“Continue as normal but in a pandemic”:

A Mixed-Methods Study of Faculty Experiences in Canadian Academia

Piara Govender

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Abstract

In March of 2020, in response to the rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the Ontario government declared a state of emergency and implemented public health measures to close in-person services and public events. To minimize disruptions to teaching, universities quickly pivoted to online learning. This policy response had significant and widespread impacts on the work and lives of university faculty across the province. The purpose of this research was to explore how this disruption and transition to remote work impacted faculty members' working conditions, work-life balance, and health and well-being during the pandemic.

Informed by feminist political economy and interpretative phenomenology, my study explored the diverse experiences, perspectives, and needs of faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic at a public research university in Ontario. My study used a sequential mixed-methods approach consisting of a critical analysis of COVID-19 university policy communications, an online survey, and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and triangulated to reveal the social and structural conditions that shape health disparities in academia along the lines of class, gender, and race.

My research revealed tensions between the university policy communication discourse and the lived experiences of faculty members during the pandemic. Firstly, the corporatization of universities, in response to neoliberal governmental practices of cost-cutting and underfunding of post-secondary education in Ontario, has promoted the precarity of contract teaching labour. Expectations from university management that faculty would provide flexibility and accommodations to support students' needs greatly exacerbated faculty workloads. This had

financial implications for precariously employed contract faculty who had to work beyond their contract hours, resulting in more unpaid work. Further, full-time faculty, especially women, reported an increase in service work and emotional labour for students and colleagues that went unpaid by the institution. Lastly, in the university communications, the dominant discourse surrounding family care responsibilities focused on challenges with childcare, with little to no acknowledgement of other forms of care work such as elder care. These findings have health and equity implications for university faculty members and highlight the need to re-examine institutional practices that impact the working conditions of faculty in Canadian academia.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Despite the inclusion of equity, diversity, and family-friendly policies at Canadian universities, inequities between academic women and men continue to persist, with evidence indicating a widening gender gap in working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Davis et al., 2022; Payne, 2020). Neoliberal policies of austerity and government underfunding of public universities have resulted in institutional restructuring and corporate practices such as cost-cutting of academic teaching labour (Baker, 2012; Brownlee, 2015; Romard & Robinson, 2023). This has led to an intensification of workloads for academics and a growing climate of precarious work in Canadian academia, in which women are overrepresented, stressed, and unwell (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). The precarious cycle of temporary teaching contracts offers little opportunities for mentorship and research funding, making it more challenging for contract faculty to advance to full-time positions in academia and further widening class divisions (Nichols, 2023; Rose, 2020). Research shows that women and racialized faculty are overrepresented in precarious contract faculty work and are more likely to find their job stressful compared to men and non-racialized colleagues (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). This stress is likely due to women and racialized contract faculty having less job security, earning lower income, and working more hours compared to their male and non-racialized counterparts (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018).

Historically, women in academia have experienced structural and cultural barriers compared to their male counterparts (Kaufman & Colyar, 2022). In Canadian higher education, becoming a mother while pursuing a career in academia often negatively impacts their health and well-being, with academic mothers reporting that work-family conflicts create high levels of stress and

exhaustion (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Wilton & Ross, 2017). Working class academic mothers in precarious contract faculty roles also experience financial stress when balancing work and childcare expenses due to the lower wages associated with these positions (Nichols, 2023). Moreover, academic women face disadvantages as they try to advance in their careers as promotions for academics are often centered on metrics, such as publication quantity, that favour men (Armenti, 2004; Kaufman & Colyar, 2022). In contrast, service and care work, which is more often undertaken by women, are undervalued aspects for tenure consideration, despite being critical to the continuation of programs and departments (Armenti, 2004; Gaudet et al., 2022). Women and racialized faculty often face pressure and expectations to take on more service work, such as being a representative on committees to improve diversity, leaving them less time for research (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). These factors have contributed to the pay gap between women and men in academia and to the underrepresentation of academic women in senior leadership positions and the academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) ((Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), 2018; Kaufman & Colyar, 2022).

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Following this announcement, public health measures were implemented by governments such as mandated lockdowns, closure of schools, restrictions on access to long-term care and retirement homes, and reduced services in the community (Government of Ontario, 2020). These COVID-19 pandemic policy responses disrupted work and home life, increasing the stress and anxiety of academics with care work responsibilities who struggled to balance childcare and elder care alongside remote paid work (Crook, 2020;

VanLeeuwen et al., 2021; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). These conditions, under which academics had to live and work, resulted in women reporting greater exhaustion and burnout, and academic women were found to be significantly more stressed compared to men (Davis et al., 2022). Conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened the numerous challenges faced by academic women, with scholars concerned that much of the progress made in addressing gender equity issues in academia have been reversed (Davis et al., 2022). Studies have shown that during the pandemic, academic women had lower research outputs, including publications, thus affecting career progression negatively (Andersen et al., 2020; Oleschuk, 2020). Health inequities affecting academic women in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic represent a major public health concern. Increases in work-life conflict and decreases in mental and physical health among women academics during the pandemic can have significant impacts and long-term implications post-pandemic on the representation, well-being, and productivity of women in academia, as well as on the learning outcomes of their students. These findings illustrate a clear need for changes to inequitable institutional structures and policies in both academia and broader society that contribute to the widening gap between the working conditions of academic women and men.

The scholarly literature in the Canadian context illustrates clear differences between the experience of academic women and men during the pandemic, with the overarching pattern of women experiencing higher levels of stress due to the unbalanced burden of care work that they shouldered both at home and within the university. There is, however, limited knowledge about how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the health and well-being among diverse groups of university faculty in the Canadian context. Previous studies situated in Canada, such as research

conducted by VanLeeuwen et al. (2021), have documented the lived experiences of university faculty members in the early months of the pandemic and looked at various factors, including faculty position (i.e., assistant professor, associate professor, full professor, adjunct professor, sessional lecturer), age, gender, geographic location, academic discipline, education, and parental status. The authors found that the pressure to balance professional and personal roles, such as parenting during work hours, sharing space with family members also working remotely, and caring for extended family members, negatively impacted faculty members' health and well-being. According to Davis et. al. (2022), the health of women and racialized faculty have been disproportionately affected during the pandemic, with these social groups experiencing increased stress and isolation, and decreased well-being. In addition, a study conducted by Belikov et al. (2021) found that the racial tensions during the COVID-19 pandemic created an extra burden on racialized faculty. Some faculty members reported feeling overwhelmed and overextended due to their efforts to address evolving international and local racial tensions and to support members of their community impacted by racist events during the pandemic (Belikov et al., 2021).

Scope of the Research

For policies to effectively address the differences in working conditions between women and men academics, the notion of work-life balance as it differs by class and gender, and the ways in which the policy response during the pandemic has exacerbated this pre-existing problem need to be further examined from the perspective of faculty members working in post-secondary institutions. The present dissertation was designed to expand knowledge of academics' lived experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic at a public research university in Ontario to illuminate how the pandemic shaped and organized the lives of faculty members. The primary

aim of this study was to better understand the structures and policies in both academia and broader society that contribute to and maintain the gendered division of labour between academic women and men, and among women as a group in Canadian academia. The focus of this research was to document how working conditions for faculty members under public health policies were implemented during the pandemic, how post-secondary institutions supported faculty members during this time, and how the pressure of meeting workload expectations while balancing unpaid work responsibilities affected their health and well-being. Ultimately, the goal of this research was to contribute knowledge about the paid and unpaid work experiences and health issues among university faculty in the Canadian context and elucidate how structural forms of discrimination and gender norms in academia contributes to varying experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For my dissertation, I used feminist political economy as an overarching framework to answer my research questions:

1. What are the contextual and structural factors driving gender and health inequities in Canadian academia at Ontario University[1]?
2. How do intersecting forms of social and structural inequities impact the health and well-being of university faculty members?
3. What are the tensions between the discourse in the COVID-19 policy communications and the lived experiences of faculty members working at Ontario University?

[1] To protect the privacy of my study participants, I use the pseudonym Ontario University for the study site.

To achieve my study objectives, I collected data in three different phases with the goal of triangulating my data from the different research methods to understand the power relations within which people work and explore the lived experiences of faculty members during the pandemic. In the first phase, I performed a critical analysis of COVID-19 university policy communications pertaining to working conditions and health and well-being during the pandemic. In the second phase of my study, I designed an online survey to gather information pertaining to socio-demographic characteristics, stress and sources of stress, and work-life balance. Lastly, in the third phase, I conducted semi-structured interviews with faculty members that revealed how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the working conditions and health and well-being of faculty members trying to balance work-life commitments.

Key Concepts

In this dissertation, health is understood as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease" (WHO, n.d.). The term inequity is used to describe differences which are unnecessary and avoidable, and that are a result of factors which are unfair and unjust (Whitehead, 1992). Structural inequalities refer to disparities in rights, opportunities, and access to resources that are embedded within social, political, and economic systems. Institutional policies, practices, and social norms shape structural forms of inequality and lead to unequal outcomes for individuals and groups based on different intersecting social locations such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, and socioeconomic status (Bermúdez Figueroa et al., 2023). Gender identity is understood as "each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum" (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.-a). Race refers to "socially constructed differences among people based on characteristics such as accent or manner of

speech, name, clothing, diet, beliefs and practices, leisure preferences, [and] places of origin" (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.-b). In this study, the notion of class is understood as a relational and dynamic category that is situated in a specific historical and regional context (Armstrong & Connelly, 1989). An analysis of class examines the social and power relationships that shape the conditions of paid and unpaid labour to reveal the organization of relations in which working-class struggles are embedded (Armstrong & Connelly, 1989; Luxton, 2006). In this current work, I looked at particular indicators of class such as precarity of employment (e.g., precarious contract labour) and socioeconomic status (e.g., personal and household income) to analyze class structures in academia. In this study, care work refers to informal work conducted without monetary compensation that involves direct, personal, and relational activities in the care of people such as children, elders, and persons with disabilities (Government of Canada, n.d.; International Labour Organization, 2018). Work-life balance is understood as the distribution of time and energy spent on paid work and unpaid work activities (Greenhaus et al., 2003), with how "balance" is perceived and experienced depending on an individual's circumstances (Kelliher et al., 2019; Reiter, 2007). Neoliberalism refers to the political ideology that the market economy and free enterprise policies lead to more efficient allocation of resources in production and distribution (Coburn, 2000). Lastly, in this study, I refer to the corporatization of the university as meaning "the process and resulting outcomes of the ascendance of business interests, values and models in the university system" (Brownlee, 2015, p. 8).

In Chapter two, I review literature from scholars on the gendered nature of work in Canadian academia. Chapter three provides a description of my theoretical frameworks that inform my work along with the methods and analytical tools used in conducting my research. Chapter four

presents my study findings from my critical policy analysis. Chapter five presents the study findings from my online survey. Chapter six presents the findings from my follow-up interviews. Finally, chapter seven discusses the key themes from my findings, policy implications and recommendations, study limitations, and future directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss how the nature of academic work creates and maintains class and gender inequities (or inequalities) in the Canadian landscape. I look at several key issues of institutional restructuring, work-life balance, and expectations surrounding service and care work to illustrate how structural inequities organize social relations such as gender, race, and the precarity of contract labour and how these longstanding issues have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Institutional Restructuring and Current Practices

In the Canadian context, universities have undergone neoliberal institutional restructuring over the past few decades to adapt to changing political and socioeconomic conditions, transforming universities from institutions that serve the public to enterprises for capitalist expansion (Baker, 2012; Brownlee, 2015; Romard & Robinson, 2023). According to Brownlee (2015), a key policy change in 1977 that shaped the university restructuring process was the implementation of the Established Programs Financing (EPF), which shifted funding from being a 50/50 cost sharing program among the federal and provincial governments (where contributions towards post-secondary institutions were matched dollar for dollar) to a system that was based on tax points and cash transfers. With this policy change, provincial governments were no longer held accountable for how federal government funding was spent and oversight that guaranteed that federal funds would be allocated to universities and colleges was removed (Brownlee, 2015). Subsequently, provincial governments reduced funding commitments to universities, resulting in a decline in funding allocation to universities across Canada (Baker, 2012; Brownlee, 2015; Romard & Robinson, 2023). For example, government funding of Canadian universities in 1982

made up 82.7 per cent of university operating revenues and by 2012 this percentage had decreased to 54.9 per cent (Harden, 2017). More recently, in 2022, revenues for universities in Ontario were composed of 10.2 per cent from federal funding, 24.2 per cent from provincial funding, and the remaining 65.6 per cent coming from other sources (Romard & Robinson, 2023). As government public funding of Canadian universities has continued to decline, universities have engaged in more neoliberal practices, such as cost-cutting, administrative reporting, and inter-university benchmarking, to make up the shortfall (Baker, 2012; Romard & Robinson, 2023).

Furthermore, this reduction of government funding to the post-secondary education sector has resulted in the corporatization of universities (Brownlee, 2015; Smith-Carrier, 2020). According to Brownlee (2015), "corporatization is based on efforts to transform the university's mission and modify its operations to better serve the private marketplace" (p. 9). Romard and Robinson (2023) go further, explaining that the corporatized university does not just act as a business would. Rather, it becomes a business with business motivations and its administrative staff acting as directors and business employees. This results in "the application of market thinking to academic life" (Romard & Robinson, 2023, p. 10). Through this process, Canadian universities have shifted from focusing on intellectual, social, and cultural functions that serve the broader community to instead prioritize efficiencies and financial imperatives in favour of private business interests (Brownlee, 2015; Smith-Carrier, 2020). Brownlee (2015) outlines several key indicators that are associated with the process of university corporatization, including more collaboration between academic institutions and corporations, greater corporate influence in infrastructure development, curriculums, and course offerings, and increasing donor agreements

and public-private partnerships. The transformation of university objectives and goals using business-like practices, the creation of new policies and incentives directed towards research projects that can be commercialized for financial gain, and the participation of more business people (e.g., corporate executives, bankers, lawyers etc.) in the board of governors of Canadian universities are all examples of the corporatization of universities (Brownlee, 2015; CAUT, 2016).

Another key indicator is the casualization of academic labour that can be seen in the rising use of contract faculty, part-time sessional instructors, and graduate students responsible for teaching instead of full-time faculty positions (Brownlee, 2015; Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Romard & Robinson, 2023). The dominant narrative used by proponents of this transition is that non-standard employment, working part-time or on temporary and short-term contracts, is good for both institutions and workers as it provides them with flexibility (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). However, while this narrative focuses on the benefits, such as the ability of these workers to earn additional income on top of their regular earnings, these supporters often forget to mention the corresponding negatives, including that some workers who rely on this type of work as their main source of income are kept in "discouraging, demoralizing precarity" (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018, p. 4).

Further indicators of the corporatization of universities include a reduction in collegial self-governance, restrictions to academics' agency in teaching and research, and the implementation of corporate management models (Brownlee, 2015). Through the adoption of these practices, Brownlee (2015) argues that Canadian universities have become co-capitalists embracing market

values. This has resulted in the transformation of post-secondary education from a public to a private good, as evidenced by the growing reliance on tuition fees where students are redefined as a consumer of education with knowledge as the product.

According to Kuehn (2018), another key aspect of corporatization in Canadian academia is the transformation of education as a globally traded commodity. In this process of commodification, students are treated as customers or consumers and viewed as revenue-generating goods. This is readily apparent when we look at how reliant Canadian universities are to the enrollment of international students as a source of revenue. For example, Romard and Robinson (2023) reported that in Ontario, international undergraduate students paid $40,200 in tuition fees compared to domestic students who paid 5.7 times less in the 2022–2023 academic year. Another example these authors provided was that, while only 19 per cent of all full-time students were international students, they paid 48.4 per cent of all tuition fees in Ontario in the 2021–2022 academic year (Romard & Robinson, 2023). As the market for international students has increased, universities have become corporate-like actors. Within this process, public universities in Canada take on private company behaviours, utilizing business discourse and profit oriented practices (Kuehn, 2018).

As universities have become business enterprises, there has also been a rise in workload intensification, resource scarcity, and job precarity for academics (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Webber, 2017; Baker, 2012; Council of Canadian Academies, 2012; Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). In Canada, universities have shifted towards a “consumer model” of operations (Brownlee, 2015; Council of Canadian Academies, 2012) in response to factors such as

increasing student enrollments, higher operating expenditures, fewer government grants, and more international competition for students (Baker, 2012; Brownlee, 2015; Kuehn, 2018). This model of consumerism has placed increasing pressure on institutions to provide "customer service" to students, with faculty spending more time on teaching and service (Brownlee, 2015; Council of Canadian Academies, 2012). Under the corporatized university, learning is transformed into a service encounter in which some students, as educational consumers, view degrees and other educational credentials as purchasable commodities through the payment of tuition fees. This ideology is further entrenched in structural practices such as the inclusion of performance measures in instructor course evaluations and student feedback data collected by the institution to ensure that faculty are providing learning experiences that fulfills customer satisfaction (Brownlee, 2015).

At the same time, as universities became more revenue focused and expenditure averse due to decreasing public funding, university administration has prioritized research outputs that are easier to measure, such as securing grants and publishing academic articles (Acker & Webber, 2017; Romard & Robinson, 2023). These research outputs have become one of the most important factors impacting faculty promotion and tenure at Ontario universities as research grants have the benefit of boosting university revenues and enhancing institutional prestige, which in turn allows universities to attract more prestigious and research-focused faculty, resulting in a cycle that further encourages these practices (Romard & Robinson, 2023). As promotion is important for faculty who are tenure-track to achieve job security, they are more likely to focus on these measurable research outputs and spend less time on teaching or service work.

Furthermore, the growing preference among Canadian universities for academics to secure external funding has been shown to contribute to the gender wage gap in academia as external funders are often biased towards large-scale quantitative research projects that are more likely to be led by senior academic men (Baker, 2016). These large-scale projects often come with additional time-consuming and costly responsibilities, such as establishing research networks with collaborators in different jurisdictions and traveling to international conferences, which can preclude academics with families, academic mothers in particular, from taking part. In contrast, qualitative research that is more often led by women is less likely to attract as much external funding (Baker, 2016). This corporatization of universities forces academics to continuously attempt to accomplish more with less time and fewer resources, and as a result, academics, particularly women, experience higher levels of stress (Baker, 2016).

Mainstream practices and institutional restructuring also play a key role in the increase in contract faculty among Canadian institutions. Due to declines in government funding, teaching is viewed by the university as a form of labour that can be cheaply solved by hiring more casual, contract, and part-time workers, with lower compensation and poorer working conditions instead of creating full-time positions (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023; Romard & Robinson, 2023). This devaluation of labour involved in teaching instruction has resulted in a class division of the Ontario academic labour market in which there are two main classes of faculty: tenure-track and tenured faculty hired on a full-time basis who perform a mix of research, teaching, and service work; and part-time, sessional, and contract lecturers hired on a temporary basis who are primarily responsible for only teaching (Romard & Robinson, 2023). Rose (2020) clarifies the distinction in class division, reporting that contract faculty “as a

collective are confined to teaching and often precluded from even applying for many of the larger, more prestigious research grants. Universities pay significantly lower salaries, provide fewer benefits, reduce reported employment time frames, and, as a result, reduce pensionable earnings" (p. 7). Despite teaching being the primary responsibility of contract faculty, these temporary workers often take on other forms of unpaid work unrelated to their teaching work, such as care work for students, administrative work, and committee work (Romard & Robinson, 2023). The gap between full-time faculty and precarious part-time faculty was not always so wide, but changes in Canadian academia in the 1970s paved the way to the class division we see today. In the 1960s, higher education was expanding and part-time faculty positions used to be part of the career ladder towards the end goal of a secure full-time academic position as a professor (Brownlee, 2015). However, fiscal restraints starting in the 1970s caused a shift in the job market's treatment of part-time positions. In order to cut costs, universities began replacing vacant tenured faculty positions, which would previously have been filled by promoting a contract faculty member to a full-time position, with a larger number of temporary part-time faculty hired on a course-by-course basis instead (Brownlee, 2015). This practice of cost-cutting to save on teaching labour by universities has greatly diminished how many precarious contract faculty are able to secure a full-time faculty position.

In the current Canadian context, more than half of all faculty appointments are contract faculty, with part-time positions making up nearly 80 per cent of contract faculty (Pasma & Shaker, 2018). Contract faculty are overrepresented in the humanities (56%) and social sciences (50%) compared to STEM fields (39%) (Pasma & Shaker, 2018). Further, contract faculty are often paid less on a per-course basis than full time faculty members and often have fewer (if any)

health benefits (Brownlee, 2015; Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023). These part-time and contract positions consist of precarious work characterized by job and income insecurity, exclusion from career development opportunities, and a lack of recognition and remuneration for contributions to the institutions (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). Furthermore, many contract faculty are also involved in research, writing, and other scholarly activities to maintain research portfolios for applying to full-time faculty positions (Nichols, 2023). However, contract faculty face challenges in securing grants and with keeping active programs of research as they are not fully associated with an institution. This precludes contract faculty from housing grants like full-time faculty and prevents them from supervising students, both of which would improve their curriculum vitae (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023). Another concerning trend regarding temporary workers is that these precarious contract faculty and sessional lecturer positions are often disproportionally represented by women academics and doctoral students (Baker, 2016).

