discourse, like public education within capitalist political economies, that it stems from.

### **9.2 - Summary of key findings**

The first key finding supports research showing precarious contracts are a significant aspect of the Ontario public secondary education system (Abawia & Eizardirad, 2020; Mindzak, 2016; Pollock, 2008; 2010; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021) that can function as a disciplinary device and extends from the ideas around the contract hierarchy pyramid (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Pollock, 2008), the iron law of oligarchy (Michels, 1911; Tolbert, 2010) and the literature from LPT (Thompson, 1989; 2010a). The second key finding is that the contract type can influence the labour process experience of the teacher/worker and is a significant variable amongst others that shapes their overall individual health and household well-being of the teacher/worker, which reinforces some of the literature into precarious work (Ciulla, 2000; Cooper, 2019; Crompton, 2006; Green, 2007; Kalleberg, 2011; Lewchuk et al., 2011; Mindzak, 2016; Sennett, 1998; Standing, 2011; Vosko, 2000; Yearwood, 2021). The third key finding is that unions can provide a sense of security and solidarity to teachers and other workers that have certain associations with the union (Blanc, 2019; Bascia (Ed.), 2015; Jaffe, 2021; Ozga & Lawn, 1981; Sears, 2003; Weiner, 2012) and to precarious workers in times of crisis (WHSC, 2021). This supported some of the literature about teacher unions and teacher professionalism while problematizing other research that has shown a distrust of unions by precarious workers

(Mindzak, 2016; Standing, 2011). Each key finding and its relation to the corresponding research will briefly be discussed below.

The first key finding was that the contract helps shape the experience of the labour process and can function as a disciplinary mechanism for the individual worker. LPT attempts to analyze the relations between multiple aspects of the labour process and considers how that is shaped via the objectives of management (Connell & Crawford, 2007; Ozga & Lawn, 1981; Reid, 2003; Smyth et al., 2000; Thompson, 1989; 2010a; Thompson & Vincent, 2010). A workplace that was ideally supposed to be stable and without disruptions with the day-to-day work of teachers was implied by some teachers with references to a metaphorical “boat” that should not be rocked. An effort to stay positive (Ehrenreich, 2009) and work to control one's emotions (Hochschild, 2012) was evident in more than a few interviews. Phrases like “don't rock the boat” were used by some teachers about their work environment and the ever-present idea of not creating conflict or raising issues while in the “boat” or workplace, was inferred by myself. LTOs and other educational workers without job security knew they needed to “play along” to “get along”. Connecting this dynamic to ideas in LPT around the management imperative for worker control suggests the occasional contract, both OT and LTO, can function as a disciplinary mechanism when compared with permanent contract teachers who did not have the same concerns about “rocking the boat” or expressing negative feelings. However, the union that the permanent teachers share with occasional teachers could also be influenced through a contract disciplinary mechanism by working to divide the union. Adding to the ways teachers are controlled that Gidney (1999)<sup>55</sup> and others (Giroux, 1981; Reid, 2003; Smyth et al., 2000;

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<sup>55</sup> Gidney (1999) argues that there are three areas of teacher control: the curriculum, management oversight, and standardized testing. I would argue that a fourth area of teacher control, the

Solomon et al., 2011) have written about, is the labour contract itself and a neoliberal employment model (Prendergast, Hill, & Jones, 2017). Research into educational history in general and Ontario educational history specifically, has shown that teachers work is work that the state seeks disciplinary control over (Althouse, 1967; Archer, 1979; Giroux, 1981; Goldstein, 2014; Hanson, 2013b; 2021; Jaffe, 2021; Smaller, 1995; 1997; 2004; 2012; 2015a; 2015b). This study has shown that precarious work is a significant feature of the educational labour sector that may allow for a “carrot and stick” hiring process that restricts the autonomy of occasional teachers and functions as a disciplinary mechanism for the occasional teacher as well as the union. Taking into consideration the lack of material security that many occasional teachers in this study and others (Mindzak, 2016; Ross, 2017; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021) face, there could be social, material, emotional, and psychological incentives to conform to group and workplace norms to help secure more secure work to maintain a livelihood.

The second key finding was that the type of contract helped shape the teacher's experience of their labour process. Additionally, larger contexts and the personal material well-being of the worker were significant factors that help inform how the contract is experienced, which relates to previous research into precarious work (Vosko, 2000). Overall, the interviews supported research that shows precarious work is detrimental to the individual health and household well-being of workers who do not want to work with insecure contracts (Ciulla, 2000; Cooper, 2019; Crompton, 2006; Lewchuk et al., 2011; Mindzak, 2016; Sennett, 1998; Standing, 2011; Vosko, 2000). The contract can influence things like “job strain”, “employment strain”, and “relationship strain”. However, when there are supports that enable personal choice,

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labour contract, is what enables the three areas of control that Gidney (1999) rightly points to as areas of control over the labour process of teachers.

supportive networks, or other specific circumstances, these can also be significant factors in how work and the various types of “strain” are experienced by colleagues in different employment contracts. To help move towards a more equitable workplace, teachers’ unions could play a role fighting against the insecurity of teacher contracts as well as in fighting for things like paid sick days and basic income, or other shared community interests that help shape the life experiences of precarious teachers, other precarious workers, and communities in general (Bascia (Ed.), 2015; Blanc, 2019; Sears, 2003; Weiner, 2012).

Favorable feelings towards the union in a time of crisis and when there were certain associations about the union was the third key finding. In general, most teachers were more positive about their union than their work. Unlike some research (Standing, 2011; Mindzak, 2016) many of the occasional teachers, including over half of LTO teachers, supported their union, but this could have been influenced by the pandemic and public health crisis when many temporary workers benefited more from being in a union (WHSC, 2021). In support of other research into teacher unionism, teacher professionalism, and social movement unionism, the interviews suggested many teachers, including precarious teachers, felt solidarity or more connected with their union when the union combined certain perceptions of teacher professionalism with what might be viewed as elements of social movement unionism (Bascia, (Ed.) 2015; Blanc, 2019; Jaffe, 2021; Ozga & Lawn 1981, Weiner, 2012). When teachers associated the union with social justice, as a place they could direct questions to, and be part of a larger collective good, views regarding the union were more favourable. Interestingly, permanent teachers, more so than occasional teachers, distinguished between their local and provincial unions and were generally more critical of their union compared to occasional teachers. Similar to the fear of “rocking the boat” at work, there could also have been fears

about expressing negative views of the union from occasional teachers. On the other hand, the union could have also acted as a form of protection during a crisis and the uncertain times of the pandemic for teachers that did not have the guaranteed continuity of work that permanent teachers had.

### **9.3 - Limitations of this study**

As much as the research method of classifying experiences into positive, mixed, and negative, helped me to sort and compare differences there was a major limitation underlying it. As was discussed in Chapter 3, I have no way to continuously measure the intensity that a teacher felt something beyond these three broad categories. The categorization of responses into positive, mixed, and negative feelings is based on general inferences and without further research I cannot state if a permanent contract teachers' negative feelings are more or less negative than another permanent teacher or a teacher from another contract type. The negative, positive, or mixed feelings for one teacher could be stronger or lesser than those feelings for another teacher.

This thesis is also intended to be exploratory and open to future projects and is not meant to be a definitive statement on the experiences or feelings of all teachers from all contract types. I aimed for the dissertation to be primarily an analysis of qualitative data where the quantitative aspect was not separate from the qualitative nor equal to it, but something secondary to it, to complement it, and provide some general context. I saw the quantitative data as somewhat of a diving board for the pool of qualitative data. I would use the diving board only momentarily, using it to pre-scan the waters, before a surface dive or dive deep into the pool of human experiences discussed in the interviews that could be connected to systemic and ideological issues. Bringing the qualitative data to light will hopefully inspire similar research projects in kindergarten – grade 12 and post-secondary educational labour sectors. Although there are

significant limits to my subjective inferring, I feel this would be more problematic if I was using the quantitative data as my primary focus, taking hard conclusions from it, and/or ignoring my own biases or positionality. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 3, I feel that my own positionality has had pros as well as cons for assessing the experiences of teachers because of my own experiences with teaching.

Another limitation also exists regarding the measurement of shifts from pre-COVID to during COVID. This study lacked a scale or measurement tool like the EPI, that could assess shifts in feelings from pre-COVID to during COVID. For example, an OT that went from positive to mixed feelings might not have the same intensity of shift as the other OTs or teachers from other contract groups who went from positive to mixed. Or, if the OT stayed positive it might not be the same intensity of positive feeling from pre-COVID to during COVID. Further research is needed to answer these questions.

The focus on secondary teaching and the province wide focus could be further limitations but also open to future areas of research. Solely looking at secondary schools prevents a broader picture of what is happening in K-12 public educational labour or post-secondary education and just looking at province wide samples prevents better knowledge about what is happening in individual school boards and union locals. Additionally, as much as my survey was province wide, the majority of participants were from southern Ontario. So, school board or regional specific studies could be beneficial as well as a larger province wide study with participants from a greater representation of the different regions.

Two final limitations to the study are that the teachers are mostly from the same union, but a couple were not, and temporally it took place after the first year of the pandemic which took some focus off the general differences between contracts. The temporal issue could have



influenced responses in other ways, like the favorable views of the union from many occasional teachers, i.e., would they have been favourable if it was not a pandemic? Not knowing the differences between the secondary teachers' unions prevented greater union specific insights and as much as comparing before and during COVID was an element of my project, it may have also placed limitations on the type of answers I observed in the interview that might have allowed me to compare more differences between the teachers. For example, there was labour action just prior to the pandemic and there were some comments in relation to this struggle. However, conversations around the pandemic prevented more detailed discussion about the labour issues that teachers were protesting and how the different contracts viewed their different interests in that strike.

#### **9.4 - Theoretical implications**

This study has contributed to two primary areas of discourse: studies in precarious work and studies into educational labour. For studies into precarious work, this project has added a qualitative lens (Cranford and Vosko, 2006) into the work of precarious teachers and the differences between them and their permanent colleagues. It has shown that precarious work is spreading to sectors outside of private sector service work and into formerly secure jobs (Kalleberg, 2011; Lewchuk et al., 2014). Importantly, it has made connections to historical patterns (Quinlin, 2012; Van Arsdale, 2016) and tried to emphasize that those who work with precarious contracts often reflect larger historical and systemic inequities (Vosko, 2000). For future research into precarious work this study has highlighted how a tool for studying precarity, the employment precarity index (EPI) (PEPSO, 2013; 2015; 2018) can be a useful device for not only studying precarity, but for studying differences in labour sectors with different contracts and being able to compare experiences around material (in)security and work-related issues between workers with different contracts.

For educational labour processes, this thesis has added to the literature into precarious educational labour in Ontario (Chalikakis, 2012; Mindzak, 2016; Ofori, 2022; Pollock, 2007; 2010; Walkland, 2017; Yearwood, 2021) as well as inequity within the labour sector around issues of permanent contract hiring (Abawia and Eizadirad, 2020) and opened pathways to areas of related research into teacher unionism and professionalism. Additionally, it has extended research into Ontario educational labour history (Hanson, 2021; 2013b; 2009; Smaller, 1995; 1997; 2004; 2012; 2015a) and has included a historical lens to the different contracts and a method for thinking historically within the educational sector (Rogers, 2018). This has helped show the historical context to the employment hierarchies within Ontario educational labour that reflect inequities within the larger social system and political economy.

Lastly, this thesis supports the insights that issues involving teacher unionism and teacher professionalism are not separate (Ozga & Lawn, 1981) and that precarious workers could be an increasing feature for unions under neoliberalism (Ross, 2017). The Janus faces of teacher unionism and professionalism can function in the interests of management/the state or the worker/teacher. When practices that involve social movement unionism are utilized, ideas of professionalism and unionism can function more so in the interests of the teacher/worker and their students/school community (Dyke & Muckian Bates, 2019; Weiner, 2012). By showing how issues of autonomy, solidarity, and security in educational labour overlap through the specific type of labour contract, the findings of my thesis imply that in an inequitable neoliberal political economy, there is a need for an organizational and legal structure like a union to address inequitable neoliberal policies. Teachers' unions wishing to reduce or eliminate insecure work from their sector might be directly effective at addressing these issues through seemingly indirect social movement unionist practices and community organizing.

## 9.5 - Policy recommendations

Secondary public education in Ontario was a system in crisis before the pandemic. The pandemic helped break open the fissures and cracks in the work relationships of teachers that were already there. Many of the policy recommendations are directly related to educational labour. However, as this thesis has tried to show, there is no real separation of educational labour from stress associated with the larger political economy. So, policies that help the larger community, reduce levels of “toxic stress” in the community, and address the social determinants of health, can also help improve teacher working conditions and address inequities between teacher labour contracts.

### *For Work:*

First, public sector education systems should seek secure permanent employment over LTO employment, similar to police departments. Allowing more certified teachers to work with secure contracts in different educational capacities can provide system support, allow for teachers to always have planning time, can lower class sizes, and allow for greater teacher to student ratios. Better teacher to student ratios can enable more effective assessment, feedback, and instruction. More effective assessment, feedback, and instruction can help improve student success which can help grow local knowledge and creative economies and improve the working conditions of teachers whose job satisfaction is heavily dependent on student success. If more permanent teachers are around day-to-day this allows better system planning. Better system planning allows teachers to better plan and not spend time covering for other teachers or spending time fixing or setting up technology for class instead of developing assessment and being available for feedback and conferencing.