As described above, while a significant concern in Canadian academia is how institutional restructuring has increased disparities among socioeconomic status and driven a widening two-tier class system of secure and insecure faculty positions, another important aspect to consider is how these changes intersect with gender and race. This trend is most evident when we examine data from Ontario in 2021 on the average income of academics where we observe structural differences in pay along the lines of gender and race. Racialized men were found to be paid 11.2 per cent less compared to non-racialized men (Romard & Robinson, 2023). Further, non-racialized women were paid 15.6 per cent less compared to non-racialized men. Lastly, racialized women were doubly disadvantaged, with a wage difference of up to 24.3 per cent compared to

non-racialized men (Romard & Robinson, 2023). In addition, racialized academic women are overrepresented in precarious employment as they make up 35.6 per cent of all part-time faculty (not employed full-time for over a year) but only account for 13 per cent of all university professors and lecturers in the province (Romard & Robinson, 2023). These structural differences in income and representation illustrate gender and racial inequities in academia.

The dependence on contract faculty for teaching labour has also resulted in poorer health outcomes among this group compared to full-time faculty (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023). Studies have found that contract faculty often experience stress around the precarity of their employment (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023). In their survey of 2,606 contract faculty across Canada, Foster and Birdsell Bauer (2018) reported that mental health was the main concern among contract workers, with 42 per cent reporting that they believe their mental health was impacted by their contract employment and 87 per cent of these respondents reporting that their mental health was negatively affected. Women and racialized contract faculty were found to work more hours per course per week and found their work more stressful compared to their male and non-racialized counterparts (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). In a study of 26 contract faculty in Ontario, Canada, Nichols (2023) reported that the majority of participants described experiencing mental health challenges such as depression and a loss of hope. These participants attributed these feelings to the competitiveness of the short-term hiring cycle of part-time sessional positions, often at multiple academic institutions, while searching for a full-time position. Part-time faculty had to balance this teaching workload with trying to keep active and engaged in research activities such as applying for grants and publishing papers, with little to no institutional support (Nichols, 2023).

In the next section, I describe how women in academia are further disadvantaged by social and structural barriers when trying to balance research and teaching activities with care work that they are expected to perform, both in the university and at home, due to structural and social practices based on traditional gender roles that is often not expected of their male counterparts.

Work-Life Balance Challenges

A recurring theme in the Canadian literature is the notion that work-life balance is shaped by structural factors such as institutional policies, organizational culture, workload demands, and access to support services such as affordable childcare or elder care. Women in the workforce face additional structural barriers such as gender discrimination and expectations regarding the ideal worker who prioritizes paid work responsibilities over all other work commitments, including family responsibilities such as childcare and elder care and domestic work (Kaufman & Colyar, 2022; Wilton & Ross, 2017). In academia, these different expectations for women and men lead to inequitable working conditions for academic women, such as feeling pressure to take on more service and care work within the institution, increasing workloads and resulting in poorer health and well-being (Acker et al., 2016; Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Armenti, 2004; Wilton & Ross, 2017). According to Acker and Feuerverger (1996), women academics often end up occupying dual-roles, one as "caring women" and another as "productive academics." Despite all the work they perform, women academics often receive insufficient recognition for the same quality output which results in them experiencing high levels of anxiety, stress, and exhaustion (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996).

There is also increased pressure among racialized women academics from underrepresented groups to "do it all" if they are the minority among faculty because women from groups that are traditionally marginalized often want to support students from social groups with similar backgrounds as them (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996). Wijesingha and Ramos (2017) describes the pressure on academic women and racialized faculty to take on more service work and mentorship of racialized students as a cultural and identity "taxation." For example, Black women scholars may feel pressured to mentor Black students or racialized women may feel obliged to volunteer in committees that need racial representation. This pressure results in these academic women spending more time mentoring students, working in committees, and volunteering in leadership roles in order to improve gender and racial representation, resulting in less time available for research activities and putting them at a disadvantage for tenure and promotion (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). Racialized faculty are also less likely to be tenured or promoted at the same rate as non-racialized faculty even if they attain more research grants and publish more journal articles (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). This finding suggests that racial discrimination may play a role in the tenure and promotion evaluation process.

There is also consensus among the literature that a prominent issue for academic women that leads to work-life conflicts is motherhood (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Wilton & Ross, 2017). The simultaneous pressure from being both a new academic and a new mother creates immense stress and exhaustion for academic mothers (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996). These women are often torn between two complex and contradictory discourses: the "successful academic," whose priority is the institution; and the "good mother," whose priority is the household (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Academic mothers

must also juggle competing demands of childcare, domestic responsibilities, and academic work, and decide which to prioritize and to what extent, while often simultaneously working to qualify for tenure to achieve job security.

In addition, Acker and Armenti (2004) found that childbearing and childrearing were often taboo subjects for academic mothers when they spoke to other faculty members. Academic mothers would often stay silent about coping issues due to concerns of stigmatization as they were afraid that a parent unable to cope would be perceived as not being an acceptable academic (Acker & Armenti, 2004). This was also highlighted in a recent study by James et al. (2021) in which pre-tenure women academics reported that it was made clear to them that their success would rely on their experiences of motherhood being invisible to their colleagues. In this study, academic mothers reported feeling stressed and worried over being absent during maternity leave and returning to employment when their care responsibilities at home would be higher (James et al., 2021). The authors described this fear as "post-partum academic erasure," with some academic mothers choosing to continue working while on maternity leave (James et al., 2021). For example, mothers in STEM fields reported visiting their labs even while on maternity leave to check in on their research programs and graduate students and to avoid negative implications to their academic positions, such as a slowing down of research productivity. For academic mothers in disciplines such as the social sciences, they coped with fears of academic erasure by being virtually available to students, colleagues, and collaborators during their maternity leave (James et al., 2021).

While many academic parents reported that their overall health was good, mothers specifically noted that stress, fatigue, and burnout characterized their experiences in academia (Acker & Armenti, 2004). In particular, fatigue was found to be especially prominent among mothers of young children in their pre-tenure years and mothers often reported exhaustion when teaching. This is not limited to mothers who are pre-tenure, as exhaustion was also echoed by tenured associate professors with young children who described themselves as always tired and busy. As a result, women academics often employed a common coping mechanism of working harder and longer, while also sleeping less (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Another example of how pre-tenure women coped with these tensions is the "May Baby Phenomenon" (Armenti, 2004). This is the term used when some women planned their pregnancies such that they would give birth in the summer term to avoid conflicts with teaching responsibilities. Conversely, other women academics stated that they only planned to have children after they had secured tenure (Armenti, 2004).

Career progression has also been found to be more challenging for academics with families, especially if they were pre-tenure (James et al., 2021; Wilton & Ross, 2017). Mothers working in academia experienced conflicts when trying to balance research productivity with care work duties as current practices for determining career progression and job security focus on publication quantity and research funding (Armenti, 2004; James et al., 2021). In addition to childcare and research productivity, some mothers reported that they were also responsible for household labour (Armenti, 2004). Altogether, balancing these three duties resulted in high levels of fatigue for these academic mothers (Armenti, 2004). These tensions were even more pronounced for faculty who were single parents, who lived geographically far from family

support, or who had partners with no job flexibility (Wilton & Ross, 2017). It is clear from the literature that family care work responsibilities are not aligned with institutional practices or policies in academia and that a child-related time crunch exists, wherein academic careers are modeled on male life trajectories which put academic mothers at a severe disadvantage by default if they wish to compete against their male counterparts (Armenti, 2004; Wilton & Ross, 2017). Furthermore, for academic mothers balancing childcare and contract teaching, the cost of childcare alongside the precarity of sessional teaching puts these working-class mothers into stressful situations of financial insecurity (Nichols, 2023). These structural conditions have significant implications for the representation of women in academia especially in senior and leadership positions.

Previous research has shown that among graduate students and early career academics, more women than men chose to stop pursuing academic careers in what is known as the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon (van Anders, 2004). This trend in women self-selecting away from academic careers is due to systemic barriers related to motherhood and family work-life balance and further contributes to the underrepresentation of women in academia (Armenti, 2004; van Anders, 2004). A recent study conducted by James et al. (2021) has expanded on this concept to examine how care work undertaken by academic mothers slows down their progress on the tenure track. James et al. (2021) argue that the "leaky pipeline" is not a passive phenomenon but that the pipeline actively pushes tenure-track academic women out when they become a mother and into a "mommy-track." The authors reported that some academic mothers felt unsupported in their universities as they navigated pursuing tenure alongside their childcare responsibilities at home (James et al., 2021).

Tenure-track faculty who took maternity leave were impacted in several ways that slowed down their academic advancement, including a loss of productivity, collaboration, and publications (James et al., 2021). Challenges such as missed grant funding opportunities, reduced networking and collaborative work, and minimized research programs resulted in decreased research capacity, which had negative impacts on academic mothers' career mobility and reduced their opportunities for promotion. Even after returning from maternity leave and restarting research projects, academic mothers still experienced a slowdown in productivity as they juggled increased care work at home alongside research and service work in academia (James et al., 2021). Academic mothers reported that increased care work at home resulted in challenges with conducting other research activities such as traveling for fieldwork, conferences, and professional development. This was particularly impactful for academic women who conducted qualitative research, with some questioning if they should change to a more quantitative approach to increase productivity and better balance care work responsibilities (James et al., 2021).

Other studies have documented how tensions in work-life balance have continued to persist for academic parents in Canada. Acker et al. (2016) reported that the career decisions of both women and men were influenced by their partner's career and/or family needs. According to Wilton and Ross (2017), women and men academics are equally committed to both their work and family. However, women were more likely to make personal sacrifices, such as reducing activities for self-care (e.g. hobbies, exercise, etc.) while also coping with higher levels of stress and pressure, due to tensions between institutional demands and structural barriers surrounding motherhood (Wilton & Ross, 2017). Similarly, women were also more likely to make job-related

sacrifices, such as taking time off to start a family, to maintain work-life balance (Armenti, 2004; Wilton & Ross, 2017).

Research conducted by Smith-Carrier et al. (2021) found that, to balance paid work and childcare, academic parents reported being sleep deprived and overextended from working early in the morning before their children woke up, late at night, and on weekends. To deal with the time constraints of childcare responsibilities, academic parents reported that institutional policies and practices that created more flexibility and agency were helpful in supporting their needs, such as extended parental leave, part-time work options, course scheduling flexibility, decreased teaching loads, less conference travel expectations, stop the clock care work accommodation extensions for tenure evaluation, and work-place policies that allowed children in the office. Despite the presence of these accommodations for childcare responsibilities, academic mothers in this study were more likely to report a negative impact on their careers due to childcare commitments compared to academic fathers (Smith-Carrier et al., 2021). This finding suggests that academic mothers' careers are disproportionately impacted by childcare responsibilities which further widens the gap between academic women and men. The following section goes into how academic women take on additional service and care work within universities compared to their male colleagues and how the gendered organization of this work contributes to inequities for women academics in the academy.

Expectations Surrounding Service and Care Work

Historically, women have reported that there is a division of labour within institutions in which women are allocated more service and care work due to structural barriers and expectations from

university management, colleagues, and students based on traditional gender roles (Acker et al., 2016; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Gaudet et al., 2022). Senior roles in academia such as research chairs are expected to attract grant funding for research projects, collaborators, and graduate students, and to bring prestige to their institutions. These roles are often occupied by men who focus on large-scale quantitative research projects favoured by external funding agencies as opposed to qualitative research more often undertaken by women (Baker, 2012, 2016). According to Wilton and Ross (2017), the culture of universities that focuses on publishing outputs, especially in top-tier journals, also puts researchers who focus on community-oriented research areas at a disadvantage. This also disregards the fact that women, by default, are less able to produce research outputs given that they spend more time on teaching and service work, as well as provide more emotional labour for students and colleagues, than their male counterparts (Gaudet et al., 2022). Scholars argue that it is these institutional practices and cultural barriers that are the source of gender inequities in the academy rather than individual choices of women themselves (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Gaudet et al., 2022; James et al., 2021). It is not just that universities still operate under a system which favours men but that what universities stand for, and what universities reward, do not align with care work at all (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Gaudet et al., 2022; James et al., 2021). These underlying structures and ideologies surrounding gender, care responsibilities, and research work continue to persist to the disadvantage of academic women today.

Despite the rise in representation of women holding faculty positions, universities continue to remain problematic institutions of work for women academics (Acker et al., 2016). Gaudet et al. (2022) argues that the academic economy undervalues service and administrative work, despite

how this labour contributes to the collective improvement and continuation of programs. Other demands from the university put pressure on women, which Armenti (2004) calls the career-related time crunch, often involving unpaid work such as accepting extra service work to compensate for the financial constraints of the institution. Moreover, administrative duties are often assigned to women academics at the beginning of their careers despite the negative impact that this may have on their career progression (Acker et al., 2016; Gaudet et al., 2022). These service and care work duties create tensions for academic women as they struggle to balance these tasks alongside research activities. Service work such as graduate student supervision, being the female representative on committees, taking on departmental administrative positions, and chairing meetings are all examples of critical work that comes at the cost of research productivity (Gaudet et al., 2022; Kaufman & Colyar, 2022). This can impact women academics' job security and wage potential as evaluations for tenure and promotions are usually based on journal and book publications, grant funding, and external rewards, whereas service and care work that is disproportionately assigned to women remain devalued and unacknowledged (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Gaudet et al., 2022; Kaufman & Colyar, 2022; Momani et al., 2019). This invisible care work also prevents women in these roles from sufficiently attending to their own self-care and health (Gaudet et al., 2022). Self-neglect of health was also linked to the prevalence of other health issues, such as high levels of stress, musculoskeletal pain, insomnia, and eating disorders, due to the competitive work environment and performative culture in academia in which vulnerability and difficulty with coping is silenced (Gaudet et al., 2022).

Furthermore, gender stereotypes and assumptions of women as more compassionate, empathetic, and accommodating place social pressure on women to assume more emotional labour in

teaching and care work (for both students at the undergraduate and graduate level and for colleagues through administrative tasks and service work in the faculties and departments they are part of), and result in women in academia becoming overburdened and overworked (Dengate et al., 2019). Research shows that while academics are not mental health counselors, they may be approached for help by students experiencing personal and mental health challenges, such as suicidal thoughts and sexual assault. Women academics were more likely to be approached for this type of support and spend time supporting students' mental health compared to male academics (Dengate et al., 2019). This gender bias has resulted in additional workload being taken on by academic women. These non-academic interactions with students were also shown to increase stress levels especially for women faculty who taught large undergraduate courses and often provided support for students in distress every term (Dengate et al., 2019). Yet, despite how time consuming and stressful providing emotional support to students can be and despite the university's expectation that this work needs to be done, care work for students is not valued when faculty members are being evaluated for tenure or promotion (Dengate et al., 2019). This lack of recognition of care work for students, colleagues, and their departments advantages academics who do not engage in these types of work, which in most instances are men, as they have more time for research and other career advancement activities and further widens the gap between genders (Dengate et al., 2019).

It is clear from the evidence presented that the gendered division of service and care work within universities places women in a disadvantageous position from the onset and pulls them away from spending more time on research. This impacts their ability to advance in tenure and promotion and further contributes to the gender inequities between academic women and men.

The following section explores how the current working conditions in academia have been further exacerbated by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response on Gender and Health: A Widening Gap

The long-standing inequities in paid and unpaid work have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a disproportionate impact on the productivity of academic women in Canada. The public health policy response to the rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus disrupted teaching and research activities as the government closed schools, daycares, and restricted access to long-term care and retirement homes and universities shifted to online learning. These changes in the structure of work, accompanied by increases in care work responsibilities, have worsened the already numerous challenges faced by all academics.

According to VanLeeuwen et al. (2021), during the pandemic, Canadian academics experienced "feelings of never-ending repetitiveness" (p. 1312) in addition to loss and sadness. These feelings can be attributed to faculty members struggling to balance home responsibilities and work expectations (VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Several studies on faculty experiences in Canadian academia report that the COVID-19 pandemic policy responses have negatively impacted the work productivity, mental health, and overall quality of life of academics (Gordon & Presseau, 2023; McLachlan, 2023; Oleschuk, 2020; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Research shows that the increase in care work responsibilities at home during the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted academic women's research productivity. This has resulted in lower publication rates by women researchers which in turn negatively impacts their job security and career trajectories (Oleschuk, 2020). Studies documenting the lived experiences of

academics during the pandemic have also described higher levels of stress, fatigue, and burnout among academics with care work responsibilities such as childcare and elder care (VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). These health concerns can be partially attributed to lockdowns, school closures, visit restrictions to long-term care homes, and community services reductions that altogether exacerbated work-life conflicts for academics juggling care and domestic responsibilities with work commitments (VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Studies have shown that the pressure to maintain professional and personal roles such as parenting during work hours, sharing space with family members also working remotely, and caring for extended family members have negatively impacted the health and well-being of Canadian academics (Gordon & Presseau, 2023; Pettigrew, 2021; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021).

Academics also experienced increased care work responsibilities for elderly family members (Davis et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2022; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Studies have documented concerns among academics with elder care responsibilities surrounding the well-being of elderly family members due to the vulnerability of older people in relation to COVID-19 (Davis et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2022). For some faculty members, this included prioritizing in-person daily visits to aging parents no matter how busy they were (VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Other faculty members described supporting elders by bringing them groceries and checking in on those isolated during lockdowns (Jones et al., 2022). Elderly family members living far away were also a source of stress and anxiety for academics and these concerns impacted their mental health and work productivity. Grief and loss were further complicated for some faculty members who felt that they had little time to grieve due to workload demands. Lastly, faculty members described

that it was challenging to navigate around the pandemic restrictions to make funeral and estate arrangements (Jones et al., 2022).

Negative health effects have also been disproportionate, with women and racialized faculty experiencing increased stress and isolation, and decreased well-being compared to their male colleagues (Davis et al., 2022). In addition, academic women with care work responsibilities reported significant exhaustion and burnout (Davis et al., 2022). As the primary person responsible for this care work, academic mothers with young children were more likely to experience interruptions during their work hours and take on additional care work responsibilities compared to men (Davis et al., 2022; Gordon & Presseau, 2023).

Moreover, academic work demands did not cease during the pandemic. According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), a survey of 4,300 faculty members across Canada in 2020 reported that one third of academics were working an additional 10 hours a week and two thirds of faculty reported reduced research productivity during the pandemic (CAUT, 2020). In addition, 84 per cent of survey respondents experienced higher levels of stress due to increased work demands from teaching and performing care work responsibilities, reduced opportunities for research activities (e.g., less in-person conferences, restricted access to labs or offices during closures, etc.), and higher job insecurity (CAUT, 2020). Extra time spent on learning new technologies, ways of teaching, and supporting students during the pandemic also created stress and anxiety for faculty members (Belikov et al., 2021; CAUT, 2020).

Among tenured and tenure-track faculty, survey data showed that women academics reported feeling more stressed and socially isolated during the pandemic compared to men (Davis et al., 2022). Women academics also reported that increased care work responsibilities during the pandemic affected their research productivity, with those who were non-tenured being the most impacted (Davis et al., 2022). Academic mothers of young children reported spending more time on childcare and less time on paid work, negatively impacting their mental health and research outputs, such as publications, grants, and data collection, compared to academic fathers (Gordon & Presseau, 2023). Concerns have been raised about the potential long-term effects on career trajectories for academic women with care responsibilities of school-aged and younger children, elders, and other dependents (Oleschuk, 2020).

Furthermore, the nature of emotional labour increased during the pandemic as academics adapted to new ways of living and teaching (Pettigrew, 2021). Academics juggled providing emotional labour for their families, students, and colleagues. For some women academics that took a student-centered approach to teaching, supporting students both in terms of academic success and mental health was a priority. This included listening to concerns ranging from losing access to campus services, such as school computers and internet access, to more personal issues, such as job losses for themselves or parents resulting in housing and food insecurity (Pettigrew, 2021). The shift to online learning also created additional work for some faculty members in the form of care work for students. Some faculty members supported their students through the transition from in-person to online learning by having additional office hours to provide more help and having more contact with students, as well as being flexible and accommodating with course structures and deadlines of assignments (Jones et al., 2022).

Overall, the Canadian scholarly literature shows that, during the pandemic, some faculty members experienced higher workloads due to learning new forms of technology, working to restructure courses from in-person to online, and developing new ways of teaching and connecting with students in an online environment. Faculty members also reported feeling more stressed, overburdened, and socially isolated as workload expectations for research and service work stayed the same. These experiences were further exacerbated for faculty members who also had care responsibilities such as childcare and elder care. Altogether, these different factors impacted academics' capacity for research, especially women academics who were more likely to take on these various forms of unpaid care work.