If the LTO system is to be kept, then to provide greater access to secure work and transparency for newly hired teachers, school boards need to articulate clearer pathways into a permanent contract. To help with clear hiring pathways, Reg.274 should be brought back but be applied in the same way in all boards. The idea that it prevented principals from hiring the best candidate is “false” (Mancini, 2019). There were problems with Reg.274 but restricting the rights of management was not one of them. The main problem was the inconsistent way that it was used by school boards. Provincial unions should survey local unions to see which school boards followed Reg.274 in an equitable way that the members felt was fair. From this, they could put forth recommendations for a specific hiring pathway for teachers that is the same in every school board.

On top of more secure work and clearer hiring pathways, public education in a democratic society should be a viable career path for a greater number of people. For public educational jobs in democracies to be equitable, they must be accessible for persons of all demographics and not primarily members of the white middle class (Lampert et al., 2016; Tarc et al., 2019). To help with this, universities and teachers’ colleges must become affordable for all and ideally free (Harris, D.N., 2021). Also, new immigrants with teaching credentials should be allowed and enabled to enter the public sector for employment as opposed to being primarily encouraged to pursue entrepreneurial pathways (Senthaneer et al., 2021). Internationally trained teachers should be able to access secure work and not have lingering uncertainty (Pollock, 2010).

School boards could also create non-standard teaching forms of employment that are secure, such as the ‘designated OT’ (DOT) position. DOTs were used by some school boards during the first couple of years of the pandemic. The DOT position is an OT position with more security that reports to the same school or a group of schools every day. The OT knows their

schedule in advance and that they will have an income that they can rely upon. Many schools in the pandemic had problems getting supply teachers (Williams, 2022) but a DOT is a supply teacher who is scheduled to come in everyday and can have sick days and benefits. Creating DOT positions could help address staffing issues by providing greater consistency for teachers and schools. School boards and unions could inquire who in their membership is an OT that is wanting a permanent contract and who is an OT that wants the flexibility. For the OTs that want more secure work, they could apply to DOT positions. In addition to offering an annual salary with benefits like paid sick days, the DOT position could be for OTs on their way to becoming a permanent teacher or they could be a career job on their own with an appropriate place on the teaching salary grid. Paid sick days existed in the past in Ontario for teachers that did not have permanent contracts. Fleming's (1971) writes in volume 3 of their multi-volume study of the Ontario education system that according to the 1970 *The Schools Administration Act*,

“A temporary teacher could claim remuneration for two days “in respect of” each month because of absence for the same reasons, but again, a board was authorized to be more generous. Similarly, an itinerant teacher was entitled to sick leave payment for at least 10 per cent of the periods of instruction and supervision specified in the agreement for his employment in any one school year”. (Fleming, 1971, page number unavailable)

When Fleming (1971) writes “for the same reasons”, they are referring to the reasons that a teacher with a permanent contract would need to have in order to be entitled for the “remuneration”, which were things like being “ill, as certified by a physician, or suffered from an acute inflammatory condition of his teeth or gums, as certified by a licentiate of dental surgery.” (Ibid.). It is also important to note that the employer was “authorized to be more generous” which suggests the potential for a level of care by the employer towards the worker regarding their individual health and household well-being. Paid sick leave would help make occasional teaching more secure.

In addition to making work more secure for OTs, teaching schedules could be innovated and re-imagined allowing greater professional autonomy for all teachers. Four-day weeks have been used to address the teacher shortages in the U.S and are in place in 550 school districts (Wilkins, 2023). However, even where they are being used some educational commentators say they are a “short term fix” to address teacher shortages and “burnout”. To address issues of overwork, lost prep time, working through weekends, and lacking the time to stay on top of new forms of pedagogy, secondary school teachers could be teaching two classes, approximately 1 hour each, a day at most with the rest of the day for planning, assessing, and conferencing with students when needed. Teachers would be able to collaborate with colleagues more often, develop new lessons, have more time to offer feedback to students, and time off to reflect, rest, and recuperate. Improving the working conditions of teachers improves the learning conditions of the students which further improves the working conditions of the teacher (Leithwood and Mcadie, 2010).

***For Their Union:***

Two ideas for teachers’ unions would be that they keep better data on the identities of their members and work towards intersectional or social movement unionist practices.

There are equity issues with the lack of data on OSSTF union members. It would be helpful for members, equity seeking groups, and researchers to access data on union membership and know the demographic representation of the members with the different contracts.

Provincial unions could provide guidance to the locals on gathering data on members and then process the various local data into a provincial database that members could access. Knowing more about members can help make connections with the communities they come from and teach as well as learn about the interests that they support.

Another indirect way to learn about members is to get more members involved with the union, promote intersectional union values, and help develop a larger democratic culture, not just in the union, but in the larger community. These actions could help encourage public support for the union movement and policies that are in the interests of teachers, community members, and all workers which could help create a counter force to the state preference for neoliberal privatization policies and anti-public sector union policies.

Bell (1999) describes the global trends in education that were restructuring education in the UK during the 1990s as part of a global pattern and a similar neoliberal “policyscape” (p.196), occurring in many other capitalist states. Unions can be better equipped to argue for counter policy proposals, prepared to organize for them, and mobilize interested actors by connecting the neoliberal “policyscape” rhetoric and the class-based interests behind the “class war from above” (Prendergast et al., 2017) to the contradictory realities lived by public education workers, especially those that have precarious labour contracts. Following neoliberal policy logic points to the idea that an underfunded public education system in crisis is a productive occurrence and a policy objective and not a failure of government. Of course, defunding public sector education seems contradictory to progressive educational rhetoric around the values of democracy, equity, and inclusion. Unions can help their own members and members of the larger community better understand the political economic interests influencing these contradictions.

To help union and community members address political economic contradictions, precarious realities, and efforts towards teacher proletarianization, teacher unions, and especially their more secure individual members must play a key role (Au, 2018; Blanc, 2019; Smyth et al., 2000; Weiner, 2012). In order for teacher unions to follow a practice of social movement

unionism, they will need to connect and organize with community groups across a range of intersectional justice issues. Au (2018) discusses the need for unions to work with local communities and the impacts that this had on local politics and justice struggles in Seattle and Chicago, “some teacher union organizing has also embodied ways that communities of colour have resisted neoliberal, corporate education reforms...the union there (Chicago) invited the community to participate in the shaping of the unions contract demands" (p.122). Issues may arise with these levels of union transparency, but I would argue that what is gained may be more important than anything lost. Following social movement principles and connecting the struggles over teacher working conditions and precarious contracts with larger systemic inequity issues that other community members are experiencing can build community support for teachers and precarious community workers, which can then be the first step towards larger political support, advocacy, and activism. One example of this in action would be for unions to not boycott services like Uber eats or other gig economy platforms because they are not unionized but work to help organize those workers.