Now that I have covered the salient issues documented in the literature impacting working conditions in Canadian academia, I go over the theories and methods for the present study in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Theories and Methods

Theoretical Lenses

Feminist Political Economy

My research draws on feminist political economy (FPE) to examine the structures, policies, and institutions that contribute to and maintain the social and power relations that structure multiple disparities along the lines of class, gender, and race, and other health inequities in academia under capitalism. The origins of FPE build on Karl Marx's work on capital and class exploitation to understand how the capitalist mode of production creates inequalities between women and men and is shaped by gender oppression and class domination (Armstrong & Connelly, 1989; Luxton, 2006). Similar to Marx's ideas on gender oppression, Friedrich Engels's work highlights how the nature of capitalism and the individualized family model requires someone, most often women, to perform reproductive work and, in the case of working-class women, to perform both paid labour and unpaid domestic labour (Engels, 2020). FPE scholars argue that the significance of domestic labour cannot be overlooked in women's oppression; any analysis aimed at improving gender disparities must transform inequalities between paid and unpaid work to successfully overcome systemic discrimination that results in inequities between genders (Armstrong & Connelly, 1989; Benston, 1969; Luxton, 2006; Vosko, 2002).

FPE extends the work of Marx and Engels, incorporating several older analytical tools and using them in new ways. Approaches informed by FPE take a materialist perspective by focusing on how daily and generational needs are met through the social reproduction of the labour force (Armstrong, 2024; Luxton, 2006). FPE approaches are also dialectical as they aim to uncover the tensions and contradictions between the redistribution of paid and unpaid labour and capital

accumulation to reveal the impacts and intersections among different social relations such as class, gender, and race (Armstrong, 2024; Luxton, 2006). A FPE perspective informs an analysis of how people's lives are shaped by historical and economic conditions and acknowledges the multiple sites of people's experiences in capitalist societies (Armstrong & Connelly, 1989). Work conducted by feminist political economists shows that the roles of capital markets, governments, institutions, and households are dynamic and constantly intersecting with various social locations, and that the shifting of paid and unpaid work between public and private spheres is not a neutral process but with benefits for the capitalist economic system and consequences for working-class individuals and collectives (Armstrong, 2024; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006).

Working conditions in Canadian academia are characterized by observable gender inequities, including the gendered division of labour and the underrepresentation of academic women in power and leadership positions. I used FPE to explore structural relations of paid and unpaid work for women in the labour force, in this case in the context of academic work in a Canadian post-secondary institution, during the COVID-19 pandemic. My theoretical framework of FPE led me to investigate how structures and conditions shape and maintain the gendered organization of labour both within households and academic institutions that operate under a capitalist mode of production. Using a FPE approach, I examined the gender differences in unpaid work during the pandemic in the forms of childcare, elder care, and emotional labour within the academy to reveal how the unequal division of reproductive labour inequitably impacted women's working conditions and resulted in health differences among women academics. I also looked at how structural relations and systems of inequity in which women are

inequitably allocated certain types of paid work, such as teaching and service roles, constrain opportunities and experiences among women when compared to men.

A FPE lens was useful when examining the gender and health inequities among academics during the COVID-19 pandemic as it revealed how capitalist structural conditions shape macro (economic, political, sociocultural), meso (institutional), and micro (individual) level processes that maintain the dominant capitalist mode of production. These systems also overlap and intersect to create differential access between women and men, and among women as a group, to the conditions necessary for their health and well-being.

Interpretative Phenomenology

A phenomenological approach identifies the "essence" and common features among individuals' experiences to produce thematic descriptions that contribute to a deeper understanding of events by illuminating how an individuals' reality is comprehended through embodied experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology identifies the meaning of participants' experiences from a combination of the understanding of the phenomena of inquiry by the researcher, information provided by participants, and data obtained from other relevant sources. Through this process of interaction and interpretation, the researcher and participants work together to construct an understanding of the phenomenon being researched in the context of broader social structures, such as cultural beliefs, traditional family roles, and sociopolitical contexts (Smith et al., 2022; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). I utilized an interpretative phenomenological approach alongside my FPE lens to focus on how structures and power relations shape the conditions and meanings of faculty members' lived experiences during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Through my semi-structured interviews, I gathered rich, detailed data on academic women and men's experiences, as well as contextual information from policy communications on how social and economic contexts shape experiences of paid and unpaid work and access to resources during the pandemic. Insights from FPE guided my data analysis of faculty members' personal experiences to focus on how structural factors like economic exploitation, gender norms, and class relations influence my participants' daily lives.

Research Design

Mixed-Methods

A mixed-method approach incorporates the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to facilitate a more detailed analysis of the phenomenon of inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The most common approach that researchers use when mixing methods is the triangulation design in which the researcher obtains various data on the same topic to better understand the research problem. This approach aims to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data that is collected either concurrently or sequentially with the goal of enhancing the interpretation of the study findings by bringing together the differing strengths and weaknesses of both types of methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I used FPE as a framework to guide my analysis of how economic structures shape the conditions in which academics work along the lines of class, gender, and race. For my research, I utilized a sequential mixed-methods design comprised of three different approaches: a critical policy analysis of COVID-19 communications from the university to faculty members, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of an online survey sent to all faculty members, and lastly, interpretative phenomenology and thematic analysis to analyze my semi-structured interviews of interested participants who completed the survey.

In the first phase, I collected COVID-19 policy communications from the Ontario University (OU) website that focused on working conditions, work-life balance, and public health policies relevant to faculty members during the pandemic. In the second phase of my study, I invited OU faculty members to complete an online survey to gather information pertaining to socio-demographic characteristics, stress and sources of stress, and work-life balance. At the end of my online survey, I asked faculty members if they would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. These semi-structured interviews were the last phase of my data collection and were valuable in providing detailed experiences of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the working conditions and health and well-being of various faculty members. Using these three methods, I triangulated my data to understand how COVID-19 policies have impacted and organized faculty members' lived experiences and to answer the research questions that I presented in my introduction chapter.

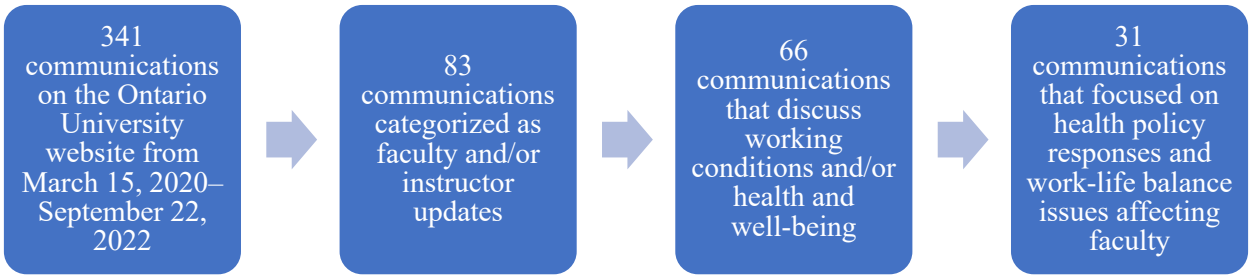
Data Collection Methods

Policy Documents

During the pandemic, faculty at OU were directed to check the university website as this was where all pandemic-related information and updates for faculty, students, and staff were posted. The first communication posted on the OU website's news update page was published on March 15, 2020. Overall, 341 institutional communications were posted and screened from March 15, 2020–September 22, 2022. On the webpage, there was an option to filter through communications based on pre-set categories. Communications could be tagged as any one or more of the following categories: Athletics, Community Updates, Faculty Updates, Health and Safety, Instructor Updates, Research Updates, Staff Updates, Student Communications (current

students, graduate students, international students, newly admitted students), Testing and Vaccination, Travel, and University Operations. As shown in Figure 1, of the total 341 communications sent out, 83 were categorized as faculty/instructor updates and manually reviewed. Of the 83 communications, 66 discussed working conditions and/or health and well-being. In total, 31 communications were selected and included in the analysis as they focused on health policy and work/life balance issues that affected faculty members during the pandemic.

Figure 1: Policy Communication Document Collection and Screening Process



Online Survey

My online survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data such as socio-demographic characteristics, Likert-style questionnaires, and open-ended questions. After receiving ethics approval from the OU Ethics Review Board, I began my recruitment of study participants. For the online survey, I sent out email invitations and one-month reminders to all department chairs and program assistants to distribute to relevant faculty email listservs at OU. I also sent out my study invitation to the university's Office of the Provost and VP Academic, the university faculty unions, as well as posting an article about the study for interested participants on the university's online campus newsletter to further increase my study invitation dissemination. Faculty members

who were interested in participating were directed to click the Microsoft Forms survey link where they were provided with an online consent form before completing the survey. The survey was available from June–August 2022. In total, 85 faculty members at OU completed the online survey representing approximately 2% of the overall faculty population.

The survey was comprised of both closed and open-ended questions. This allowed for a richer collection of data as participants were able to provide feedback and more contextual answers about their experiences during the pandemic. The survey had three sections that asked respondents about socio-demographic information, stress and sources of stress, and work-life balance. Three validated Likert-style questionnaires were included in my online survey: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), and the Work-Life Balance Measure. The 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) was originally developed by Cohen et al. (1983) to assess how different situations affect people's perceived stress levels. The questions in the 10-item questionnaire ask about a participant's feelings and thoughts over the past month to understand the perception of how stressed someone feels based on what is happening in their lives (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). The OLBI is a 16-item questionnaire comprised of two subscales that measure disengagement and exhaustion to understand the severity of professional burnout (Demerouti et al., 2010). Lastly, three items from the Work-Life Balance Measure questionnaire developed by Brough et al. (2014) were used to have participants reflect on their work and non-work activities over the last three months. See Appendix A for the full online survey.

Semi-Structured Interviews

At the end of the online survey, participants were asked if they were interested in being contacted for a follow-up interview to further discuss their experiences. Out of the 20 participants who indicated initial interest, a total of 16 faculty members were able to participate in the qualitative interview phase. Interviews took place remotely from September–October 2022 on Zoom and over the phone. See Appendix B for the semi-structured interview guide.

Data Analysis

Critical Policy Analysis – WPR Tool

To examine the policy communication documents, I used an analytical tool called "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) introduced by Carrol Bacchi in 1999 and updated in 2009 (Bacchi, 1999, 2009). This approach arose from Bacchi's initial scholarship in gender and policy which then led to contributions to the broader fields of critical policy studies and post-structuralist theory as an analytical framework to investigate how problems are conceptualized in policy discourse (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012). The WPR framework is a powerful tool for policy analysis as this approach differs from other analytical approaches which examine policies from a "problem-solving" perspective that is often a technical and neutral process to instead view policies as an act of socially constructed "problems" which affect and are themselves affected by dominant discourses. This shifts the mode of analysis from a problem-solving perspective to a problem-questioning perspective. This type of analysis is valuable as it can elucidate how these problem representations are central to governing practices (Bacchi, 2009; Bletsas & Beasley, 2012). A WPR analysis can be used to surface how political, historical, and epistemological contexts shape the problem being represented and how it emerges within the policy discourse by

focusing on the conceptualization of the "problem" itself alongside the proposed solutions. (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012).

I use Bacchi's WPR as a tool to problematize representations from the lens of feminist political economy as this allows me to generate insights into how policies frame gender and class issues to reveal the underlying assumptions and effects of these representations. This integrated approach also helps to reveal and challenge the normative assumptions and power dynamics embedded in policy discourses. Thus, combining feminist political economy insights with WPR allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of how policies are framed and their implications for class and gender relations. By way of clarification, while Bacchi's WPR approach draws from post-structuralist theory, I have adapted her method and use it not epistemologically, but as an analytical tool to problematize problem representations. This is in line with Bacchi's own suggestion that the WPR approach does not need to be closely followed but can be made to fit with the policy being examined, including the use of some, but not all, six questions when analyzing documents (Bacchi, 2012a, 2016). This level of inquiry facilitates my analysis as a feminist political economist to examine the ways in which social relations are organized along the lines of gender, class, and race. According to Bacchi (2012a), the WPR approach offers a useful set of questions that can be used in a broad field of applications and that it "ought to be conceived as an open-ended mode of critical engagement, rather than as a formula" (Bacchi, 2012a, p. 23). It is intended to be a flexible resource for researchers to counter the assumption that "any one 'truth' is as good as any other" (Bacchi, 2012a, p. 22).

According to Bacchi (2016), WPR is a form of analysis that can be applied to health policies to enable a critical assessment of policy agendas. A WPR approach has been applied to policies across various disciplines such as public health (Chaufan et al., 2024; Pringle, 2019), health services (Chaufan & Hemsing, 2024), education (Chaufan, 2024; Tawell & McCluskey, 2022), welfare (Jonsson et al., 2022), and international relations (Riemann, 2023). Taking a WPR approach requires researchers to be reflexive when applying a critical assessment of assumptions that shape policy proposals, the social world, and social problems (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012). The WPR approach posits that policy solutions that are proposed to address issues contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the problem or "problem representations" (Bacchi, 2012a, 2016). Therefore, researchers using the WPR tool to conduct critical policy analysis need to carefully read the policy documents to identify and "work backwards" from policy recommendations to understand how the problem is being represented within them (Bacchi, 2012b, 2016). To do so, Bacchi (2012a, p. 21) recommends researchers consider the following questions when analyzing policy documents:

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

According to Bacchi (2016), as the WPR approach offers several interrelated questions, this framework can be followed sequentially as a whole or applied in parts to contribute to a larger integrated analysis. For the purpose of my dissertation, I used a modified version of questions one, two, and four of Bacchi's WPR approach to guide my critical policy analysis. These questions were selected as my goal was to identify problem representations in the Ontario University COVID-19 policy communications discourse and reflect on how the representation of these problems shaped the university's policy response during the pandemic. The other questions in the framework analyze the genealogy of the problem representations and effects of the problems which are beyond the scope of this present study.

I used the following modified questions from Bacchi's WPR approach to facilitate my analysis:

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy and what presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
2. What is left unproblematic in the dominant problem representation?

These two modified questions were useful to guide my critical policy analysis and investigate how dominant problem representations in the policy communication documents impacted the lived experiences of university faculty members during the pandemic.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Scores for the Likert-style questionnaires were collated and coded using Microsoft Excel. The PSS-10 questionnaire is comprised of 10 items on a 5-point scale ranging from 0, 'Never,' to 4, 'Very Often.' Scores are determined by first reversing the scores for the 4 positively-stated items then adding the scores for each item to get an overall total score. Individual scores range from 0–

40, with higher scores indicating higher levels of stress. Overall scores that range from 0–13 are considered to represent low levels of stress, scores from 14–26 indicate moderate levels of stress, and scores from 27–40 indicate high levels of stress (Cohen & Williamson, 1988).

The OLBI questionnaire is comprised of 16 items on a 4-point scale ranging from 1, 'Strongly Agree,' to 4, 'Strongly Disagree.' Items are split into two subscales with 8 items each and within each subscale 4 negatively-stated items are reverse scored. Scores for each subscale were then added to tally levels of disengagement and exhaustion, with a third category that is an average of both subscales combined to indicate overall burnout levels (Demerouti et al., 2010).

The Work-Life Balance Measure questionnaire is comprised of 4 items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1, 'Strongly Disagree,' to 5, 'Strongly Agree.' Items 1–3 were used from the original scale with item 2 being reverse scored (Brough et al., 2014). Mean, standard deviation, median and interquartile range were reported for each of these scales.

Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient

The Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient is a non-parametric test that measures the strength and direction of association between ordinal variables (McDonald, 2014). I used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a quantitative data analysis software, to compute a two-tailed Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient statistical test to determine if there was a relationship between my three Likert-style questionnaires on stress, burnout, and work-life balance (PSS-10, OLBI, Work-Life Balance Measure).

Mann-Whitney U Test

The Mann-Whitney U Test is a non-parametric test used to compare an ordinal outcome variable between two independent groups (Sullivan, 2018). I used SPSS to run a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U Test. I conducted this statistical analysis as I wanted to investigate whether there was a difference between academic women and men's levels of stress, burnout, and work-life balance based on my participants' Likert-style questionnaire scores. Due to small sample sizes, a comparison between the other groups (non-binary, other, prefer not to disclose gender) was not conducted.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I utilized Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software, to code and analyze my qualitative data. I analyzed data from both my online survey's open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews using Braun and Clarke's (2006) five-step process for conducting thematic analysis. Firstly, for the online survey, I uploaded the excel sheet with the open-ended survey questions from Microsoft Forms into Dedoose. Secondly, I made an initial list of codes that were salient to my research questions. I also created additional codes as I identified emerging patterns while reviewing the data. Thirdly, I identified themes by analyzing the codes and considering how they combine to form overarching themes. Fourthly, I reviewed the themes that I identified and refined them during my data analysis. Lastly, I finalized my themes and organized them with a detailed analysis of how each theme fits my overall data set.

For my interview data, I used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework to design my interview questions and guide my analysis of the interview transcripts. During my

semi-structured one-on-one interviews, I asked my participants exploratory and open-ended questions (See Appendix B) on relevant topics salient to my research questions to understand my participants' point of view and to collect a rich and reflective account of their experiences. This type of interview process facilitated purposeful conversations and interactions in which my participants were able to tell their own stories (Smith et al., 2022). Guided by the IPA framework, I closely examined each case and subsequently looked at the similarities and differences across cases to identify shared themes while also highlighting distinctive variations in experiences among my participants (Smith et al., 2022). Using Dedoose, I developed codes and themes to report my findings in a way that captured the lived experiences of my participants. I also engaged in the reflexive process of bracketing by writing analytical memos to reflect on any ideas or questions that came to mind before or during my interviews and while coding my data. This exercise allowed me to set aside my own biases and assumptions during my discussions with my participants and while analyzing my data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Data from both the online survey and semi-structured interviews were stored electronically in secure password-protected files. During data analysis, I coded and de-identified all data records to ensure participant privacy. I used the pseudonym Ontario University (OU) to reference the study site. Participation in the online survey was anonymous and, during data analysis, direct quotes from the qualitative open-ended survey questions were assigned a short form code of letters and numbers that pertain to the specific qualitative data collection phase of the study. For my findings section, I used 'SP' as a short form to indicate 'Survey Participant' with a subsequent number following these letters for each respondent. After analyzing the results from

the survey, I designed my interview questions to better understand recurring issues that were reported by participants along with key topics that I wanted to investigate further. To maintain anonymity, quotes from interview participants were de-identified and assigned a short form code of letters and numbers that pertain to the specific study arm and phase of qualitative data collection. Similar to above, for my findings section, 'IP' was used as a short form to indicate 'Interview Participant' with a subsequent number following for each interview participant. Demographic information from the online survey was also linked to each corresponding interview participant.

Chapter Four: Critical Policy Analysis Findings

In the following chapter, I utilized Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) policy analysis tool to critically examine selected publicly available de-identified policy communications regarding COVID-19 policy responses, working conditions, and health and well-being posted on the OU website. This approach helped me to uncover how the "problem" of the SARS-CoV-2 virus as an unprecedented threat to the public health of the OU community was represented in the policy documents and what assumptions about working during the pandemic were made by the university through this problem representation. By taking a close reading of the policy communication documents, I used Bacchi's WPR approach to identify how the "problem" of the spread of COVID-19 was represented and organized my findings based on the most dominant representations: 1) We must prioritize health and safety while classes continue, 2) We all need to be flexible, and 3) We are a community of care.

Within these dominant representations, I identified several salient findings that emerged from my critical analysis of OU's policy communications. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic policy response, the university policy communications emphasized that a rapid transition to online learning was required to protect the health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff, due to an imminent provincial government state of emergency order[2] that closed schools and restricted access to long-term care homes and other public places across the province. Despite the disruptions to work and home life, faculty needed to swiftly pivot from in-person to online learning, with little time to prepare and few resources available. Throughout these

[2] On March 17, 2020, the Ontario government declared a state of emergency as a policy response to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. During this time the province created and enforced emergency orders including closing non-essential workplaces such as schools, access to long-term care homes and correctional facilities, libraries, theatres, concert venues, and provincial parks (Government of Ontario, 2020).

communications, very little was said about how the more precariously employed workers, such as part-time sessional lecturers at the university, would deal with the evolving policy responses. This included whether any compensation would be given for the additional work required to quickly learn new technology and new ways to teach, create online course materials and evaluations, and provide flexibility and accommodations for students that needed additional support, such as extensions to course work beyond the end of the usual semester deadlines.

In addition, while the university policy communications highlighted the childcare challenges during the pandemic for faculty members with young children, notably absent from the communication discourse was recognition of issues faced by faculty members with elder care responsibilities, including the impact of public health restrictions preventing family visits to long-term care and retirement homes. Finally, the gender-neutral language of the communications assumes that faculty members were all affected equally and failed to acknowledge the diverse experiences of faculty who were disproportionately impacted during the pandemic, particularly women with care work responsibilities and racialized faculty who may have been deeply involved in supporting their broader communities that were further marginalized during the pandemic due to issues such as access to health care or poverty. In the following sections, I discuss each dominant representation in more detail.

We Must Prioritize Health and Safety while Classes Continue

When reading the policy communications on the OU website, the university administration's emphasis on the importance of completing the Winter 2020 semester and continuing classes during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was a dominant representation. The problem

represented in the policy communications is the need to limit the spread of COVID-19 without stopping classes. This specific policy focus resulted in the university administration mandating a hard pivot to online learning during the early days of the pandemic. This policy response was communicated in the President's Message that announced the transition to remote work on Friday March 13, 2020, which stated:

> As the COVID-19 pandemic has grown and evolved, [Ontario University] has kept the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and faculty at the heart of all its decisions. We are also conscious of our role in the national and global fight against a serious illness. In light of the developments we have seen at home and around the world this week, it is time for the University to enter a new phase in its comprehensive response. Beginning on Monday, March 16, 2020, we will be suspending all face-to-face instruction and moving courses to online formats. We are committed to completing the term and will deploy all of our resources to support faculty and students through this transition.

As illustrated in the quote above, the problem being represented is that students, staff, and faculty need to be kept safe during the evolving global health crisis. The university administration's solution to this problem was to cancel in-person classes and instead have faculty continue teaching these classes remotely until public health authorities lifted lockdown restrictions. While there was acknowledgement in the university policy communication discourse that faculty had to rapidly shift to online learning, it greatly underplayed how difficult and stressful it must have been for faculty members to have to do a substantial amount of work to transition their classes, which were designed for in-person learning, to an online format with only a weekend's worth of time. Further, this affected full-time and part-time contract faculty members as both groups taught classes, albeit with full-time faculty also having to do other

duties like research and supervision while part-time faculty were fully devoted to teaching. Given that only a limited number of OU courses were hosted online pre-pandemic and that there were few resources or training available at this time meant that a vast majority of faculty had to scramble to learn new technology, develop new methods for online teaching, and create new course content in a short time on their own and possibly with no prior knowledge.

Online learning continued throughout the Summer 2020 semester with planning taking place for the impending fall term. In a communication sent out on May 7, 2020 regarding resources for remote teaching for the Fall 2020 semester, the university's administration continued to emphasize the importance of continuing classes while adhering to public health restrictions:

> For many of you, this may be the first time you will be using online/remote learning, or if you have used it before, you may not be as familiar with or as comfortable using online/remote learning platforms as you would like to be.
>
> In order to help our course directors and TAs prepare for the Fall term, the University has brought together a suite of programs and resources that are being enhanced over the summer months. …
>
> I urge you to take advantage of these supports in preparing for the Fall term. Being ready to deliver courses remotely/online to the extent it remains necessary this Fall will ensure students can progress and thrive in their programs while we protect everyone's health and safety.

> Once again, I want to thank all instructors for your efforts to maintain our excellent academic programs in these unprecedented conditions.

Similar to the first quote from the President's Message sent out at the onset of the pandemic, the quote above illustrated that the university's solution to the problem of students needing to be safe and being able to "progress and thrive" was that classes had to continue by whatever means necessary. Furthermore, unlike with earlier messaging, the quote above did acknowledge that some instructors may not have had experience with online learning technology and followed up with providing resources to assist them in designing and setting up online classes. However, there were no mentions in the policy discourse of whether faculty members would be compensated for doing this additional training and work of designing remote classes; this missing information is especially important for sessional lecturers who have hourly contracts.

As the pandemic evolved, remote teaching continued to be one of the main options of instruction delivery in 2020 and 2021 as the school slowly phased in some hybrid and in-person classes that required student attendance on campus while adhering to evolving public health guidelines. In the Fall 2021 semester, the university announced that classes would be primarily taught in-person starting in the Winter 2022 term as the school was returning to pre-pandemic campus operations as documented in a policy communication from October 19, 2021:

> The University has undertaken extensive planning this year to support a safe and gradual return to [Ontario University] campuses. Our plans have enabled us to increase in-person courses from around 5 per cent in summer to 33 per cent in the fall, and all buildings on [Ontario University]'s campuses are now open, including offices and research spaces.

> The combination of our safety protocols, along with optimistic public health indicators, improving vaccination rates and forecasts from the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table, provide a level of assurance that we can proceed with the planned full return to on-campus academic activities for the winter 2022 term.
>
> I would encourage all community members to refer to the Senate Executive update for further details, but in brief, the winter term projections allow us to plan for a student learning experience that looks much closer to what was possible prior to the onset of the pandemic.
>
> Under this scenario, courses are being planned without class size caps or temporal gaps between classes. We know that students and instructors alike share a deep appreciation of the tremendous value of in-person instruction to achieve student learning outcomes, engagement, connection and overall well-being. We expect mask protocols among other health and safety measures to remain in place and ask for everyone's cooperation in continuing to observe them now and into the winter term.

As the policy communication above exemplified, the university administration's focus at this time switched to a "student learning experience that looks much closer to what was possible prior to the onset of the pandemic" due to some positive health indicators pointing to a reduction in COVID-19 cases. To achieve this goal, the policy solution by the university was a "full return to on-campus academic activities." This policy solution assumes that, even under public health mandates such as masking and social distancing, students' learning outcomes will be achieved. The university policy communication discourse emphasized that returning to in-person classes

was important as there was “tremendous value” in this mode of learning and that it had an impact on “student learning outcomes, engagement, connection and overall well-being.” This sentiment was repeated multiple times in further communications regarding the Winter 2022 semester with language such as “Returning to in-person learning, interaction, and engagement on our campuses is in the best interest of our community" in a January 21, 2022 communication and “The pandemic has made clear the tremendous value of in-person learning” published on January 28, 2022. These quotes illustrate that the university administration and management assume that the remote delivery of classes was not meeting student learning outcomes and thus had lesser “value” compared to in-person learning. Furthermore, the policy communication highlights that “students and instructors alike share a deep appreciation of the tremendous value of in-person instruction.” The underlying assumption in this policy communication assumes that students and faculty members had challenges with learning and teaching online, and dismisses those with diverse experiences who may have found online learning and remote work to be beneficial to both their academics and health and well-being.

Another important point to consider that was again missing within the university policy communication discourse of the return to on-campus activities was how workloads of faculty members were compounded further when this pivot to online learning was reversed and classes were switched to be in-person or hybrid instruction. This meant that some classes that were just updated to be online were made to pivot again, this time to be in-person, which took additional work and time to transition. Moreover, in the winter term of 2022, faculty members were asked to be prepared to offer both an in-person and a remote option for teaching to allow for flexibility in the event that the instructor fell ill and could not travel to campus. There was again no

mention of how this additional workload was compensated (if at all) or the impacts on households as they readjusted to returning to campus. For example, faculty with care work responsibilities such as childcare and elder care may have been disproportionally impacted during this transition as they had to coordinate alternate care arrangements for family members in order to fulfill in-person work obligations.

We All Need to be Flexible

The need for faculty members to be flexible was another dominant representation in the policy communications. The problem represented in the policy communications discourse is that faculty members needed to be flexible and provide accommodations for the disruptions to the work and home lives of students, staff, and colleagues during the pandemic. The university's policy response was to recommend measures that faculty members can utilize when scheduling meetings in order to be flexible and accommodating of everyone's different schedules. For example, in a communication dated July 29, 2020 titled *Staff and Faculty Well-being,* the university acknowledges that faculty and staff have been experiencing an upheaval of work-life conflicts and recommends the following measures to improve work and home life boundaries:

> As the physical divide between work and home is increasingly blurred, there is a risk of extending workdays into evenings and weekends. While appreciating that there may be employees who require some flexibility regarding their work day, setting timeframes for when meetings are held can help create boundaries that support mental well-being. I ask that you therefore take all reasonable measures to schedule meetings during core business hours of 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and concluding no later than 6 p.m. where needed to

> accommodate flexible work hours. Please adjust accordingly for employees who start their day before 8:30 a.m.

This discourse of flexibility was also found in policy communications about care work responsibilities during provincial lockdowns and school closures. For example, in a university communication sent out on January 26, 2021 about supporting the OU community during the COVID-19 pandemic, the university stated the following:

> We recognize that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown restrictions and extended return dates for in-person learning have placed a significant toll on many parents, caregivers and members of the [Ontario University] community. Managing uncertainty and adapting to ongoing changes that affect daily responsibilities continue to be a shared experience and many of us are also experiencing different levels of grief and loss, in some cases closer to home than earlier on in the pandemic. With this in mind, we would like to highlight the supports and resources available to faculty, staff and instructors who are managing childcare, impacts to mental health as well as other caregiving responsibilities during this challenging time.
>
> Last year, a letter from the President offered ideas on how to support balance and maintain reasonable boundaries during working hours. We would like to remind everyone that it is important to stay as flexible as possible around scheduling and timelines for work requests to be completed. We also suggest leaving between 12-1pm unscheduled and free of meetings, to support our wellbeing, especially for colleagues who are caring for young children.

> For those facing caregiving challenges, the University's policy on Accommodating Family commits to ensuring that all [Ontario University] community members receive equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of family status, and allows for a degree of flexibility to be exercised to alleviate the disadvantages that a caregiver may face. The nature of any accommodation will depend on the particular circumstances of individuals and the requirements of their job. Faculty members or instructors should contact their Dean's/Principal's Office, and staff members should contact their Manager, to discuss options for accommodating caregiving responsibilities.

While care work at home in the form of childcare for faculty members with young children was acknowledged in the above quote, there was little recognition by OU's administration and management of the increase and change in care work that faculty members were providing to other family members such as older children or elders, not to mention non-family members such as students, colleagues, members of their broader community (especially those who were disproportionately impacted such as Indigenous communities), and self-care for their own health issues during the pandemic. The university communications directed students and faculty to resources that they could access, but the emotional labour that was being done by faculty due to the impacts of the pandemic policy response, such as the changing public health restrictions, the return to in-person work, and the effect this had on faculty health and well-being, remained invisible within the university's policy communications. Moreover, elder care was not limited to being an issue within households and the impact on faculty who may have had relatives outside their home, such as in long-term care or nursing homes, was absent in the policy discourse.

A final aspect of this communication discourse to note is the gender-neutral language when it comes to acknowledging "parents, caregivers and members of the [Ontario University]

community." The underlying assumption by the university administration is that care work is gender-neutral making the gendered impacts of family care work, which disproportionately fall on women, less visible. In addition, there is a lack of recognition of structural issues faced by academic women with care responsibilities, such as access to affordable daycares or extended family support to help manage care work during the pandemic.

Lastly, the importance of faculty flexibility in addressing the issue of student attendance during the transition from remote learning to in-person classes was emphasized by the university. In a university communication about returning to campus and contingency planning for instructors on January 28, 2022, the university states that:

> With the transition to more in-person activities in our daily lives, and the need for vigilance with one another's health and safety, instructors should expect some variability in students' attendance. COVID-related absences may arise as individual students themselves may be unwell or may need to provide care for others in their homes who are unwell.
>
> Even in the event you experience a higher than typical number of student absences, in-person learning should continue for those who are able to attend. Students have selected their courses on the basis that classes will be meeting in person.
>
> As always, instructors have discretion to make minor changes to a course outline to accommodate time constraints in covering material, or to schedule make-up classes as needed. Similarly, most instructors have the flexibility to convert in-person exams or

> other assessments to online versions, provided the grading scheme in the course is not altered.

It is clear that the assumption being made by the university administration is that issues with student attendance during the pandemic and the transition from online learning to in-person classes will be solved by faculty members providing flexibility and accommodations within their courses. There is no mention of how much additional workload this added flexibility costs faculty members and staff, and whether any compensation or assistance in doing this work will be provided for this imposed extra work.

As illustrated in the quote below from a January 26, 2021 communication, the university policy communication discourse also highlights additional forms of flexibility for some faculty members, such as with pre-tenure faculty having the option to "stop the clock" for up to one year to accommodate the impacts of COVID-19 on faculty's career progression:

> We also remind all faculty (regardless of family status) of the University's commitment that COVID-19 should not prejudice career progression. Pre-tenure faculty have the option to defer applying for tenure or promotion for up to one year. Requests should be made to the Dean or Principal and no reasonable request will be denied.

The underlying assumption in this policy communication is that one year is sufficient for tenure-track faculty members to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and be back on track with their career progression. This presupposition dismisses the diverse experiences of particular groups of faculty members who may have been more greatly affected by the pandemic (i.e., lasted longer than a year). For example, academic women who had increased care work responsibilities during the pandemic may be disadvantaged by having a pause of only one year.

In contrast, men who may not have had to do any care work during the pandemic may have had more time to spend on research so, to them, an additional year would have been to their advantage.

We are a Community of Care

OU implemented many public health restrictions and guidelines, such as online learning, daily COVID-19 screenings, social distancing, and mask and vaccine mandates, during the course of the pandemic. As the pandemic progressed, adhering to these guidelines and following public health guidelines mandated by the university was framed as a "community of care commitment" by the OU administration to address the problem represented in the policy communications discourse of needing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when attending campus in-person. For example, in a university communication on November 8, 2021 about the provincial reopening plan, the university announced that:

> For the remainder of the fall term, [OU] plans to continue with the public health measures that are currently in place, including all of the requirements outlined in the community of care commitment. All community members must wear a mask or face covering in indoor spaces, and continue physical distancing where possible. In addition, please continue submitting daily COVID-19 screening through [the OU App] and confirm this has been done with a manager or designate, where required to do so.
>
> We will also continue to abide by public health guidelines as the University moves toward full reopening and primarily in-person instruction for the winter term. Our strong vaccine mandate, and the co-operation we have received from our community in

> observing health and safety measures while on campus, has allowed us to plan the return of most of our classes this coming Winter 2022.

It is important to note that students who were not in compliance with the university's vaccine mandate were de-enrolled from in-person courses unless they had a special circumstance and had approval from instructors and the university to be excused from in-person class attendance altogether. In a communication from December 3, 2021, the university states that:

> In order to uphold our commitments to health and safety on our campuses, instructors are especially discouraged from making any special arrangements for students who are not in compliance with the University's vaccination mandate, including those whose requests for an exemption have already been denied after careful review at the University level. Those students are no longer permitted to access our campuses under any circumstances and may enroll in online courses only for the winter term.

The university viewed these student de-enrollments as a necessary step to address the problem of vaccine non-compliance. The assumption in this policy communication is that students who follow the vaccine mandate and faculty who enforce this policy are upholding the community of care commitment that the university administration expects the OU community to abide by. This assumption ignores the decisions by some students to not get vaccinated out of concerns about harms associated with vaccines or previous experiences of discrimination/mistreatment by health care providers resulting in mistrust of the health care system among racialized communities such as Black (Cénat et al., 2023; Innovative Research Group, 2021) and Indigenous (Mosby & Swidrovich, 2021) groups. At the same time, faculty members were also impacted by this mandate; full-time faculty members who decided not to get vaccinated were unable to teach

courses and precarious part-time lecturers may not have had their contract renewed. Further, faculty who did get vaccinated were still indirectly impacted; those with teaching responsibilities may have had lower student enrollment and those with supervision responsibilities may have had students who had to leave ongoing research projects. The last salient update about OU's community of care approach to health and safety was communicated on September 6, 2022, in which masking was recommended, but not enforced, and the vaccine mandate was paused, with the university continuing to monitor the evolving COVID-19 landscape.

Overall, while the university kept faculty members up to date with its evolving COVID-19 policy response, the problem represented in the policy communications of needing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring the continuity of learning and teaching revealed the university's understanding and prioritization of issues impacting faculty members during the pandemic. This resulted in a policy response by the university administration that put the burden on faculty and relied on the labour of faculty to ensure that safety measures could be met. At the start of the pandemic, the focus of the policy discourse was to limit the spread of COVID-19 and complete the Winter 2020 semester with minimal disruptions despite the unprecedented circumstances. This led to a policy solution of implementing a rapid shift to online learning at the onset of the pandemic. This continuation of classes with little teaching support for faculty members was made by the administration under the assumption that there would be no issues when transitioning from in-person classes to online classes during this extenuating public health situation. The application of an equity lens to the problem would have changed the policy response to include all forms of care work (e.g., childcare, elder care, emotional labour for students and colleagues, etc.) in the dominant discourse with accommodations to reduce negative

impacts on faculty members struggling with balancing these responsibilities and acknowledging the disproportionate impact on academic women who most often take on this labour both within the university and at home.

The university's community of care approach for faculty health issues focused on solutions such as providing vaccination clinics to the local community and implementing public health mandates (e.g., masking, social distancing, vaccinations, etc.). The unintended consequences of these policy responses, both at the start of online classes as well as during the interim period when online classes became the status quo, resulted in the burden of these problems being shouldered primarily by faculty members. Despite the disruptions to everyday life, the university's "business as usual" approach to workloads resulted in higher levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout for faculty, in particular for both full-time and part-time faculty with teaching responsibilities who also provided emotional labour to students and colleagues. In addition, full-time assistant, associate, and full professors in administrative positions during the pandemic also experienced higher service workloads. For contract faculty with a set number of hours (paid per hour and whose pay is significantly lower than full-time faculty), these significant increases in teaching and care work went uncompensated during these unprecedented conditions and caused further stress.

Bringing a feminist political economy (FPE) lens to my WPR findings allowed me to uncover how the discourses in the university's policy communications construct issues of class and gender. It is important to note the inherent underlying structure and class relations with the top-down policy communication approach by the university administration. Typically, senior

university administration and management positions are held by executives or faculty members that are paid higher wages and are outside the faculty union. These positions are often not front-facing and focus on administrative and service work. This can create a disconnect and produce tensions between the university policy discourse and the working conditions of unionized rank and file full-time faculty members (such as assistant, associate, and full professors) with teaching responsibilities. This disconnect in working conditions is even greater when we consider the difference in experiences between senior administrative positions and unionized contract faculty who often had high teaching loads and took on more care work for students during the pandemic, especially precariously employed part-time faculty who did this additional work at a much lower wage.

My WPR analysis helped me to surface unpaid work and class divisions as a structural factor that underpinned faculty experiences during the pandemic. In the capitalist economic context, the additional labour that was required from faculty members to implement the rapid shift to online classes at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and again when classes were switched to in-person in the winter semester of 2022 went unrecognized and uncompensated by OU administration and management. In addition, the university policies requiring faculty members to be flexible and provide accommodations within their courses, such as to adjust for an increase in student absences or to adjust in-person exams to an online format, once again assumes that this additional workload could easily be taken on by faculty members who were teaching courses without any hardship or strain. This policy representation indicates that the assumption by university administration and management was that the additional workload that both full-time and part-time contract faculty members were expected to undertake throughout the pandemic

was an inevitable aspect of the "unprecedented conditions." Yet, this assumption by the university administration and management failed to acknowledge the issue of class and the economic implications for part-time faculty members who would have been most impacted by the increases to their workloads that went beyond their hourly contracts and were left unpaid. This assumption by the university administration and management also had implications along the line of gender as women academics are often overrepresented in part-time work (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018).

By using a FPE perspective to analyze my WPR findings, I also identified unpaid care work as a structural factor that shaped faculty experiences during the pandemic. I found that the policy communications discourse emphasized managing childcare as a work-life balance issue experienced by academic parents. The policy discourse also framed this issue as a shared community concern and requested that faculty members leave lunch hours free of meetings to support the well-being of their colleagues with young children along with referring parents with childcare responsibilities to resources and accommodations they could access if needed. The underlying assumption from the gender-neutral language in this policy discourse is that care work responsibilities are equally distributed among academic mothers and fathers, with a lack of recognition of social structures such as access to affordable daycares or family support which shape the experiences of academic mothers who were more likely to be the primary person responsible for care work. This gender-neutral language does not acknowledge the differences in experiences between genders. By using an equity lens, the university could have acknowledged, within the inclusive language used in the communications, that not everyone was impacted the same and that women, particularly those who were primarily responsible for care work such as

childcare and/or elder care, were more likely to take on a disproportionate share of care responsibilities.

Furthermore, while the policy communications discourse did mention that faculty members may be managing "other caregiving responsibilities during this challenging time," this vague statement marginalizes the impact that other forms of care work, such as elder care and emotional labour, have on faculty members' experiences during the pandemic. This lack of recognition within the policy discourse of academics performing elder care and emotional labour renders this type of work "invisible" where the needs of those performing these forms of care work, academic women in particular, go unnoticed. In addition, the policy discourse fails to sufficiently recognize the unpaid care work conducted by faculty members supporting students and colleagues throughout the pandemic. This undervaluation of emotional labour in the policy discourse serves the capital interests of the university, resulting in the exploitation of unpaid care work within the institution along the lines of class as part-time contract faculty often work in precarious conditions without adequate wages, support, resources, or recognition, and along the lines of gender as women academics are more likely than men to be expected to perform this type of care work.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic policy response and how these policies and practices shaped the lived experiences for diverse groups of faculty members will be further explored in the findings from my online survey and follow-up interviews in the next sections.