Another example of this type of unionism that tends to gain grassroots community support, is also from the U.S, but it can be a useful example for Canadian teacher unions. In the U.S, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York state formed alliances with local Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) groups in an effort to organize child day care workers (Weiner, 2012). For any corrective policies to eliminate precarious public educational work to be successfully implemented amidst a neoliberal “policyscape” and the “class war from above”, widespread grass roots public support is essential, and actions such as the ones outlined will need to continue to spread and grow.



Reversing decades of defunding public education is the primary policy recommendation for dealing with the influences from first neoliberalism and then COVID and teachers' unions are uniquely situated to help organize and mobilize towards those goals. Getting the provincial government to use federal funds that were already allocated for public spending as opposed to cutting or holding on to them, would help (PressProgress, 2021). In the wake of the gross inequities illuminated by the pandemic, research by Matilla-Santander et al., (2021) have called for a new social contract. Refunding the public educational sectors so that it expands the number of secure forms of unionized permanent work would help provide jobs with benefits for members of society who want to be educational workers. This could help to reverse rising levels of precarious public sector education work and revitalize notions of a social contract and community interdependency.

***For Individual Health and Household well-being:***

A revitalized push for a new social contract could encourage the adoption of government supported paid sick days along with social protections like basic income (BI). Both would help teachers with occasional contracts and members of the student's families/school communities that the teachers work with to reduce "toxic stress". A minimum of ten paid sick days annually would provide support to workers if infected so they can stay home and avoid the pressures of having to work when sick and possibly infecting others (DeRigne et al., 2016). Considering that a local community's challenges influence the local school, a minimum of ten paid sick days for all workers could also help the levels of safety and security for the families of the students in the communities that teachers work with. If a student's housemates or family members can take days off when sick or exposed to viruses, this could reduce overall levels of community transmission and make schools safer. Similar reasoning applies to providing people with a BI.

BI could help reduce the “toxic stress” in communities that teachers work with, as was discussed in Chapter 7. It can also provide OTs with financial support when they cannot access work, provide extra when they can, help them not need a roommate or partner to help with living expenses, or help support a partner to stay at home if they choose to raise children or take care of the home. Policies that can help the community can help all teachers, including OTs who lack paid sick days and an income they can rely upon.

For BI, there is a sizable amount of research that supports putting it into practice (Ferdosi et al., 2020; Lu, 2020; Fawcett, 2020). Ferdosi et al. (2020) found that all participants of a BI study project in Ontario, “reported benefitting in some way” (p.4). There were many improvements in health issues, less visits to health services, it created a sense of self-worth and gave hope, many participants moved to higher paying or more secure jobs. Those with jobs before BI “reported greater improvements” on some measures for well-being than people who were unemployed before they received BI (ibid.). Similarly, Lu (2020) writes that, “people who received universal basic income reported better financial well-being, mental health and cognitive functioning, as well as higher levels of confidence in the future”. Most importantly, especially for equity seeking organizations like unions who can put pressure on the state, Fawcett (2020) writes, “the most important contribution that a UBI<sup>56</sup> could make to our lives is raising our expectations of what governments can—and should—do”. Likewise with paid sick days, governments can do it, “and should” do it.

Paid sick days help reduce transmission of illnesses, help with vaccine uptake, and are actively being fought for in Ontario. Thompson et al., (2021) found that when paid sick leave was around in some states there was a 50% reduction of COVID cases per day, per state. In

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<sup>56</sup> UBI is short for Universal Basic Income

regard to vaccine uptake, McKoy (2022) in an article for Boston University's School of Public Health writes that, “a new study found a 17- percent higher vaccination rate in cities with paid sick leave policies, compared to cities that do not have these policies”. As of Spring 2023, the campaign for ten paid sick days in Ontario is active and supported by groups like Justice for Workers ([justice4workers.org](http://justice4workers.org)) and the provincial New Democrat Party (NDP) ([ontariondp.ca](http://ontariondp.ca)). Bill 104, the Paid Sick Days for Ontario Workers Act is being read and voted upon in the provincial government (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2023). BI and a minimum of ten paid sick days would be beneficial policies for all teachers and the communities they work with. But they would particularly benefit OTs, who do not have paid sick days or reliable income.

***For COVID Protections:***

For protections against COVID, smaller class sizes (Klein, 2020), ventilation (Fabian & Levy, 2022), ultraviolet light (Matteus, 2023), and a reconsideration of masks (Oliver et al., 2023), at least when community transmission levels are at certain levels (Donovan et al., 2022) are all needed. In an article that was critical of the proposals for school closures and online learning early in the pandemic, Klein (2020) wrote that maybe schools never needed to be closed as they were and instead asked, “So how about hiring double the number of teachers and cutting class size in half? How about making sure that every school has a nurse?” Klein’s (2020) idea would create jobs for the many people looking for work in Ontario and allow for more physical distance in schools and less people breathing in the same air.

Air quality is important for school member health and maybe to avoid legal liability. In British Columbia, in Fall 2022, a mom made a regulatory complaint against her child’s school district over what she felt was the poor quality of ventilation in her child’s school and she wanted it reviewed by a third party and not the school board. She also wanted to know how the school

board was defining the word “safe”. This sparked a discussion in the area about organizational liability if the virus spreads in buildings and could there be potential future lawsuits if schools are found that they did not meet a certain level of expectation (Kulkarni, 2022). Clean air is not just important for organizations to avoid legal liability issues, but it helps student learning (Fabian & Levy, 2022) and according to reporting by Reuters, one Italian study showed it can reduce the transmission of COVID by up to 82% (Jones & Parodi, 2022) and another study that looked at two secondary schools in Switzerland found concentrations of airborne COVID were on average 70% lower with mask mandates and 40% lower with air cleaners (Banholzer et al., 2023).

Lastly, there is growing research suggesting ultraviolet lights can also help clean air and these should also be used in schools if deemed safe (Matteus, 2023). If the air is clean with ventilation and ultraviolet light, and there are smaller class sizes as well as the ability for community members to stay home when sick along with accessible COVID testing, masks might only be needed when transmission levels are at a certain level. However, in late April 2023 the country of Vietnam was reintroducing masks in their schools and commercial centers because of an increase in COVID cases (Ngoc Chau, 2023) and in early May 2023 about a dozen high schools in Australia have returned to remote learning or reintroduced mask mandates because of COVID outbreaks (Carroll, 2023). Regarding claims that mask mandates do not work, at least one study has found that those claims are flawed (Oliver et al., 2023). As of late April 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US is recommending students to “consider” wearing masks in school to reduce the transmission of COVID (CDC, 2023).