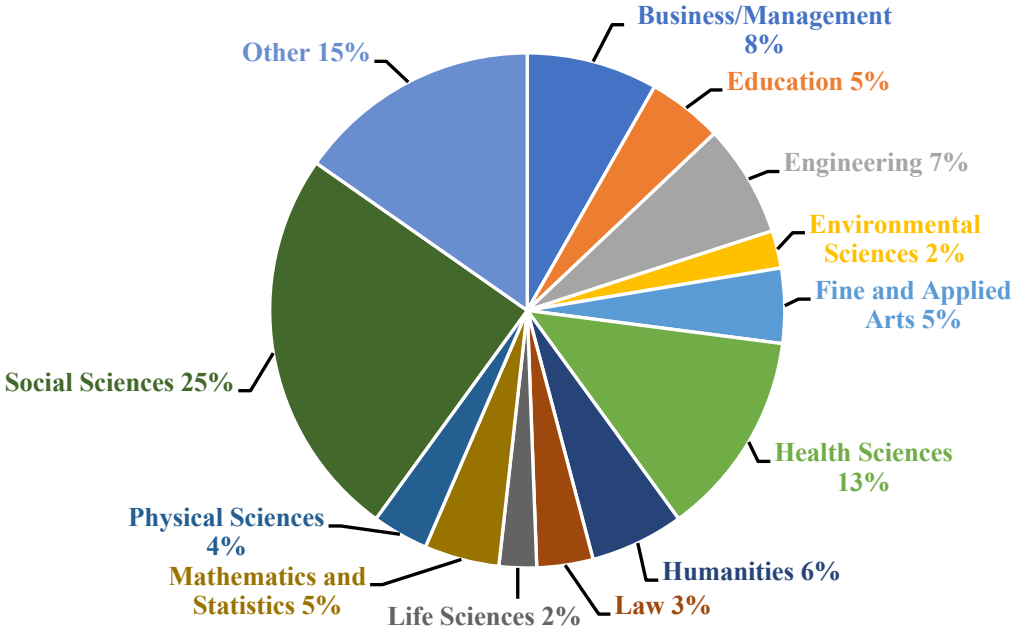
Chapter Five: Online Survey Findings

A total of 85 faculty members completed the survey. Most of my participants identified as women (58%). A salient finding was the class nature of my sample as the three groups with the most survey participants were all full-time faculty: tenured associate professors (39%), tenure-track assistant professors (20%), and tenured professors (15%). Looking at the income range of my respondents, 85% of my survey sample reported having an income range of $100,001 and over, and 86% reported having a household income in that same range. According to data from Statistics Canada, individual annual earnings of $100,000 and over places these survey respondents in the top 13.9% of Canadian household incomes in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2024). Most respondents were married (76%) and around half of my participants reported having dependents (51%). A majority of my respondents identified as not being from racialized backgrounds (65%). A large number of participants resided in Ontario during the pandemic (89%). I provide further details for each demographic category in the sections below.

Demographics of Survey Participants

I asked participants to identify their academic discipline/field of study from a list of various areas of study to understand the breadth of research and teaching expertise represented by these participants. Figure 2 below illustrates the diversity of academic disciplines among respondents by percentage.

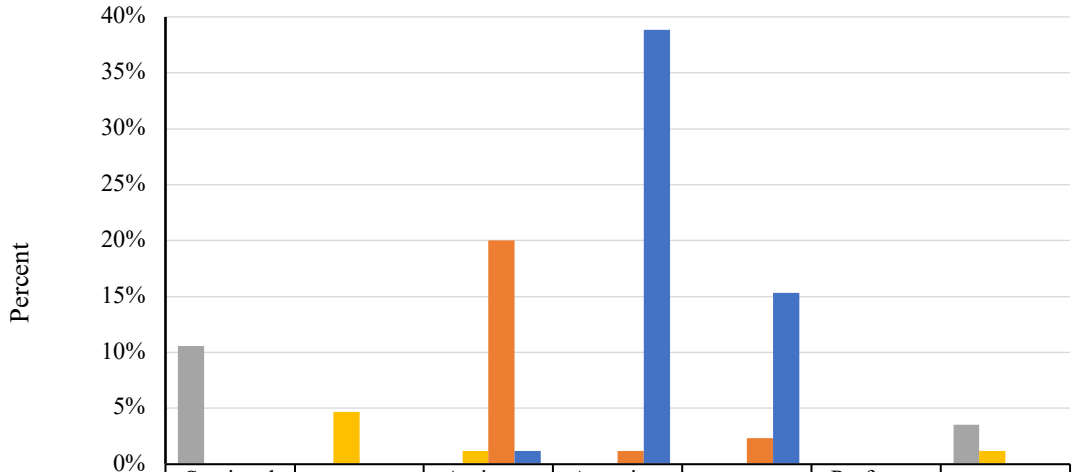
Figure 2: Survey Participants' Academic Discipline/Field of Study



Based on the responses, the most common academic disciplines my survey participants were part of were Social Sciences (n= 21) followed by Health Sciences (n=11) and Business/Management (n=7). Environmental Sciences (n=2), Life Sciences (n=2), Law (n=3), and Physical Sciences (n=3) were the least common. Thirteen respondents selected 'other' and were prompted to specify their field of study in a textbox. Three respondents answered Psychology, while the other ten respondents each wrote Biology, Political Philosophy (Humanities) and Social Sciences, Education and Language Acquisition, Linguistics, Communication, Food Policy, Gender and Women's Studies, Kinesiology, Global Health, and Human Science.

I also asked faculty members to indicate their current faculty appointment and the status of their current appointment to better situate their degree of employment security. Figure 3 below shows the breakdown of current faculty appointment among participants and their status.

Figure 3: Survey Participants' Current Faculty Appointment



	Sessional Lecturer	CLA	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor	Professor Emeritus	Other
Part-time	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%
CLA-contract	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Full-time tenure track	0%	0%	20%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Full-time tenured	0%	0%	1%	39%	15%	0%	0%

The largest group of survey respondents were full-time associate professors with tenure (n=33), with the next largest group being full-time assistant professors who were tenure track (n=17), and full-time professors who were tenured (n=13). This distribution indicates that full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members may have had more time available to complete my survey given that there were few part-time sessional lecturers in my sample (n=9).

I also asked faculty members if they were professorial or teaching stream. Out of the 85 respondents, 57 indicated they were professorial stream, 19 were teaching stream, two respondents selected not applicable and seven selected 'other' specifying they were contract faculty/sessional lecturers. Lastly, I asked faculty members if "over the past three years have you held an administrative position in your unit?" Seven faculty members responded that they had been a departmental chair, seven indicated they had been a director, six indicated undergraduate program director, four indicated graduate program director, one respondent wrote in the 'other'

category that they were a program coordinator (from 2021–2022), and one respondent selected 'other' but did not further specify their administrative position. The remaining 59 respondents answered not applicable.

I collected socio-demographic information from my 85 survey participants which I have summarized in Table 1 below with the counts and percentages.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants

Characteristics	**Count (n=85)**	**Percentage**
Ethnicity/Race		
Arab	0	0%
Black	3	4%
Chinese	5	6%
Filipino	0	0%
Indigenous	0	0%
Japanese	1	1%
Korean	0	0%
Latin American	3	4%
South Asian	3	4%
Southeast Asian	1	1%
West Asian	0	0%
White	55	65%
Other	2	2%
Multiracial	3	4%
Prefer not to answer	9	11%
Gender		
Man	28	33%
Non-binary	3	4%
Transgender	0	0%
Two-Spirit	0	0%
Woman	49	58%
Other	1	1%
Prefer not to answer	4	5%

2SLGBTQ+			
	Yes	7	8%
	No	70	82%
	Prefer not to answer	8	9%
Disability			
	Yes	12	14%
	No	69	81%
	Prefer not to answer	4	5%
Age			
	Less than 20 years	0	0%
	20–29	0	0%
	30–39	10	12%
	40–49	27	32%
	50–59	23	27%
	60–69	18	21%
	70 years and over	5	6%
	Prefer not to answer	2	2%
Education (Terminal Degree)			
	Bachelors	3	4%
	Masters	11	13%
	Doctorate	71	84%
	Other	0	0%
Marital Status			
	Single	8	9%
	Married or Common-law	65	76%
	Separated	2	2%
	Divorced	6	7%
	Widowed	1	1%
	Other	0	0%
	Prefer not to answer	3	4%
Income Range			
	Less than $20,000	0	0%
	$20,001–$40,000	1	1%
	$40,001–$60,000	2	2%

$60,001–$80,000	0	0%
$80,001–$100,000	3	4%
$100,001 and over	72	85%
Prefer not to answer	7	8%
Household Income Range		
Less than $20,000	0	0%
$20,001–$40,000	0	0%
$40,001–$60,000	1	1%
$60,001–$80,000	1	1%
$80,001–$100,000	2	2%
$100,001 and over	73	86%
Prefer not to answer	8	9%

Table 1 shows that the majority of my survey respondents were women (58%). Most of my respondents were not from racialized backgrounds (65%). A majority of my sample reported doctorate as their highest level of education (84%). Most respondents were between the ages of 40–49 years (32%), were married/common law (76%), were from high income households of $100,001 and over (86%), and did not self-identify as having a disability (81%) nor as 2SLGBTQ+ (82%).

I was also interested in knowing how many of my survey respondents had care work responsibilities, if they took care of children and/or adults, and if this care work occurred within the household and/or outside the home. I summarize my findings in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Caregiver[3] Status of Survey Participants

Care Work Responsibilities	**Count (n=85)**	**Percentage**
Do you have dependent(s) in your household?		
Yes	43	51%
No	41	48%

[3] I used the term caregiver in my survey to keep my terminology consistent with the Statistics Canada General Social Survey – Caregiving and Care Receiving.

Other	1	1%
Please indicate if your dependent(s) is/are:		
Child(ren) under 18	31	36%
Adult(s) in need of care	5	6%
Both child(ren) and adult(s)	4	5%
Other	3	4%
Please indicate your caregiver status:		
I am the primary caregiver	6	7%
I share caregiving duties with another person(s)	32	38%
I am not the primary caregiver	5	6%
Other	0	0%
Do you have any caregiving responsibilities outside of your household?		
Yes	21	25%
No	63	74%
Other	1	1%
Please indicate if your dependent(s) is/are:		
Child(ren) under 18	2	2%
Adult(s) in need of care	18	21%
Both child(ren) and adult(s)	1	1%
Other	0	0%
Please indicate your caregiver status:		
I am the primary caregiver	3	4%
I share caregiving duties with another person(s)	12	14%
I am not the primary caregiver	6	7%
Other	0	0%

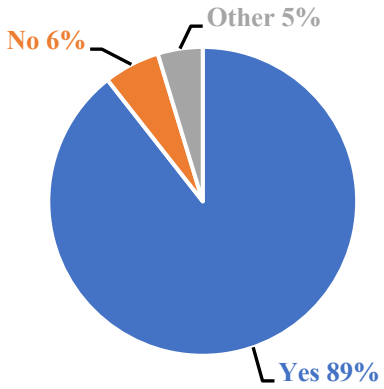
Around half of my survey respondents reported that they had dependents in their household (43/85), with most of these respondents specifying that these dependents were children under the age of 18 (31/43) and some respondents reported that their dependents were both children and adults in need of care (4/43). Of the 43 respondents who reported they had dependents in their

household, 32 respondents indicated that they shared care work responsibilities with another person. A quarter of my survey sample said that they had care responsibilities outside the home (21/85), with most reporting that this care was for adults in need (18/21) and that they shared care work duties with another person (12/21).

Geographical Representation of Survey Participants

In my survey, I also asked respondents if they had been residing primarily in Ontario during the pandemic. As shown below in Figure 4, the majority of my sample indicated 'yes' (89%).

Figure 4: Survey Participants Who Resided in Ontario, Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Respondents who answered 'no' (6%) were asked to specify the other location. Out of the five respondents that indicated 'no,' one specified they had lived in both Germany and Canada, one said Quebec, one answered Texas, one wrote the UK, and one indicated not applicable. Out of the four respondents that selected 'other,' two specified that they had lived in both Ontario and in France while the remaining two answered they had lived in both Ontario and the USA.

Likert-Style Questionnaire Correlational Analysis

Table 3: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient (P-value) between Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), and Work-Life Balance Measure

	PSS-10 (n=85)	OLBI Disengagement (n=85)	OLBI Exhaustion (n=85)	OLBI Overall Burnout (n=85)	Work-Life Balance (n=85)
PSS-10	-				
OLBI Disengagement	.818 (<0.001)	-			
OLBI Exhaustion	.926 (<0.001)	.674 (<0.001)	-		
OLBI Overall Burnout	.961 (<0.001)	.874 (<0.001)	.941 (<0.001)	-	
Work-Life Balance	-.950 (<0.001)	-.820 (<0.001)	-.920 (<0.001)	-.956 (<0.001)	-

Spearman's Rank Correlation was computed to assess the relationship between the three different questionnaires: PSS-10, OLBI, and Work-Life Balance Measure. As seen in Table 3 above, there were statistically significant correlations between each pair. Strong positive correlations existed between stress, disengagement, exhaustion, and overall burnout while work-life balance was strongly negatively correlated with stress, disengagement, exhaustion, and overall burnout. I also ran Spearman's Rank Correlation by gender for women and men (data not shown) and the results were similar; all tests were statistically significant and strongly correlated. Due to small sample sizes, analysis of the other groups (non-binary, other, prefer not to disclose gender) was not conducted. In the following sections, I take a closer look at the data from each of the three Likert-style questionnaires.

Stress and Sources of Stress

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of PSS-10 Scores by Gender

	Total Sample (n=85)	Women (n=49)	Men (n=28)	Non-binary (n=3)	Other (n=1)	Prefer not to answer (n=4)
Mean PSS-10 Score ± SD	16.89 ± 8.14	19.56 ± 7.18	11.39 ± 7.36	18.00 ± 5.29	17	16.75 ± 9.36
Median (IQR)	17 (13)	20 (11)	9.5 (7.5)	20 (5)	17	17.5 (13.25)
Stress category frequency n (%)						
Low stress	35 (41%)	12 (24%)	20 (71%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)
Moderate stress	37 (44%)	26 (53%)	6 (21%)	2 (66%)	1 (100%)	2 (50%)
High stress	13 (15%)	11 (22%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The data from the PSS-10 scores in Table 4 showed that, in the last month of when this questionnaire was administered (June–August 2022), women had the highest raw scores of perceived stress compared to all other gender groups. PSS-10 raw scores were used to calculate the levels of stress and women were found to be significantly higher compared to men as per the Mann-Whitney U Test ($U=258.00$, $p<.001$). According to individual scores obtained in the PSS-10, participants were separated into three perceived stress categories: low, moderate, and high stress. Only 15% of the total sample had high stress, with the rest of the sample closely split at having moderate (44%) and low stress (41%). Looking more closely, more women had high and moderate stress compared to other genders, and more men had low stress compared to other genders. More specifically, there were approximately three times as many women with high stress (22%) compared to men (7%), approximately two-and-a-half times as many women with moderate stress (53%) compared to men (21%) and approximately three times as many men with low stress (71%) compared to women (24%).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of OLBI Scores by Gender

	Total sample (n=85)	Women (n=49)	Men (n=28)	Non-binary (n=3)	Other (n=1)	Prefer not to answer (n=4)
Mean OLBI Score ± SD						
Disengagement	2.23 ± 0.47	2.30 ± 0.48	2.10 ± 0.48	2.25 ± 0.33	2.88	2.25 ± 0.35
Exhaustion	2.51 ± 0.56	2.68 ± 0.51	2.21 ± 0.59	2.50 ± 0.22	2.63	2.50 ± 0.51
Overall Burnout	2.37 ± 0.48	2.49 ± 0.45	2.16 ± 0.51	2.38 ± 0.27	2.75	2.38 ± 0.39
Median (IQR)						
Disengagement	2.25 (0.50)	2.25 (0.38)	2.13 (0.41)	2.13 (0.31)	2.88	2.38 (0.38)
Exhaustion	2.50 (0.75)	2.63 (0.75)	2.06 (0.63)	2.38 (0.19)	2.63	2.31 (0.38)
Overall Burnout	2.38 (0.63)	2.44 (0.44)	2.06 (0.50)	2.25 (0.25)	2.75	2.34 (0.38)

Table 6: Range and Frequency of OLBI Scores by Gender

	Range	Frequency n (%)					
		Total sample (n=85)	Women (n=49)	Men (n=28)	Non-binary (n=3)	Other (n=1)	Prefer not to answer (n=4)
Overall disengagement (n=85)	Low ≤ 1.76 Moderate = 1.77 to 2.70 High ≥ 2.71	Low = 13 (15%) Moderate = 61 (72%) High = 11 (13%)	Low = 6 (12%) Moderate = 35 (71%) High = 8 (16%)	Low = 6 (21%) Moderate = 20 (71%) High = 2 (7%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 3 (100%) High = 0 (0%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 0 (0%) High = 1 (100%)	Low = 1 (25%) Moderate = 3 (75%) High = 0 (0%)
Overall exhaustion (n=85)	Low ≤ 1.95 Moderate = 1.96 to 3.06 High ≥ 3.07	Low = 10 (12%) Moderate = 62 (73%) High = 13 (15%)	Low = 2 (4%) Moderate = 37 (76%) High = 10 (20%)	Low = 8 (29%) Moderate = 18 (64%) High = 2 (7%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 3 (100%) High = 0 (0%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 1 (100%) High = 0 (0%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 3 (75%) High = 1 (25%)
Overall burnout (n=85)	Low ≤ 1.89 Moderate = 1.90 to 2.84 High ≥ 2.85	Low = 13 (15%) Moderate = 62 (73%) High = 10 (12%)	Low = 4 (8%) Moderate = 38 (78%) High = 7 (14%)	Low = 9 (32%) Moderate = 17 (61%) High = 2 (7%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 3 (100%) High = 0 (0%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 1 (100%) High = 0 (0%)	Low = 0 (0%) Moderate = 3 (75%) High = 1 (25%)

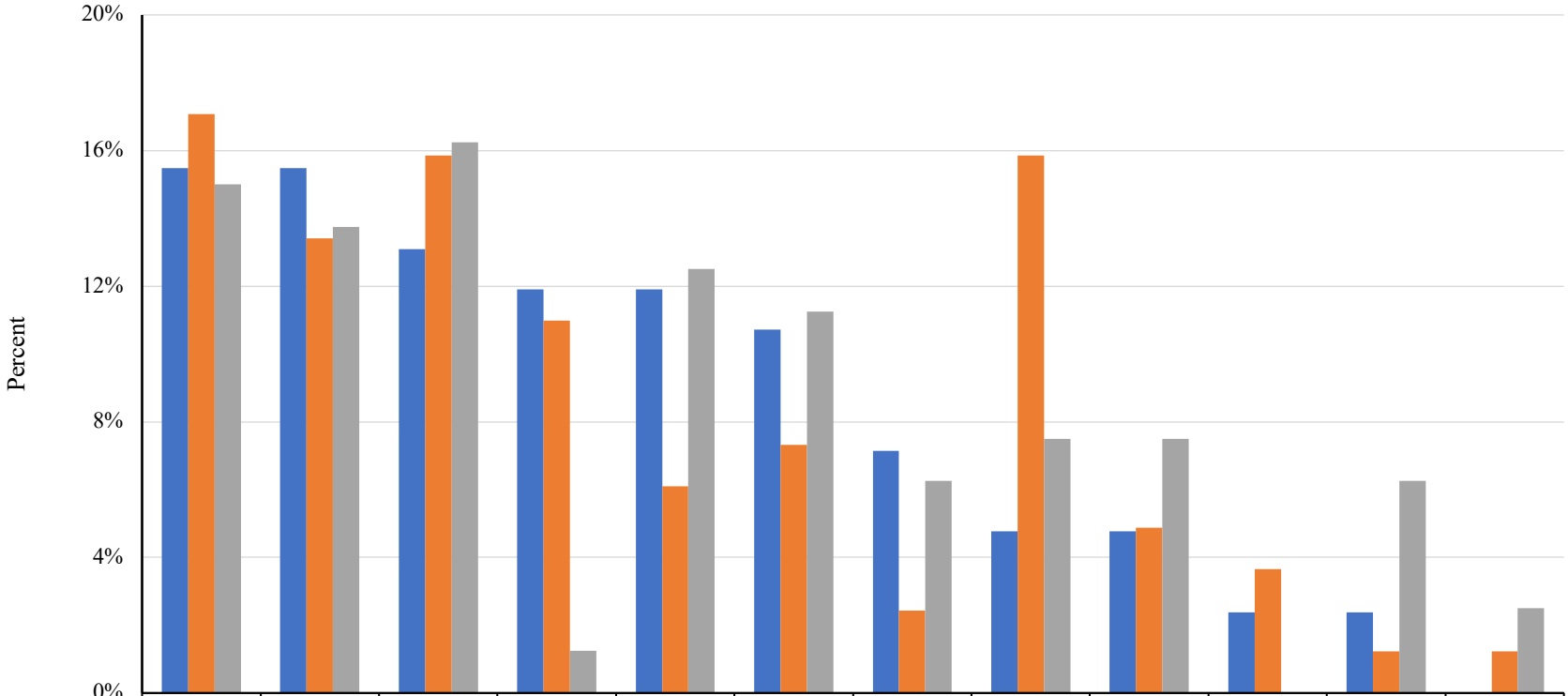
The OLBI questionnaire assesses levels of disengagement and exhaustion, and the average of those two scores results in an overall burnout score. The data from the OLBI scores are shown in Table 5 and 6. The data from the OLBI scores in Table 5 showed that women had the highest scores of disengagement, exhaustion, and overall burnout compared to all other gender groups. The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between women and men's OLBI scores. There was a significant difference between women and men in overall burnout scores ($U=383.00$, $p=.001$) as well as in the subscale score of exhaustion ($U=330.50$, $p<.001$), with women having higher burnout and exhaustion compared to men. Women had higher disengagement scores than men, but it was not found to be statistically significant ($U=511.50$, $p=.063$).

Looking more closely within groups, as shown in Table 6, the three different measures of burnout were very similar. Most participants had a moderate degree of burnout (73%), with low and high levels being similar (15% and 12% respectively). However, when assessed by gender, twice as many women were found to have high burnout (14%) compared to men (7%). There were also more women with moderate burnout (78%) compared to men (61%). There were four times as many men with low burnout (32%) compared to women (8%). Similar trends were observed for disengagement and exhaustion though the degree of difference between men and women differ depending on the burnout measure.

Next, I asked survey respondents what their three main sources of stress were in order of priority that they experienced in relation to their job. As this was an open-ended question where participants submitted their answer in a text box, participant responses varied so I coded each

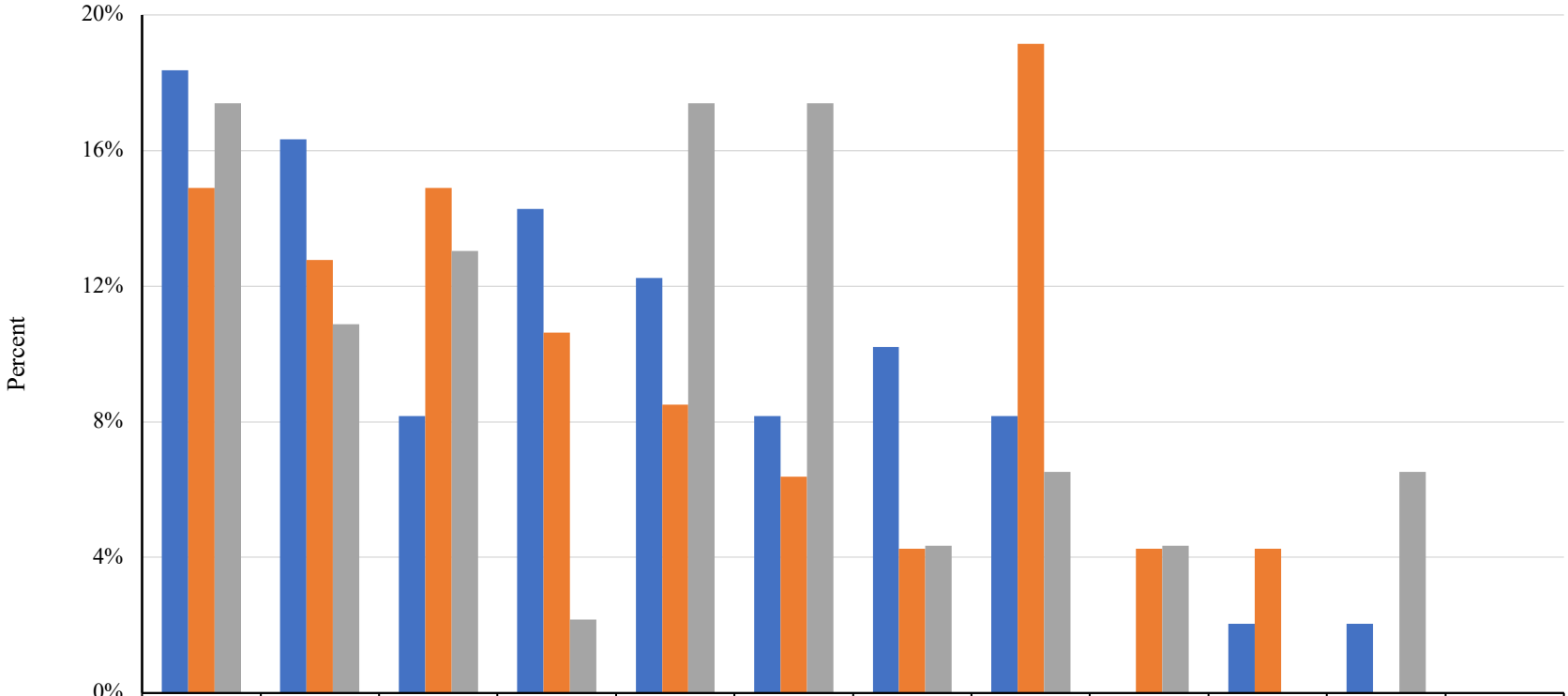
response to create the categories shown in Figure 5. Figures 6 and 7 show the three main sources of stress broken down further by the two largest gender groups (women and men) that make up my survey sample. Figure 8 blends the responses from these two groups for comparison.

Figure 5: Three Main Sources of Stress in Order of Priority among Survey Participants



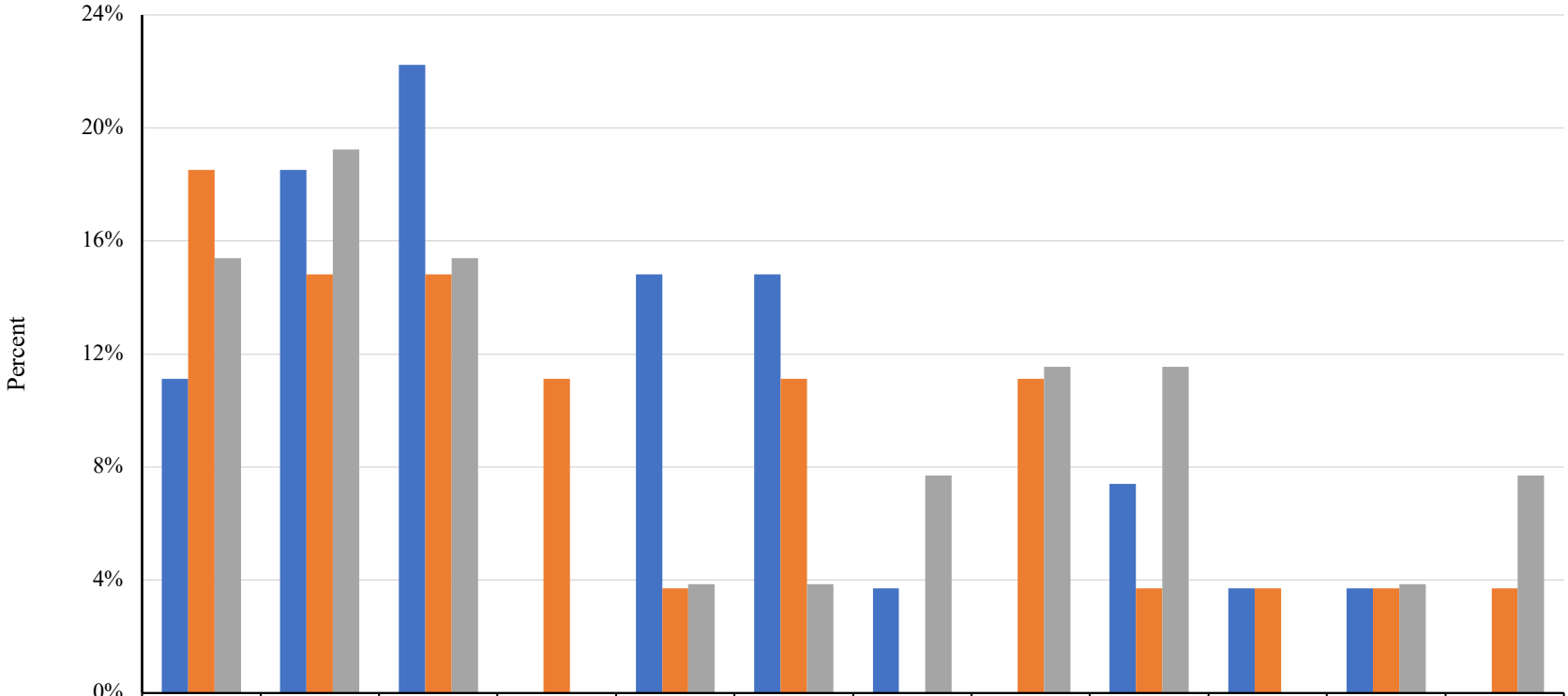
	Teaching	Service / administrative work	Lack of time	Research	Work-life conflict	Tensions with administration	Relationship with colleagues	Care work	Health and well-being	Economic stressors	Changing structure of work	Pandemic uncertainity
First (n=84)	15%	15%	13%	12%	12%	11%	7%	5%	5%	2%	2%	0%
Second (n=82)	17%	13%	16%	11%	6%	7%	2%	16%	5%	4%	1%	1%
Third (n=80)	15%	14%	16%	1%	13%	11%	6%	8%	8%	0%	6%	3%

Figure 6: Three Main Sources of Stress in Order of Priority among Women Survey Participants



	Teaching	Service / administrative work	Lack of time	Research	Work-life conflict	Tensions with administration	Relationship with colleagues	Care work	Health and well-being	Economic stressors	Changing structure of work	Pandemic uncertainity
First (n=49)	18%	16%	8%	14%	12%	8%	10%	8%	0%	2%	2%	0%
Second (n=47)	15%	13%	15%	11%	9%	6%	4%	19%	4%	4%	0%	0%
Third (n=46)	17%	11%	13%	2%	17%	17%	4%	7%	4%	0%	7%	0%

Figure 7: Three Main Sources of Stress in Order of Priority among Men Survey Participants

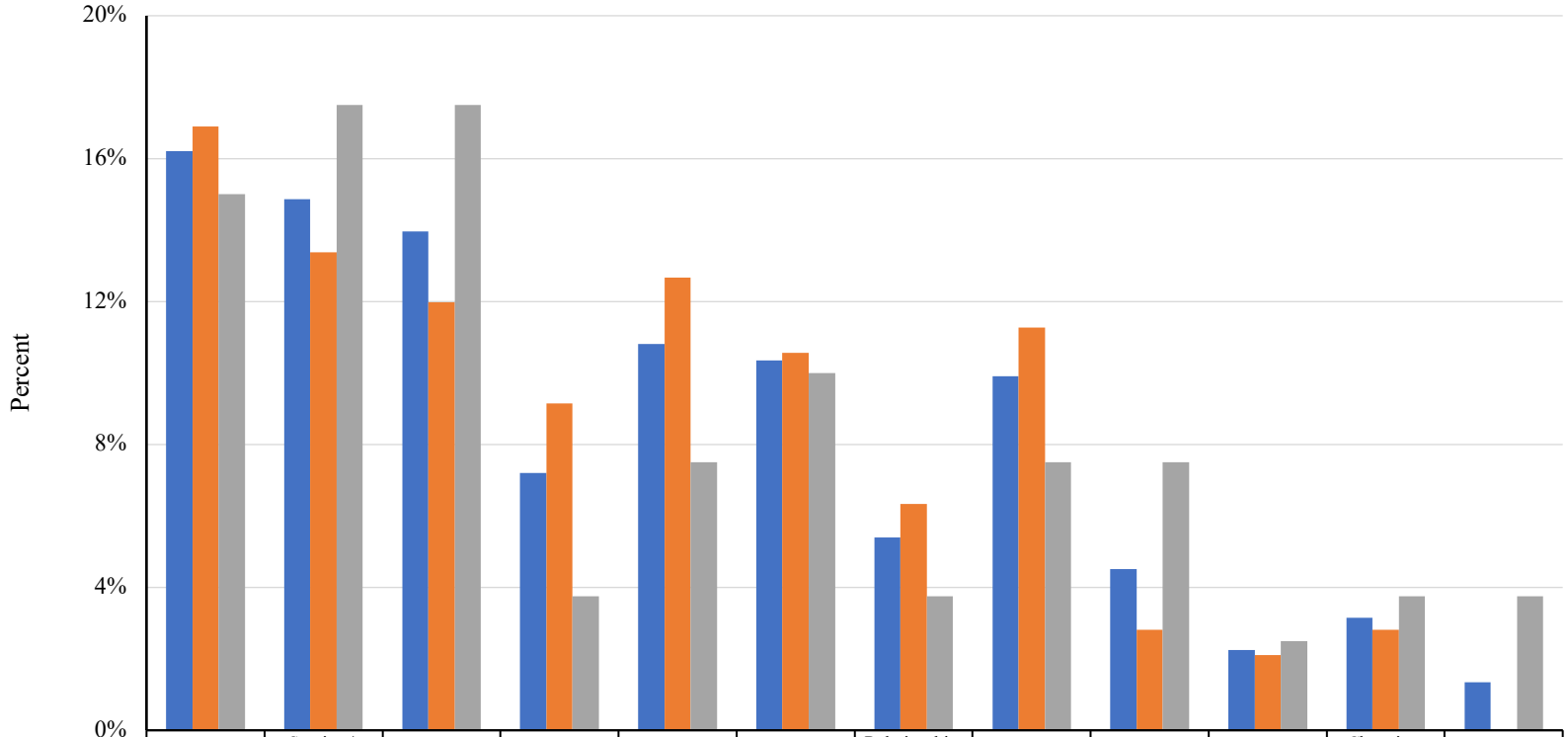


	Teaching	Service / administrative work	Lack of time	Research	Work-life conflict	Tensions with administration	Relationship with colleagues	Care work	Health and well-being	Economic stressors	Changing structure of work	Pandemic uncertainity
First (n=27)	11%	19%	22%	0%	15%	15%	4%	0%	7%	4%	4%	0%
Second (n=27)	19%	15%	15%	11%	4%	11%	0%	11%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Third (n=26)	15%	19%	15%	0%	4%	4%	8%	12%	12%	0%	4%	8%

As shown in Figure 5, when looking across all survey participants, both teaching and service/administrative work was found to be the top source of stress (n=13) followed closely by lack of time (n=11). These three sources of stress were also commonly cited as the second and third source of stress for the entire group. Interestingly, care work was described as the second source of stress by several people (n=13). Figure 6 illustrates that the distribution of women's sources of stress does not differ too greatly from Figure 5, with teaching (n=9) and service/administrative work (n=8) both being found to be the top source of stress. This is not surprising as the majority of my sample consisted of women (n=49/85). However, more women found research to be the first source of stress (n=7) compared to lack of time (n=4). Tied with teaching, the most common response by women was to put care work as their second source of stress (n=9).

As shown in Figure 7, lack of time was listed most often as the first source of stress by men (n=6) followed by service/administrative work (n=5), then it is a tie between work-life conflict and tensions with administration (n=4). Curiously, research and care work were not listed as the first source of stress by any men, though it was stated as the second source of stress by a similar number of respondents (n=3). For the three participants who identified as non-binary, one ranked teaching, one ranked research, and the last one ranked lack of time as their first source of stress. One respondent who identified as androgynous ranked health and well-being as their main source of stress. Lastly, for the four respondents who preferred to not identify their gender, two ranked research, one ranked health and well-being, and another ranked tensions with administration as their first source of stress.

Figure 8: Comparison of Sources of Stress among Women and Men Survey Participants



	Teaching	Service / administrative work	Lack of time	Research	Work-life conflict	Tensions with administration	Relationship with colleagues	Care work	Health and well-being	Economic stressors	Changing structure of work	Pandemic uncertainity
Women and men (n=222)	16%	15%	14%	7%	11%	10%	5%	10%	5%	2%	3%	1%
Women (n=142)	17%	13%	12%	9%	13%	11%	6%	11%	3%	2%	3%	0%
Men (n=80)	15%	18%	18%	4%	8%	10%	4%	8%	8%	3%	4%	4%

Figure 8 compares the sources of stress responses provided by women and men survey participants. The combined total responses for both groups were n=222, with 142 responses from women respondents and 80 from men. Responses for each group were not ranked but instead combined based on frequency. For women, the most common source of stress was teaching (24/142) followed by service/administrative work (19/142), and work-life conflict (18/142). In comparison, service/administrative work (14/80) and lack of time (14/80) were most often reported as a source of stress by men. It is interesting to note areas where there were big differences between women and men in what they perceived as a common source of stress. For instance, a larger percentage of men's responses focused on service/administrative work (14/80) and health and well-being (6/80) as a source of stress compared to women (19/142 and 4/142 respectively). In contrast, a larger percentage of women's responses focused on research as a source of stress (13/142) compared to men (3/80).

Work-Life Balance

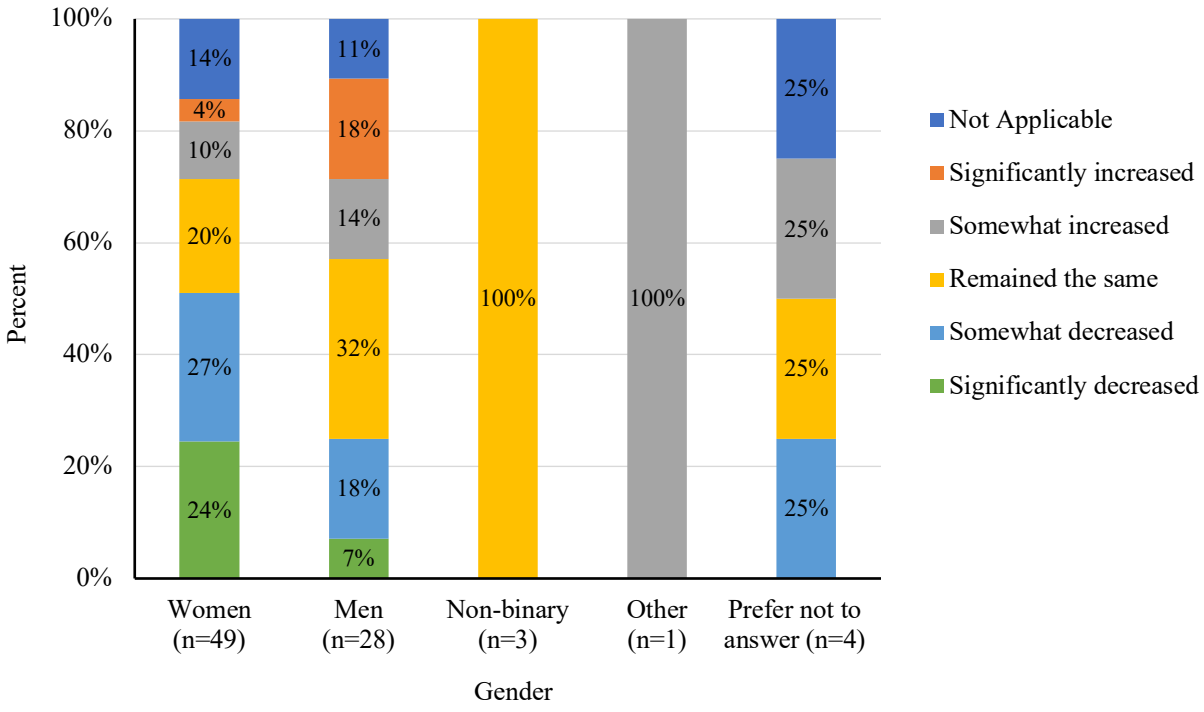
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Work-Life Balance Measure Scores by Gender

	Mean Work-Life Balance Score ± SD	Median (IQR)
Total Sample (n=85)	8.99 ± 2.93	9 (6)
Women (n=49)	8.06 ± 2.62	7 (4)
Men (n=28)	10.39 ± 3.10	11 (3)
Non-binary (n=3)	9.33 ± 2.52	9 (2.5)
Other (n=1)	9	9
Prefer not to answer (n=4)	10.25 ± 2.22	11 (1.25)

The data from the Work-Life Balance Measure is presented in Table 7. For this scale, a high score indicates having a good balance between the time spent on paid work demands and the

time respondents have available for activities outside of paid work. A significant difference in Work-Life Balance Measure scores was found between women and men using the Mann-Whitney U Test, with women having significantly lower work-life balance compared to men (U=384.00, p=.001).

Figure 9: Faculty Research Productivity by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic



As shown in Figure 9, a greater percentage of women (51%, n=25) reported a decrease in research productivity compared to other genders during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, we see that more men had no change in research productivity (n=9) compared to other genders. We also saw that more men reported a significant increase (n=5) in research productivity compared to the other genders.