Reducing the spread of COVID is important for public health and equitable public access for all people in society and in schools. There are researchers who have argued that by not

taking more precautions against COVID and allowing the virus to freely spread is a form of “social murder”, where the state, through policy or lack of, creates the conditions for people to unnecessarily die (Abbasi (Ed.), 2021). If those people are members of marginalized groups and have pre-existing health issues, the “social murder” could also have elements of eugenics underlying it. Some have also argued that the U.S response to COVID has been a form of “necrosecurity” where the “mass death of less grievable subjects plays an essential role in maintaining social welfare and public order” (Lincoln, 2021). Governments or organizations allowing or facilitating the “mass death of less grievable subjects” cannot claim to be inclusive or equity seeking. Schools should be made ‘Davos safe’ (Feigl-Ding, 2023). ‘Davos safe’ was a popular social media term in January 2023 for the safety standards and precautions used at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland in 2023 (Doubleday, 2023). Some observers took note of the protections against COVID used at the WEF (Lee, 2023) that many public schools do not have.

Returning to the idea of social movement unionism and improving union communication strategies, by continuing the fight to reduce COVID transmission while informing the public of private interests that are against that option, the union could help gain popular demand to bring back pandemic protections and supports, like CERB - which was like basic income, as well as justify smaller class size standards, improve air quality, and provide paid sick days. Union communications could help to inform members and the public of the wealthy right wing private interests that influenced the school reopen debate (Ahmed, 2021; Archer, 2020; Bragman, 2022; Bragman & Kotch, 2021; McGreal, 2021; Richards, 2022). These strategies could also counter inaccurate arguments in the public sphere that claimed countries like Sweden had successful pandemic policies (Hiltzik, 2022). Union members and the public might be interested to learn

about the ways certain private interests had an influence over public systems during COVID and how the state addressed those interests. A variety of union communication and organizing strategies could be used.

## **9.6 - Recommendations for research**

Some of the avenues for future research include using a similar method to study differences between teachers with different contracts in local school boards and local unions to help compare the different contracts in different locations, and/or comparison studies between other provinces, countries, or regions. These would be beneficial for research into precarious work, educational labour processes, and histories of educational labour contracts. Further inquiry into the history of the different types of teachers in Ontario and their employment contracts would also be useful for educational labour history as well as general knowledge into the overlaps of the education system with policies of the political economy at a given time. The methods used for this project could also be applied to studying the differences between educational workers in higher education and mapping the different historical configurations between different contract workers in that labour sector, documenting their feelings about work, their ability to organize collectively, and how their individual health and household well-being are influenced.

In relation to COVID, a similar study that includes questions around COVID would be helpful for learning more about if teachers with different contracts were infected in different numbers, how they managed their illness, and what benefits were available to them in their collective agreement. This could shed light on further inequities within the labour sector around the abilities of teachers with different contracts to deal with long term sickness. It is important to learn how COVID has impacted those teachers that were infected, what contracts they had, as

well as how the teachers are managing working with colleagues and students who also might be suffering from Long-COVID/long COVID. Research from the United Kingdom suggests that as many as one in seven children infected with COVID, can develop some forms of Long-COVID (Smout, 2021). Additional research found that the prevalence of self-reporting of Long-COVID/COVID was greatest in, “people aged 35-49 years of age, people living in more deprived areas, *those working in teaching and education*, social care, or health (likely reflecting increased exposure to COVID infection in these sectors) ...” (Ayoubkhani & Munro, 2022).

The health crisis brought on by the pandemic has overlapped with the pre-COVID problems that existed in public education which were largely caused by neoliberal public sector restructuring. Further research can contribute to learning more detailed and historicized information about the different types of labour contracts in publicly funded education systems, their larger socializing function, how re-funding education policies could reduce inequities in the labour sector while making it safer for the current and future pandemics, and what roles that teachers unions can play towards these goals. Because of the trans-disciplinary overlaps that this thesis covers, the areas for future research are expansive.

## **9.7 - Conclusion**

This study on the different experiences of secondary teachers in Ontario with different labour contracts built on and added to studies in precarious employment, educational labour processes, Ontario educational labour history, teacher professionalism, and teacher unionism. The occurrence of the COVID pandemic and public health crisis added another element to these areas of study, mainly the pandemic’s influence on all of them, which surprisingly was not as significant as might be assumed. Aside from the favourable view of the union by several precarious teachers which is counter to some previous research, there were not many changes

amongst the different teachers during the pandemic which suggests a system in crisis even before the pandemic.

Before and during COVID, the security of a permanent contract could not itself prevent issues of burnout or overwork, but it did reduce the stress of having to frequently look for and worry about finding work. On top of the challenging working conditions for most teachers, many OTs and LTOs had concerns about getting hired into permanent jobs and some were unaware of how they could get hired and concerned that there were injustices and inequities in the hiring process. There were instances that indicate the occasional contract can act as a disciplinary device undermining professional autonomy and preventing equity in the workplace. Public sector educational labour in Ontario lacks transparency in regard to workforce demographic specifics, differences between school boards and local unions, and hiring pathways which creates further uncertainties for would-be teachers considering entering the profession, new teachers' college grads preparing to apply to boards for work, and teachers working with uncertain labour contracts.

For public education systems to provide equitable and inclusive learning spaces for students, they must first create them for their workers who are also learners and who model and help normalize social life and larger social norms to the students. According to social learning theory, if teachers work and live within an inequitable hierarchy this model of social relations will provide potentially more memorable lessons about society than the rhetorical ideas about democracy, equity, or inclusion described in curriculum documents, professional material, school board, or union literature and communications. Precarity in public education will have a largely hegemonic function for neoliberal capitalism, where the labour of teachers is secondary to the learning of students, when both need to be valued as one in the same.



Neoliberal policies supposedly enable greater personal freedom or autonomy. However, the differences between the different contracts shows professional autonomy and personal freedom might be more enabled when they exist within a context where there's also feelings of security and solidarity which are largely provided by a secure contract that is protected by a collective agreement and a union. More research into educational labour processes could help validate these findings.

The absence of teacher labour contracts in discussions about educational labour is significant, especially in times of environmental, political, economic, and public health crisis which are issues that educators would critically discuss and question in their classrooms and with colleagues. This is also significant for public sector teacher union organizational awareness and strategizing. If there are correlations<sup>57</sup> between the increased use of OTs and a decrease in the power of teachers' unions since the 1970s in Ontario which have been accompanied with larger shifts in the global and Canadian political economies relating to multiple geopolitical crises, then fighting against not only anti-public education policies but also policies that connect to the larger structural changes could be worthwhile. If unions can connect anti-public sector shifts in the political economy with shifts in educational labour practices like changes in contract norms to their members, greater organizational and structural awareness can develop.