Figure 10: Time Spent on Teaching by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic

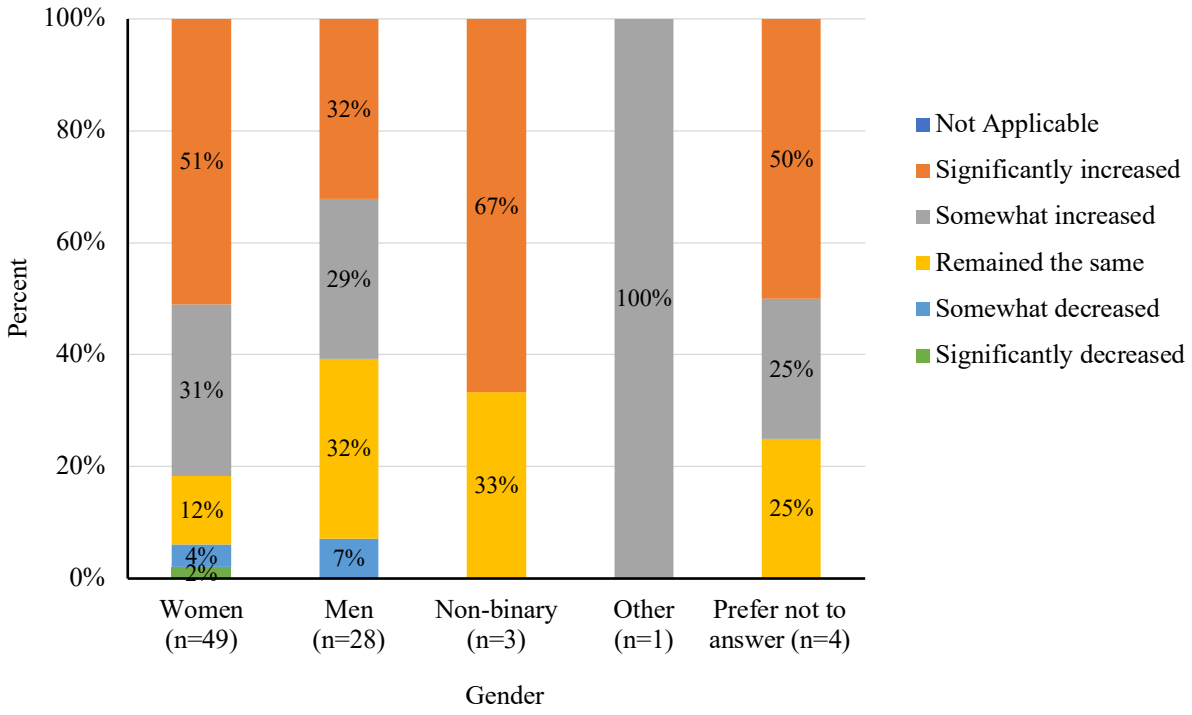
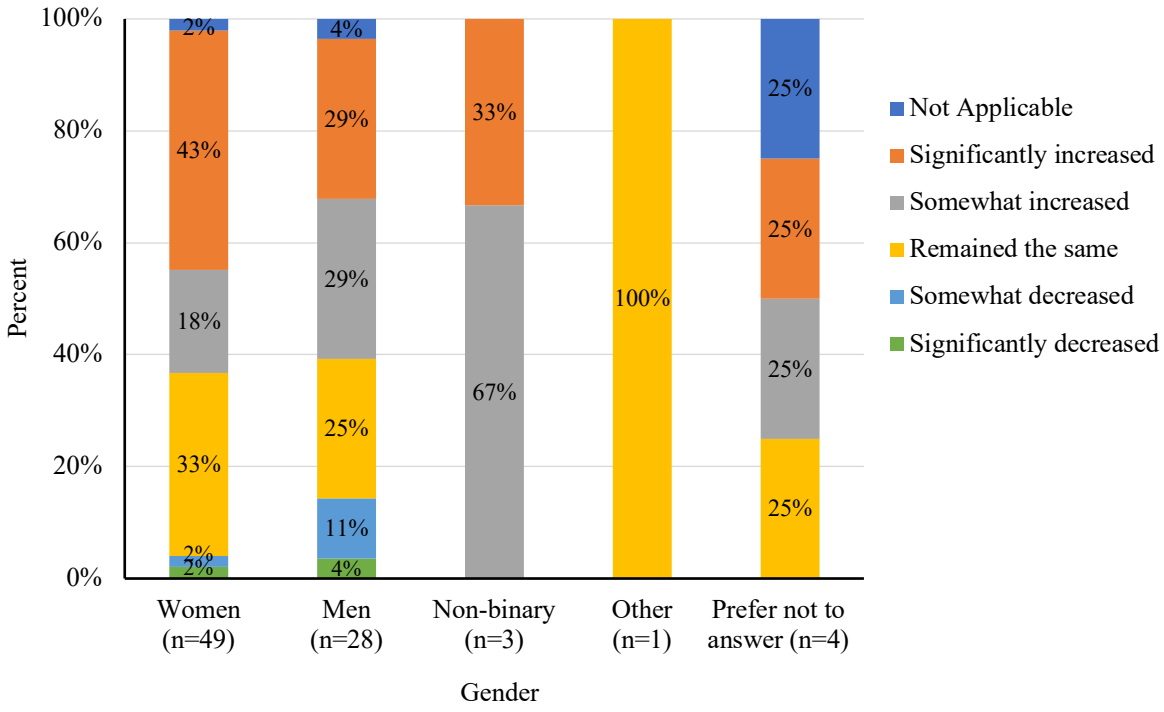


Figure 10 shows that more women reported a significant increase (n=25) in time spent on teaching compared to other genders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, more men reported no change (n=9) in time spent on teaching compared to other genders.

Figure 11: Time Spent on Administrative Tasks by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic



As shown in Figure 11, more women reported a significant increase (n=21) in time spent on administrative tasks compared to other genders during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, a greater percentage of men reported a somewhat increase in time spent on administrative tasks (n=8) compared to other genders. Interestingly, if we combined the results from significant increase and somewhat increase to get a measure of overall increase in time spent on administrative tasks, there is not much difference between women (61%, n= 30) and men (57%, n=16).

Figure 12: Time Spent on Committee Work by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic

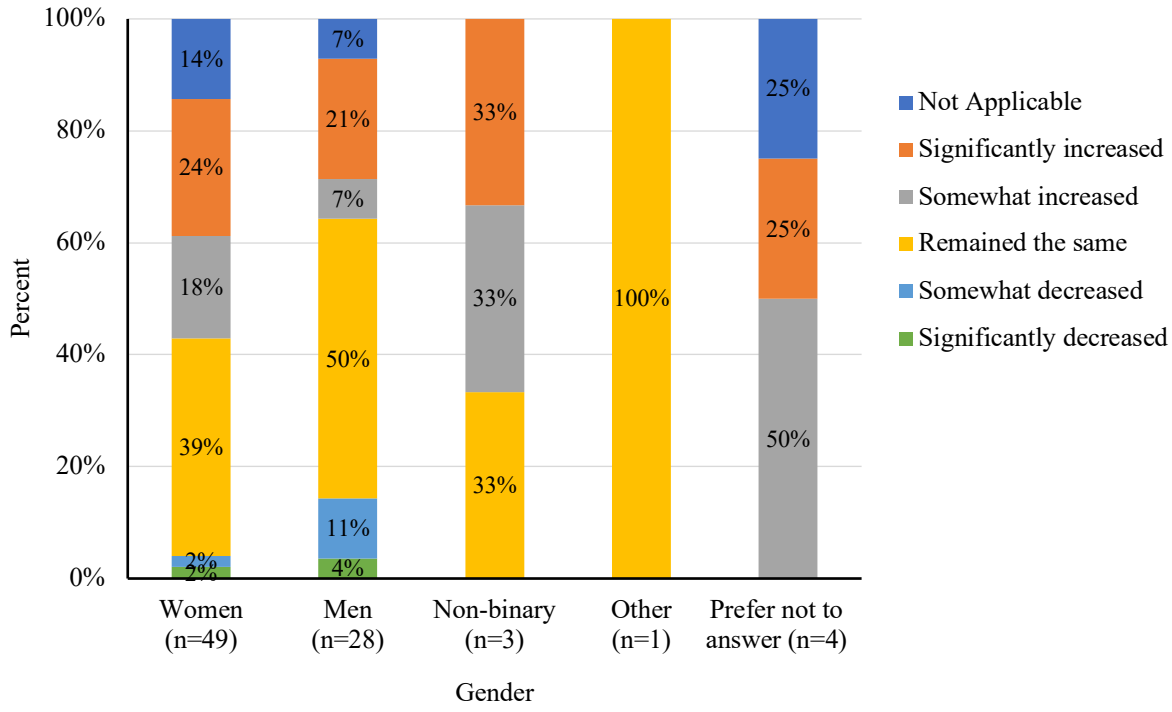
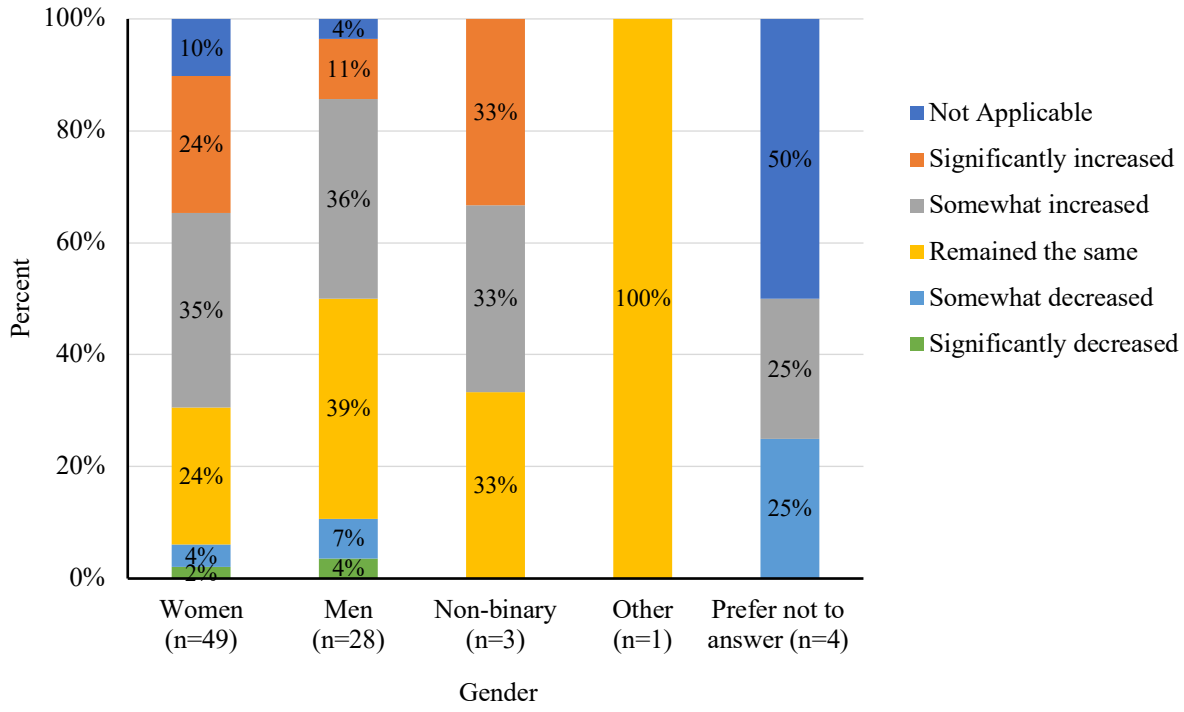


Figure 12 shows that a greater number of women found a significant increase (n=12) in time spent on committee work compared to men (n=6). Conversely, a greater percentage of men reported no change (n=14) on time spent on committee work compared to other genders.

Figure 13: Time Spent on Student Supervision by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic



As shown in Figure 13, more women reported a significant increase (n=12) in time spent on student supervision compared to other genders during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, a higher percentage of men reported no change in time spent on student supervision (n=11) compared to other genders.

Figure 14: Time Spent on Care Work at Home by Gender during the COVID-19 Pandemic

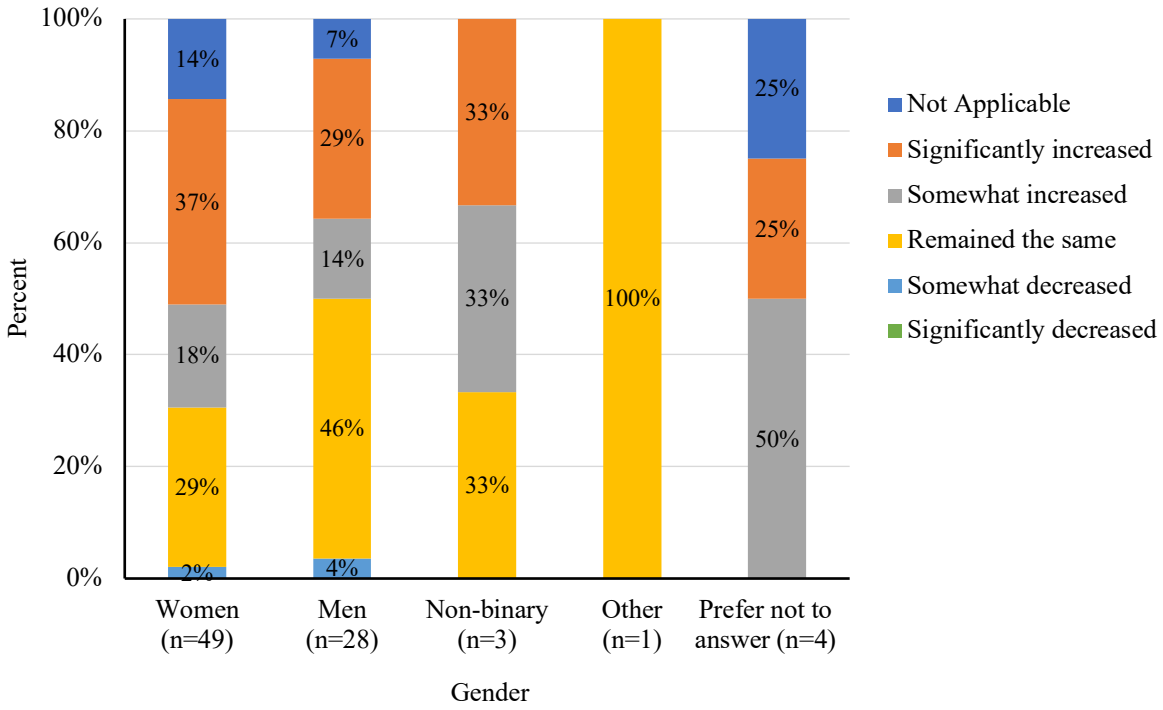


Figure 14 shows that a greater percentage of men found no change (n=13) in time spent on care work at home compared to other genders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking more closely at women and men, overall scores show that more women (55%, n=27) spent more time on care work at home compared to men (43%, n=12).

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Survey Responses

The last four questions of my survey were open-ended qualitative questions to help me better understand respondents' experiences and concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their work. The questions were as follows:

1. Do you feel the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your career trajectory in academia?
2. Do you have any other pandemic concerns related to your work?
3. Do you have any post-pandemic concerns related to your work?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The responses from these questions were coded both deductively, in relation to my research questions, and inductively, as any new salient themes emerged. The key themes that emerged from my data analysis were: 1) Impaired research productivity, 2) Increased workload demands, endless work hours, and constant availability, 3) Feeling drained and disengaged, 4) Feeling unrecognized and underappreciated by university management, and 5) Benefits from changes to work structure.

Impaired Research Productivity

A recurring theme for faculty members' career trajectories focused on how their research productivity was negatively impacted during the pandemic. Some respondents reported that COVID-19 had a negative impact on research activities with one female[4] professor describing the impact of the pandemic as "Drained my energy; slowed my research projects and

[4] For the purpose of this dissertation the terms "female" and "male" are being used as adjectives (e.g., a female professor, a male participant, etc.) when appropriate and relevant to describe participants who self-identified as women or men respectively.

publications" (SP40). This decrease in research outputs was due to several reasons that included lower student productivity, lack of travel due to lockdowns and restrictions that limited conferences, networking opportunities, and fieldwork, as well as increases in teaching and care work responsibilities. Several respondents reported that the stress and disconnect of students being supervised to produce research work during the pandemic impacted faculty members' own research productivity. During the pandemic, respondents reported that some graduate students conducting research were more stressed and had challenges with staying engaged. For one female professor, this resulted in fewer publications and loss of grant funds for projects that could not be completed due to COVID-19 restrictions (SP38). A professor who preferred not to self-identify their gender reported "My students couldn't work in the environment that I created for them, stalling them for some time. Some students even left academia. This affects my research output and career trajectory" (SP24). Another female professor reported that the increase in care work for students had an impact on research productivity and was a source of stress stating:

> There is an unacknowledged significant increase in the needs of students who experienced mental health concerns as a result of the pandemic, and in the mental health concerns of faculty members themselves. The significant impact on research activities, and continued unpredictability of pandemic life is a largely undiscussed stressor (SP2).

Increases in teaching, service, and care work were also reported by respondents as being a factor in decreased research activities throughout the pandemic, with one female contract faculty member stating "Teaching time increased to a point that I did not pursue any outside research and writing" (SP50). Another female sessional lecturer discussed how it has kept them in the

precarious cycle of contract work "I am even more stuck in the gerbil wheel of contract teaching and less able to get to my research, writing and publishing than before" (SP61) while a female professor discussed the downsides to hybrid work structure:

> I'm worried that hybrid will [be] the worst of both worlds for meetings. One is expected to go to all of them and have 100% attendance, the emails are growing and students really expect immediate response to email questions. If I answer all emails (both students and admin) in a timely manner then I would never do any other work. Finding time to carve out good time for writing research is really hard (SP53).

Another female professor highlighted that the gender difference in research productivity was a concern:

> I fear the result of my reduced research productivity during the pandemic will be fewer future opportunities for e.g. grants, research leaves, internal promotions/chairs, etc. I also fear that the larger trend will disparately impact women and/or others from equity-seeking groups, thereby exacerbating existing patterns of disadvantage (SP23).

Increased Workload Demands, Endless Work Hours, and Constant Availability

Another prominent theme among participant responses was the evolving and increasing work demands that felt "endless," resulting in faculty members experiencing exhaustion and disconnect from academic life. Several respondents talked about the changing work demands and their struggle to keep up while also balancing the evolving situations at home throughout the pandemic with one female professor describing it as:

> The boundaries between work and home have eroded, which brings lots of opportunities and flexibility, but also means that work never seems to end. You can always squeeze in one more task or feel guilty about not squeezing in one more task (SP53).

The increase in workload surrounding teaching was found to be an issue, with faculty reporting that they felt they were spending more time on teaching duties, such as course prep and student emails, compared to how much time was spent on these same tasks pre-pandemic. For example, one female professor recounted:

> An enormous amount of time was required of me to learn new delivery modes, answer innumerable emails, and be available to students a lot more than in the pre-pandemic times (when we used to hold regular office hours). Also, the uncertainty and frequently changed decisions by upper administration, as well as all kinds of "upgrades" to digital platforms and new bureaucratic pathways added additional stress (SP40).

A female sessional lecturer reported that the increase in mental health needs of students had become part of faculty workloads:

> Students are anxious, un-supported, and disconnected. Expecting them to just hop back to class with enthusiasm and engagement is unrealistic--and again, does not acknowledge the huge expectations that are being placed on instructors. I dread the ongoing expectation that instructors will have to 'pick up the slack' in supporting students to weather this ongoing storm of uncertainty (SP44).

One female professor described being unable to slow down and take a break “Things are getting back to normal, but I haven't really had a chance to take a break. So it always feels like you are constantly just going and students don't understand that Faculty are living through the pandemic too” (SP36) while another female professor expressed concerns about endless work hours for student availability and professional development being the norm “I worry that the expectations of constant availability and endless hours dedicated to professional development and new skills learning have become normalized (especially from unit/department level administrators)” (SP40).

Conflicts between work and home life were at the forefront of respondent’s minds especially for those who had care responsibilities at home. For example, one female professor wrote that “I feel very tired! It has been exhausting being a full-time caregiver during the pandemic and trying to maintain a productive research program while doing a good job at delivering online teaching” (SP68). Another female professor discussed how COVID-19 has impacted their career trajectory due to the struggle of balancing work tasks alongside taking on the primary role of homeschooling their children and doing household chores:

> My research program had been in a ramp-up phase following intensive years of childcare (my kids were finally more independent, and I had finally figured out a suitable paid-help arrangement at home) and this crashed to a halt during the pandemic. An important research trip was cancelled. I lost 1/3 of my sabbatical time as 2019-2020 was my sabbatical year and when the pandemic hit, my spouse got sick, kids were home managing online school and social isolation and for a good chunk of time I was 100% devoted to caregiving and housekeeping. As it happens, I have found it very hard to

> bounce back from that. My kids need a lot of intensive caring, meaning lots of focused time spent with them, and I am not great at balancing this with focused research/thinking/reading/writing time. Administrative work, teaching, committee work have all been very busy, lots of adjustments, and it has been hard to keep the research focus. So, my productivity in publicly viewable ways (publications) has been very low. I think this slows my career advancement, in terms of recognition, networking outside the university, building a record, etc. Plus, some colleagues and [Ontario University] then use this metric as a basis for respect/disrespect - which stinks (SP29).

A male professor described the struggle to stay up to date on university policy changes and the evolving structure of work while balancing care work responsibilities for both homeschooling their children and providing elder care:

> The work demands since Feb 2020 have been endless, and increasing. Just to stay on top of policy changes (re teaching accommodations, research, virtual vs hybrid vs onsite work), to implement them, then to adapt again and again, and to support students and staff in doing the same, has been exhausting. This has occurred as I have had to do exactly the same in relation to my three children's schooling, and in relation to the care requirements for three elders in my family- for whom I am primary care giver for two (my wife is the primary care giver for one) (SP20).

Another male professor with care responsibilities expressed how a poor work-life balance has resulted in them needing to catch up in their home responsibilities and homeschooling due to focusing too much on work:

> Feeling failure of my two young kids. So involved in work, that their homeschooling online was a loss of significant early years for them. Now playing a lot of catch up and repairing their learning loss on top of work (SP85).

A female professor with young children reported that they were unable to receive accommodations from the institution during periods of school lockdowns:

> I expressed concern that I would struggle to teach in-person classes in Winter 2022 due to elementary school closures and COVID screening-related absences, which resulted in childcare gaps that fell to me. I was told that these concerns were regarded by senior administration as "speculative." I received this response at a time when these challenges were very real, present, and ongoing for me — and as it turns out, I was entirely correct in my assessment. Relatedly, [Ontario University's] return to in-person learning was timed and communicated in a manner that seemed entirely oblivious to the fact that many [university] community-members have unvaccinated children under the age of 5. My feelings of satisfaction and trust in [the university] as an employer have decreased dramatically over the course of the pandemic (SP23).