Unlike earlier Education Acts, the term 'occasional teacher' appeared in the 1974 Education Act. This was around the time of the collapse of Bretton Woods gold standard, increasing militarism and imperialism backed by financialization of the U.S dollar and anti-

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<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that I am not trying to imply correlation equals causation but that there were influential variables at play in the late 1960s through the 1970s and after, that had interests to weaken the power of the public sector and teachers' unions and to enhance the power of the private sector to help navigate the various "crises".

labour sentiment (Chomsky, 2003a, p.324; Hudson, 2021), the 1975 report by the Trilateral Commissions about the ‘crisis of democracy’; which suggested there was too much democracy amongst marginalized groups (Chomsky, 2003a, p.325), and a growing awareness of looming environmental crisis by major oil producers (Millman, 2016). These were all part of an atmosphere of social unrest, anti-union sentiment, and growing distrust of government public sector spending. This atmosphere had similarities with the anti-labour social unrest in the early 1900s when teachers’ unions in Ontario officially formed. As Chapter 4 showed, the state can view teachers as threats to the status quo. In times of public health crisis, environmental crisis, and rising militarism with national security objectives, having a disciplinary mechanism over a labour sector that works with ideas and can teach students how to critically think, question, and consider various perspectives, could be beneficial for the management of the neoliberal state.

A tiered carrot and stick contract hiring process reinforced by neoliberal management norms and an iron law of oligarchy within the teaching labour market could make getting a permanent contract difficult for radical minded teachers who might be seen as trying to instill in their students “sentiments hostile to the parent state” (Althouse, 1967, p.9). It could also make union solidarity and mobilization challenging. This dynamic also might not lead to equitable or inclusive hiring practices. If there are significant structural and ideological influences that might be of concern to the managers of a society undergoing various forms of systemic crisis, then controlling labour through divided contracts could be beneficial for administration but this might not be equitable or inclusive for the teacher. Not only do divided contracts enable forms of control over teachers, but they also create a disciplinary device within the union by dividing the membership and limiting union growth and strength. The labour of the teacher, partially shaped by their contract, is a nexus of cultural, historical, and political economic contexts in which

students and other teachers interpellate their place in the larger world. If integrity is when words and actions align, then for the public education system to be a system with integrity that has equitable and inclusive learning spaces that promote democratic cultures, and for teachers' unions to have greater levels of solidarity, there cannot be inequity between the types of labour contracts that are used to employ teachers within that system.

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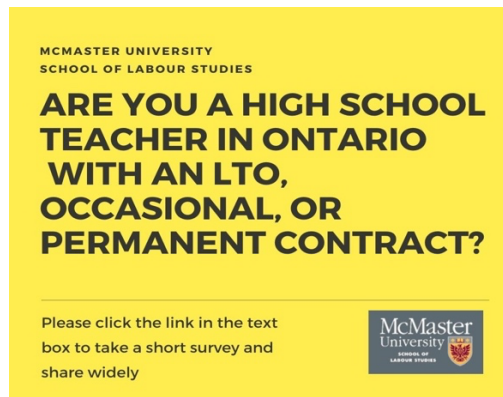
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Appendix A - Social media recruitment posters for online survey



## **Appendix B - Online survey (Lime Survey platform)**

The survey has 48 questions. You may skip any question that you choose not to answer. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would be interested in consenting to do an online, 16 question interview, via zoom, which will remain private.

You are more than welcome to complete this survey and not consent to the interview. If you choose to volunteer for the interview, and if you are chosen, you will be contacted within the next 2 months.

There is no time limit and thank you for your time.

There are 48 questions in this survey.

### **Identity**

The following questions are to gather information about your identity.

#### **1 What is your gender?**

Choose one of the following answers.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Woman
- Man
- Non-Binary
- Prefer not to say

#### **2 What is your age in years?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 23-29
- 30-35
- 36-41
- 42-47
- 48-53
- 54-59
- 60-65
- 66+

#### **3 Are you...**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Arab
- Black (including African, African-Canadian, African-American, Caribbean)

- Chinese (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan)
- Filipino
- Indo-Caribbean, Indo-African, Indo-Fijian, or West-Indian
- Japanese
- Korean
- South Asian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Sri Lankan, Punjabi)
- North African (Egyptian, Libyan)
- Pacific Islanders or Polynesian/Melanesian/Micronesian (e.g., Cook Island Māori, Hawaiian Ma’oli, Fijians, Marquesan, Marshallese, Niuean, Samoans, Tahitian Ma’ohi, Tongan, New Zealand Māori)
- South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Malaysian, Thai, Vietnamese)
- West Asian (e.g., Afghani, Armenian, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Yemini)
- White (including European, White-Canadian/American/Australian/South African)
- Multiracial/ethnic (with at least one parent in a non-White group above)
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

#### **4 Do you identify as Indigenous?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- No
- Yes: First Nations (either status/non-status)
- Yes: Metis
- Yes: Inuit
- Yes: Other
- Prefer not to answer

#### **5 Are you...**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Single/Never Married
- Married/Common-Law
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed

#### **6 What are the first 3 digits of your postal code? (you can leave this blank if you wish)**

Please write your answer here:

#### **Personal Life**

The next set of questions will ask you about aspects of your personal life.

**7 Thinking about the last 12 months, has concern over your employment situation negatively influenced large spending decisions (large purchases, vacations, children activities)?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**8 Has your employment status impacted decisions about having children?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes - decided to wait
- Yes - decided to have children
- Yes - decided not to have children
- No - it has had no impact

**9 How often does uncertainty about your work schedule negatively impact yours/and your family's quality of life?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

**10 In the last 3 months, how often did anxiety about your employment situation interfere with your personal or family life?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**11 Thinking about the next 12 months, does your employment situation make you concerned about your ability to meet your debt obligations (i.e. mortgages, credit cards, bank loans)?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:



- Yes
- No

**12 Thinking about the next 12 months, are you concerned that you will not be able to maintain your current standard of living due to your employment situation?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**Labour Contract**

This series of questions will ask you about how secure you feel in regards to your work.

**13 Which of the following best describes the job/contract that paid you the most in the last 3 months? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Casual (on-call, day labour)
- Temporary/short term contract (less than a year)
- Fixed term contract, one year or more
- Self-employed-no employees
- Self-employed—others work for me
- Permanent part-time—less than 30 hour per week
- Permanent full time—30 hours or more per week

**14 In the last 3 months, what portion of your paid hours came from temporary employment agencies? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- All
- Most
- Half
- Some
- None

**15 Does the following describe your current employment relationship?<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> "I have one employer, who I expect to be working for a year from now, who provides at least 30 hours of work a week, and who pays benefits." Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes

- No

**16 Does your current employer(s) provide a private retirement income plan such as a pension plan, or a contribution to an RRSP (CPP does not count)? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Does Not Apply

**17 Do you receive any other employment benefits from your current employer(s) such as a drug plan, vision, dental, life insurance etc.? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Does Not Apply
- Don't Know

**18 Do you usually get paid if you miss a day's work? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**19 In the last 12 months, how much did your income vary from week to week? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- A great deal
- A lot
- Some
- A little
- Not at all

**20 How likely will your total hours of paid employment be reduced in the next 6 months? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Very likely
- Likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely
- Not likely at all

**21 In the last 3 months, how often did you work on an on-call basis? (That is, you have no set schedule, and your employer calls you in only when there is work) Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

**22 Do you know your work schedule at least one week in advance? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Always
- Most of the time
- Half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

**23 What type of labour contract are you in right now, this semester?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Long Term Occasional (LTO)
- Occasional Teacher (OT)
- Permanent

**24 If you have an OT/LTO contract, how many years have you been working as an OT/LTO teacher?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21+
- I have a permanent contract

**25 If permanent, how many years did it take for you to get at least one permanent line?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- I do not have a permanent contract
- less than 1 year
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years
- 12 years
- 13 years
- 14 years
- 15 years
- 16 years
- 17 years
- 18 years
- 19 years
- 20 years

- 21+ years

**26 In total, how many LTO lines have you worked (including if you are in any now)?**

Please write your answer here:

**27 In the last 2 years, how many LTO lines have you worked?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

**28 If you are an OT/LTO and were offered a permanent contract would you take it?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, even if it was one line
- Yes, only if it was at least two lines
- Yes, only if it was three lines
- No, I prefer to OT and/LTO
- Does not apply to me, I have a permanent contract

### **Work Life**

This set of questions will address issues related to your life at work.

**29 Would your current employment be negatively affected if you raised a health and safety concern or raised an employment rights concern with your employer(s)? Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Very likely
- Likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely

- Not likely at all

**30 Do you feel that discrimination was a barrier for you in getting hired at any stage in the hiring process?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**31 Is discrimination a barrier for you in getting work or assignments you prefer?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**32 What are your teachable subjects? Check all that apply**

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- English
- English Language Learners
- Languages (French, Spanish, Latin, etc.)
- Special Education
- Learning Resource
- Health and Physical Education
- History
- Art
- Drama
- Dance
- Music
- Philosophy
- Law
- Social Sciences
- Geography
- Business
- Indigenous Studies
- Math
- Co-operative Education
- Guidance
- Science
- Technological Studies
- Family Studies

- Adult Education
- Computer Studies

**33 Do you often teach within your primary teachable subjects?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

**34 Compared to teachers with a permanent contract, how stressful is the workplace for teachers with an OT contract?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- much more
- more
- same
- less
- much less

**35 Compared to teachers with a permanent contract, how stressful is the workplace for teachers with an LTO contract on the LTO list?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- much more
- more
- same
- less
- much less

**36 Compared to teachers with a permanent contract, how stressful is the impact of work life on personal life, for teachers with an OT contract?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- much more
- more
- same
- less
- much less

**37 Compared to teachers with a permanent contract, how stressful are the impacts of work life on the personal life, for teachers with an LTO on the LTO List contract?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- much more
- more
- same
- less
- much less

**Income and Supports**

This final set of questions will ask you questions related to your income and supports.

**38 Do you live alone?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**39 How many people do you live with (including yourself)?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

**40 How many people does your income help support (including yourself)?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

**41 In the last 12 months, did you provide (check all that apply)**

Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Child support/Alimony
- Financial support to an adult child
- Financial support to a parent or other adult
- Financial support to someone outside of Canada
- None of the above

**42 What was the total income from all sources (before taxes and other deductions) of all family members living in your household including yourself for the past 12 months? (Include wages, profits, pensions, investment incomes, rental income, and any other governmental transfers in your calculations.)**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$29,999
- \$30,000 to \$39,999
- \$40,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$59,999
- \$60,000 to \$79,999
- \$80,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$119,000
- \$120,000 to \$149,000
- \$150,000 +

**43 In the last 3 months, what portion of your employment income was received in cash?**

**Choose one of the following answers**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Most
- About half
- Less than half
- None

**44 Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following statements best describes how well you and your household have been keeping up with your bills and other financial commitments?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Keeping up without any problems
- Keeping up, but it is sometimes a struggle
- Having real financial problems and falling behind

**Consent to be contacted about 'Online 16 Question Interview'**

This is where you will be asked if you are interested in being contacted about being interviewed online at a later date, approximately within two months from the time you complete this survey. The interview should take approximately 60 mins. To give compensation for their time, those interviewed will receive a \$25 gift certificate for Presidents Choice.

**45 Would you like to be contacted about being interviewed?**

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

**46 If you selected, 'yes', and you would like to be contacted about participating in a 16 question interview that will take about 60 minutes, please provide an email address so that I can contact you. I would recommend a non-school board related email. You will be given the questions ahead of time.**

Please write your answer here:

**47 If you choose not be interviewed, or if you are not selected to be interviewed, but you would still like the results of this study, please leave an email address so that I can send you a link to the results, when they are ready.**

Please write your answer here:

**Open response**

This final part allows the participant(s) to add any thoughts or points they feel might be relevant.

**48**

**Please feel free to add any thoughts or points that you feel might be relevant. There is no word limit.**

Please write your answer here:

Thank you again for taking the time to complete this survey.

Your effort is of a great help to my research and helps contribute to a greater understanding of the secondary educational labour sector in Ontario.

If your participation in the interview is requested, you will be contacted within the next 2 months.

## Appendix C - Letter of Information and Consent

### LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

#### A study about: Comparing How High School Teachers in Ontario with Different Labour Contracts Feel Towards Work and Life, Before and During Covid19

**Student Principal Investigator:**

Andrew Wilkin, PhD. Candidate,  
School of Labour Studies  
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E-mail: [wilkinad@mcmaster.ca](mailto:wilkinad@mcmaster.ca)

**Faculty Supervisor:**

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk  
School of Labour Studies  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
E-mail: [lewchuk@mcmaster.ca](mailto:lewchuk@mcmaster.ca)

**What am I trying to discover?**

I hope to discover any differences felt between occasional teachers and permanent high school teachers towards their work and working conditions.

You are invited to take part in this study on the various feelings experienced by teachers. Specifically, I will be comparing teachers with different labour contracts and how their feelings towards work and life may differ.

I am doing this research for a dissertation that will help me complete my PhD in Labour Studies. This is a line of research that I hope to continue in the future and will use your data for this project as well as for future related studies.

**What will happen during the study?**

If you choose to take part, you will access an online link to LimeSurvey that will be provided to you once you contact me and express your interest. You will first complete a 43 question online survey through LimeSurvey. You will then be asked if they wish to participate in a 16 question online interview in which both audio and video will be recorded (if you would prefer to have the video off, that will be allowed). From those participants that choose to be interviewed, I will select approximately two dozen teachers. Of these, half will be permanent contract teachers and the other half will be occasional contract teachers. Once all participants have been contacted and have been sent the Letter of Information via email, I will meet at an agreed upon time and date on the online platform Zoom, individually, with each participant/interviewee. All possible privacy measures will be taken. Before the interview, I will then ask you to orally consent to the interview, that the interview be both audio and video recorded, and other areas of consent. You can turn the video off at any point before or during the interview. I will then ask you the 16 additional questions about your work, working conditions, and impacts on your personal life. The interview should be approximately 60 minutes, give or take a few minutes on either side. I will be taking notes and the interview will be recorded and transcribed. For example, below are two questions that you will be asked:

- *Do you feel that your labour conditions enable you to meet the professional standards of practice in a way that you feel confident and encouraged about? Please explain?*
- *Are your working conditions impacting your home life and/or relations with family and/or friends? If so, in what ways?*
- *Are you concerned about any issues of surveillance by administration/the school board? Either on electronic devices (at work or home) or as drop in visits/walking by classrooms etc.? How does this impact you personally/professionally?*

The results of the interview will allow me to compare any differences between permanent and occasional teachers in regards to how they feel about their workspaces. This information will help to inform my final project.

*This study will use the LimeSurvey and Zoom platforms to collect data which are externally hosted cloud-based services. A link to their privacy policies are available [here](#) and [here](#). Please note that whilst this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is still a small risk with any*

*platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please talk with the researcher if you have any concerns.*

**Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:**

This is a study sanctioned by McMaster and not your school board. Please be aware that school boards can have their own privacy policies and speaking to me may violate those policies. Please check with your individual school board and familiarize yourself with their privacy policy. If you feel comfortable being interviewed after you have read your own board’s privacy policy, please contact me. The interview may evoke negative emotions and/or thoughts. However, I will not be using your name nor the name of the school board in my completed project. Also, if you feel uncomfortable with (anxious, uneasy about) answering some questions, and you may decline to answer if you wish. If you find it stressful to recount certain stories, ***please always know that you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.*** I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

**Potential Benefits**

By better understanding the labour conditions of different types of contract teachers, researchers and others may be able to advocate and work towards creating policies that will improve the labour conditions of all teachers. These improvements could also improve the learning environment of the students. Participants may also *not* benefit from participating in the study.

**Payment or Reimbursement**

For completing the interview you will be given an honorarium of \$25 towards Presidents Choice. This can be mailed to you or, if possible, transferred electronically.

**Who will know what I said or did in the study?**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but me [or other members of the research team] will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them.

Once the study is complete, an archive of the data, without identifying information, will be maintained for one year.

**What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form up until June 2021, when I expect to be submitting the rough draft of my thesis.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

**Information about the Study Results:**

If you would like to receive the summary personally, please let me know how you would like me to send it to you.

**Questions about the Study:**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me (Andrew Wilkin) at:

<p>wilkinad@mcmaster.ca, 289-253-9191</p>
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This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

### CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Andrew Wilkin of McMaster University.
  - I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
  - I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until the day of interview.
  - I have seen and read a copy of this form.
  - Because the interview will be conducted online, I will ask you for your consent verbally, as opposed to having you physically sign.
  - I agree that the interview can be video and audio recorded.
  - I agree to participate in the study.
1. I agree that the interview can be audio and video recorded (I know that I can turn the video off at anytime if I choose to).
- Yes  
 No
2. I agree to have my responses from this project used in future related projects.
- yes  
 no
3.  Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.  
Please send them to me at this email address \_\_\_\_\_
- No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

## Appendix D - Interview Questions Guide

### Interview Questions Guide, Completed Using Zoom

**Information about these interview questions:** I am conducting this interview in order to help me learn about any differences in feelings between permanent and occasional contract teachers towards their labour process and working conditions. Interviews will be one-to-one and will be open-ended (not just “yes or no” answers). Because of this, the exact wording may change a little. Sometimes I will use other short questions to make sure I understand what you told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: “*So, you are saying that ...?*”, to get more information (“*Please tell me more?*”), or to learn what you think or feel about something (“*Why do you think that is...?*”).

\*\*\*Some questions may evoke negative emotional feelings, PLEASE NOTE, you do not need to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with and can pass on the question\*\*\*

**1) Information about you: Where did you go to high school and teachers’ college as a student? Are you a permanent contract teacher or an LTO/OT teacher?**

**2) Please tell me about your experiences getting hired and the employment situation(s), such as job competition? (i.e how long before you were hired, the process).**

**3) Do you feel that the hiring process is/was equitable? [ ] Yes [ ] No**

**Do you feel that Reg. 274 has helped increase the fairness of the hiring process? [ ] Yes [ ] No Please tell me more about why you think this?**

**4) How would you describe your working conditions prior to the Covid crisis?**

**5) How have your working conditions changed since the Covid crisis? What do you feel are the most significant changes that has impacted your personal feelings towards your work?**

**6) Do you see yourself teaching in 10 years? [ ] Yes [ ] No Please tell me more about why you think that?**

**7) Do you feel that your labour conditions enable you to meet the professional standards of practice in a way that you feel confident and encouraged about? Please explain?**

**8) Are you concerned about any issues of surveillance by administration/the school board? Either on electronic devices (at work or home) or as drop in visits/walking by classrooms etc.? How does this impact you personally/professionally?**

**9) Do you feel empowered (encouraged to grow and network) or disempowered (frustrated, defeated, etc.) with the flexible/networking hiring model (i.e the LTO List)? Please tell me more why you feel that way? If you are a permanent teacher, do you feel the different types of contract teachers helps to improve labour conditions or problematize them?**

**10) Do you feel your labour conditions, such as the rate of speed you work at, are conducive to individual and/or workplace wellness? Any other conditions that might impact wellness?**

**11) Do you feel your type of labour contract (permanent or occasional/LTO) influences how you teach? Do you feel comfortable talking about controversial issues/current events with students?**

**12) Do you feel your type of labour contract impacts how you feel towards colleagues, students, the union, the board? If so, how so?**

**13) In what ways might your work environment impact how you feel towards the union or the board? Do you feel listened to, validated, confident in your job security, empowered in your profession, comfortable expressing yourself and raising questions? Do you feel comfortable questioning administrative decisions/policies?**

**14) Are your working conditions impacting your home life and/or relations with family and/or friends? If so, in what ways?**

**15) Is your labour contract impacting your home life and/or relations with your family and/or friends? (ex. does not having a permanent contract impact your friendships and who you befriend, or, vice versa if you have a permanent contract)**

**16) Is there anything else you think I need to know about labour conditions/process in high school education today, or wished that I had asked? Why?**