Lastly, one female professor discussed how they felt that elder care was not a priority for the university in terms of providing accommodation for academics taking on this form of care work:

> Because elder care and end of life care especially for elders is not a priority for our institution, this work has to be done while working full time which directly impacts the time we have to do our research work especially - this is frustrating because I see my colleagues with children getting course release and all kinds of support from chairs on up

> to the decanal level and at our union whereas the plight of those of us with elders in LTC we are primary caregivers for especially (the most vulnerable populations during COVID) is not a concern for anyone at [Ontario University] (SP82).

Another source of pandemic related work concerns that was brought up by survey respondents centered around changes in structures of work and the loss of agency over how courses were delivered. For example, one female professor stated that the "University has significantly increased restrictions on how I teach and control over what had been considered part of academic freedom before the pandemic" (SP69), while another female professor reported they were concerned about:

> The sudden overreach on the part of administration in terms of controlling how we teach, the delivery, the expectation of us doing hybrid or someone juggling the needs of students who want to be in the classroom and those who do not (SP77).

Respondents also discussed the increase in workload and evolving structure of work and how this has influenced their perspectives on taking on any potential leadership and/or administrative roles in the future. One professor who self-identified as non-binary reported that "work doesn't feel the same. What is the university? is it really just a series of online meetings, classes, tasks? Hard to imagine committing myself to any admin or leadership roles when there is so much uncertainty" (SP58). Similarly, a female professor wishing to maintain a good work-life balance described feeling less motivated to take on more roles and work within the institution:

> I feel less inspired in my research and teaching; I do not feel connected to the [Ontario University] community and I don't really feel a desire to reconnect in a way that would be

> ideal. I enjoy the extra time I have had to be with my family during the pandemic (even though many days were challenging) and it feels overwhelming to think about throwing myself fully back into my work and missing out on time with my family. My job was all consuming before the pandemic and I don't know how to fully re-engage with the [OU] community without losing balance with my family. This has made me feel less inspired to apply for grants or take on leadership roles in the university (SP68).

The gendered effect of these increased demands both at home and at work was also discussed by respondents. One female professor discussed how these increased demands often fell on women academics and racialized women:

> Colleagues with young kids had it very very tough – our 3 kids are older, my spouse shares childcare, but for others it was very tough. Also, faculty were expected to be understanding etc. but I had colleagues who themselves suffer from anxiety, depression – asking them to do more, more, more to be adaptive to a wide range of student circumstances, more and more responsive to students etc. was frankly absurd. They were just holding themselves together. And the psycho-affective work falls on women faculty and racialized women faculty much more than others (SP14).

Another female professor echoed this sentiment and pointed out that the increased service workload was being disproportionately placed on women academics “The service load falls more heavily on women and minorities in my department. Some senior male colleagues do little to no service work and actively avoid any collegial responsibilities” (SP75).

Feeling Drained and Disengaged

Respondents described negative health effects of experiencing burnout and feeling disconnected and devalued during the pandemic. This was due to the toll of workload demands during the pandemic while receiving little recognition for their work and support for their own health and job security, with one male professor writing that they "Hope the consideration of academics as actual human beings in productivity reporting isn't lost as we exit the pandemic" (SP83). A female professor stated, "I am tired all the time and don't feel like my work matters because of the state of the world" (SP32). While another professor who self-identified as non-binary reported that "work was stripped of most human contact. I felt like I was just part of a machine" (SP58). Another professor who preferred to not self-identify their gender described the loss of in-person social contact due to public health restrictions: "I think not being able to visit family and friends was awful, especially those of us who are far from home. This has not gone away... and it impacts everything" (SP47). Another female professor discussed feeling burnout and resentment towards the institution from work demands of providing increasing support to students while not receiving any clear guidance on how the impacts of the pandemic and its effect on lower research productivity will be evaluated for tenure:

> I do not feel the [Ontario University] tenure stop-out for people impacted by COVID has been administered in a transparent or helpful fashion; I am not at all confident that it has actually impacted how my tenure and promotion file is being assessed, and I have been given to understand that my research output was directly compared to that of colleagues who did not require a COVID stop-out. I have feelings of resentment and burn-out after years of being extolled to provide maximum support to students while receiving minimal institutional support. I was, for example, deeply offended by the holiday message from

> the [university] President thanking those of us who could not take time off for the holidays for our dedication; I could not take time off because I had to finish my grading after spending most of the grading period caring for sick family members and recovering from illness myself (SP23).

Faculty members not only had to deal with their own health issues but also those of students which resulted in an increase in care work especially during the transition from remote teaching to in-person classes with one professor who self-identified as non-binary reporting that "the handling of the back to campus in winter 2022 seemed to be extra-stressful. I became ill more than once. My students were ill and very stressed out in ways that were difficult to support them in" (SP66). While another female professor reported that they felt unequipped to handle the mental health needs of students:

> Concerned about masking policy and health/safety policy on campus. Student demands for mental health care and accommodations by email seem to remain high. I want to help students, but I cannot (am not trained and have no desire to) manage their mental health care (I am aware of resources and provide these to students, but they are often not interested) (SP22).

While the university's policy was for faculty members to direct students' mental health concerns to institutional resources, it is clear that many faculty ended up shouldering this burden often at the cost of their own mental and physical well-being.

Some survey respondents expressed health concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and returning back to in-person work without proper ventilation and unclear masking and vaccination policies. For example, one female professor stated that "top-down decision making which forced us back into face-to-face teaching - without provisions for social distance, etc." (SP84) was a concern. Another female professor reported:

> I have concerns about returning to a campus with no vaccine and booster mandate and no mask mandate. I think that course directors should have had more control over options to teach remotely, at least in part. Also, the classroom technology is abysmal and we still have to try to teach making accommodations for students who get sick or have other issues getting to campus. Every high school student in Ontario could attend remotely during the pandemic- I think we should have done more to offer flexibility, although I agree that we are not an online university (SP62).

Feeling Unrecognized and Underappreciated by University Management

Another recurring theme was that there were limited institutional supports focused on faculty's needs. One female contract faculty member reported that they felt "devalued" as the focus of the university was on meeting student needs, with little recognition for faculty needs, stress, or care responsibilities (SP50). Another female professor stated that, while the university provided little resources, workload expectations were business as usual, explaining:

> I don't think that the University at all levels were particularly supportive of work demands during the pandemic. You were still expected to complete the same level of work and in some cases it was increased to better support students, but there was no support for staff (SP36).

Another female part-time faculty member discussed that the additional workload of care work and flexibility expected by the administration was unpaid, creating an issue surrounding exploitation:

> I am a 'part-time', sessional instructor. We were consistently told by administration throughout the pandemic to support students and to be flexible. Indeed, these demands from administration continue. However, we are not compensated for the extra time this involves--for example, training and learning how to use technology to provide accessible options for students; providing flexible deadlines for students, which lengthens the grading period, etc., etc. Receiving nothing but cheerful messages from [the Ontario University] administration to 'keep it up', but with no compensation for this extra work is frankly another example of the exploitation of workers at the post-secondary level (SP44).

Other faculty members also reported feeling that the university's focus was on creating more administrative support and failed to acknowledge the increased workload or burnout experienced by faculty members. For example, one female professor stated that:

> The University has made no effort whatsoever to acknowledge or thank faculty for the increased demands in time and commitments during the pandemic. Not even an email. The morale of faculty members is very low. I have heard of other universities focusing in a kind of COVID recovery related to morale and burnout-- planning a luncheon for example. Meanwhile, the University was saving tons of money on closed offices, they have been spending it in the wrong places -- on expanding decanal oversight for example.

> We have had to fight tooth and nail to get proper admin support staff for our program and we have been made to re-do our websites with utterly inadequate support (SP81).

Benefits from Changes to Work Structure

For some survey respondents, the changes to work structure and transition to remote work had a positive effect on academics' work and home lives. Some faculty members reported that they were able to move and live with family while remotely working for the university. This change in work structure was especially beneficial for one female professor who was then able to receive help with childcare from family and described their whole work-life balance as "radically changed" (SP15) in a positive way. Some professors also reported that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted them to relocate and change academic institutions to live closer to family (SP60, SP83). This resulted in better work-life balance and feeling happier and more satisfied with work. Some respondents saw an increase in research productivity as their work became "in great demand" (SP42) during the pandemic while others were able to develop a new community of networks online that created more opportunities for research (SP53). One male professor reported that they were able to better balance work and childcare responsibilities when working remotely: "Online meetings are a huge positive. It means more ways to provide childcare at home, less time at the physical office" (SP85). Another female contract faculty member called for more remote work stating "There should be more online options. University and Province is focused on getting back to 'normal' rather than creating a new normal" (SP50). Overall, the transition from in-person work to more online options created opportunities for work to be more accessible, allowing faculty members to spend more time with their family and to better balance

work-life responsibilities, by removing the barrier of travel and the requirement of having to live local to the university.

In summary, my quantitative survey findings showed that, in my sample of 85 survey respondents, there was a gender difference in stress, burnout, and work-life balance, with more women academics experiencing higher levels of stress and overall burnout and poorer work-life balance compared to their male colleagues. The main sources of stress were reported by respondents as teaching, service work, and lack of time. I found similar trends in my qualitative survey data where respondents described concerns with the increased time spent on care work responsibilities, teaching, and supporting students with mental health needs as key areas contributing to less research productivity. These work demands and conflicts with care responsibilities increased stress levels and feelings of exhaustion among affected faculty members. Some respondents also reported that changes to work structure during the pandemic, especially the increased flexibility surrounding remote work, created unforeseen benefits, such as the ability to better balance work and family commitments, which resulted in more work and life satisfaction.

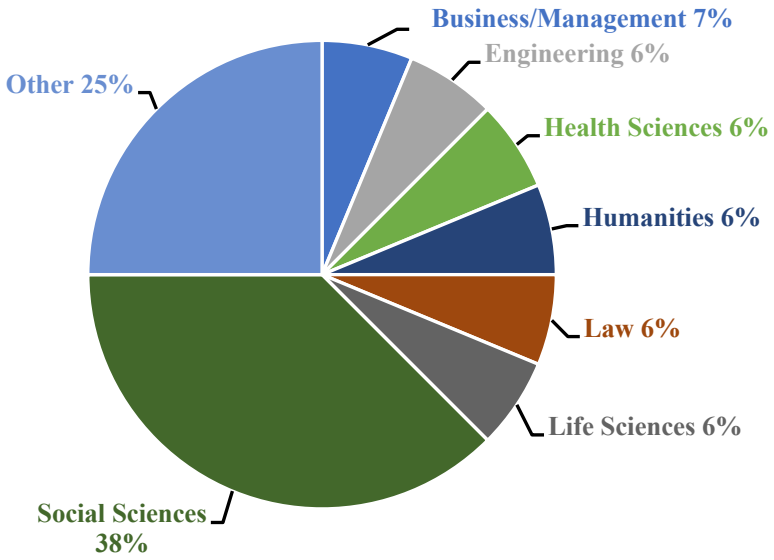
In the next section, I present my findings from my follow-up interviews.

Chapter Six: Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview Findings

From my survey sample of 85 respondents, a total of 16 faculty members participated in a follow-up interview. As expected, the demographics of this follow-up interview sample is very similar to the distribution of my survey respondents. Most of my interview participants held full-time faculty positions, with 44 per cent of them being tenured (25% professors and 19% associate professors) and 25 per cent of them being tenure-track assistant professors. The majority of my participants similarly reported a personal income range and a household income of $100,001 and over. Most of my interview sample identified as women (63%). The largest group of my interview participants were in the field of Social Sciences (38%). Most of my participants reported that they had resided in Ontario during the pandemic (75%). Further details are provided in the following sections.

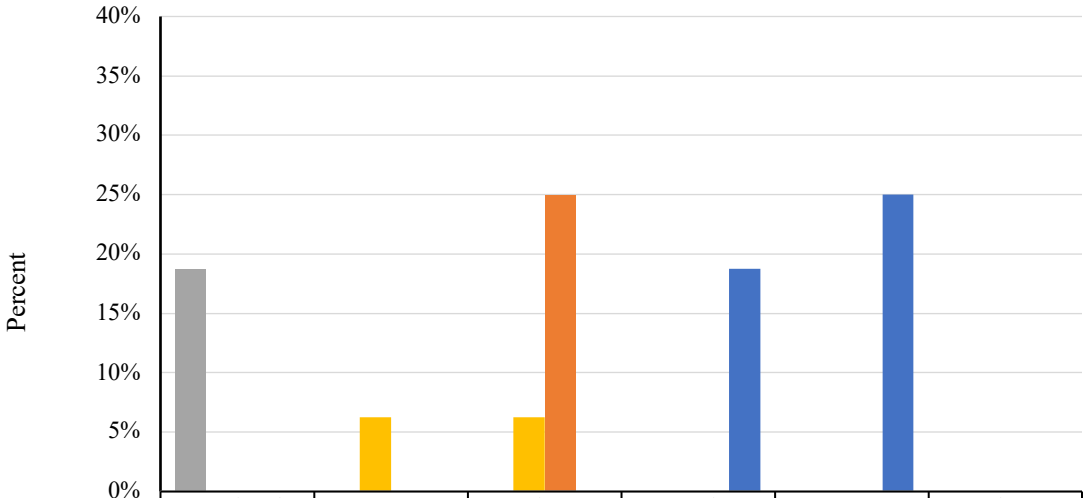
Demographics of Interview Participants

Figure 15: Interview Participants' Academic Discipline/Field of Study



As shown above in Figure 15, Social Sciences was selected most often by interview participants as their academic discipline/field of study (n=6). Business/Management, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Life Sciences each had one participant. The four participants that chose 'other' were prompted to specify their field of study in a textbox. Each respondent wrote Biology, Education and Language Acquisition, Global Health, and Kinesiology.

Figure 16: Interview Participants' Current Faculty Appointment



	Sessional Lecturer	CLA	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor	Professor Emeritus
Part-time	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
CLA-contract	0%	6%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Full-time tenure track	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Full-time tenured	0%	0%	0%	19%	25%	0%

Figure 16 shows that a quarter of the faculty members in my interview sample were full-time tenure-track assistant professors (n=4) and another quarter were full-time tenured professors (n=4). Participants also consisted of tenured associate professors (n=3), part-time sessional lecturers (n=3), and faculty with contractually limited appointments (CLA) (n=2). Of the 16 interview participants, 11 participants indicated they were in professorial stream, two were in teaching stream, one was a lecturer, one was a contract instructor, and one indicated not

applicable. Six participants indicated that they had held an administrative position in the last three years. Four participants had held director positions, one was an undergraduate program coordinator, and one specified they had only been a program coordinator over the last year (2021–2022).

I summarized the socio-demographics of my interview participants in Table 8 below with the counts and percentages.

Table 8: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

Characteristics	**Count (n=16)**	**Percentage**
Ethnicity/Race		
Arab	0	0%
Black	1	6%
Chinese	1	6%
Filipino	0	0%
Indigenous	0	0%
Japanese	0	0%
Korean	0	0%
Latin American	1	6%
South Asian	1	6%
Southeast Asian	0	0%
West Asian	0	0%
White	12	75%
Other	0	0%
Multiracial	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Gender		
Man	6	38%
Non-binary	0	0%
Transgender	0	0%
Two-Spirit	0	0%
Woman	10	63%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%

2SLGBTQ+		
Yes	0	0%
No	14	88%
Prefer not to answer	2	13%
Disability		
Yes	3	19%
No	13	81%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Age		
Less than 20 years	0	0%
20–29	0	0%
30–39	4	25%
40–49	3	19%
50–59	4	25%
60–69	5	31%
70 years and over	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Education (Terminal Degree)		
Bachelors	1	6%
Masters	1	6%
Doctorate	14	88%
Other	0	0%
Marital Status		
Single	2	13%
Married or Common-law	13	81%
Separated	1	6%
Divorced	0	0%
Widowed	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Income Range		
Less than $20,000	0	0%
$20,001–$40,000	1	6%
$40,001–$60,000	1	6%
$60,001–$80,000	0	0%
$80,001–$100,000	1	6%

$100,001 and over	13	81%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%
Household Income Range		
Less than $20,000	0	0%
$20,001–$40,000	0	0%
$40,001–$60,000	0	0%
$60,001–$80,000	0	0%
$80,001–$100,000	1	6%
$100,001 and over	15	94%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%

Table 8 shows that the majority of interview participants were not racialized (n=12) and were women (n=10). Most interview participants were married/common law (n=13), and most had a household income of $100,001 and over (n=15). In combination, there were seven women who were both married/common law and had a household income of $100,001 and over. The majority of participants had a doctorate (n=14) and the age range of the interview participants were evenly spread, with the largest age group being between 60–69 years of age (n=5).

Next, I present the caregiver status of my interview participants in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Caregiver Status of Interview Participants

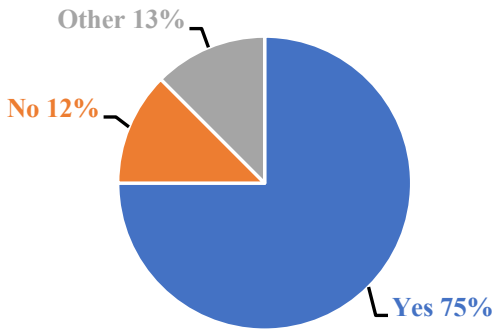
Care Work Responsibilities	**Count (n=16)**	**Percentage**
Do you have dependent(s) in your household?		
Yes	4	25%
No	12	75%
Other	0	0%
Please indicate if your dependent(s) is/are:		
Child(ren) under 18	4	25%
Adult(s) in need of care	0	0%
Both child(ren) and adult(s)	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Please indicate your caregiver status:		
I am the primary caregiver	0	0%
I share caregiving duties with another person(s)	4	25%
I am not the primary caregiver	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Do you have any caregiving responsibilities outside of your household?		
Yes	6	38%
No	10	63%
Other	0	0%
Please indicate if your dependent(s) is/are:		
Child(ren) under 18	1	6%
Adult(s) in need of care	5	31%
Both child(ren) and adult(s)	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Please indicate your caregiver status:		
I am the primary caregiver	1	6%
I share caregiving duties with another person(s)	4	25%
I am not the primary caregiver	1	6%
Other	0	0%

Out of 16 interview participants, four participants indicated that they provided care for children under the age of 18 and that they shared care work responsibilities. Six participants also indicated that they had care work responsibilities outside their household, with the majority (n=5) indicating that their care work responsibilities were for adults in need of care and four out of these five stated that they shared care work duties with another person.

Geographical Representation of Interview Participants

Figure 17: Interview Participants Who Resided in Ontario, Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic



As shown in Figure 17, the majority of interview participants indicated that their primary residence during the pandemic was in Ontario (n=12). Two participants indicated 'no' and each specified that they resided in Quebec and Texas, respectively. For the two participants that selected 'other,' one stated they had lived in both Ontario and France, and one explained that they had moved to Ontario during the pandemic from the USA.

Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

Next, I present my findings from my discussions with these faculty members. There were several key themes that emerged from my data analysis of my semi-structured interviews: 1) Gendered nature of work-life balance and care work, 2) Impaired social connections, 3) Broken institutional communications, and 4) Unexpected gains in terms of accessibility. I discuss each theme in more detail in the following sections.

Gendered Nature of Work-Life Balance and Care Work

In my discussions with interview participants, it became clear that some faculty members' experiences working at the university during the pandemic were shaped by expectations based on traditional gender roles placed on them by the institution, students and colleagues, and the gendered organization of work in academia. Participants reported that care work both at home and within the institution often went unrecognized and unsupported during the pandemic. This additional work that was experienced by women academics in my study resulted in them feeling more stressed, overwhelmed, and exhausted as they struggled to balance work and life responsibilities.

Women participants who primarily provided care work in their household reported a poor work-life balance due to the additional work of childcare and elder care. For example, one female professor described their struggle with juggling home and work responsibilities and shared that they felt:

> Totally overwhelmed and failing in all aspects of life. Like not being able to support my kids in the way they needed support, not being able to sort of keep up on family stuff and definitely feeling like work was just overwhelming and I was dropping balls all over the place and I didn't know how to keep up (IP10).

Another female contract faculty member reported they were not able to take time to engage in self-care "I did not look after myself well. I was just too busy and too busy caring for others" (IP5). Academic women who were providing elder care also reported poor work-life balance and challenges with maintaining work productivity (IP14, IP15). For example, one female professor

reported that elder care during the pandemic increased especially when a parent was hospitalized:

> The care part, at least early in the pandemic, was much more because my father was living in a facility that was a retirement facility … but they weren't allowed to leave for a number of months … but I would bring him groceries and go visit him through the glass doors of his home and just have a cell phone, and you know, we were always close. But that was really difficult. And then he was hospitalized in September of 2020 and so that took all of my time. I was at the hospital with him every single day because we were only allowed one person, so it was me and I don't think I did any real academic work in September 2020 (IP15).

Another female professor experienced the loss of a parent they were providing care for and reported that the exhaustion from providing elder care along with the university's expectations regarding returning to work left no room for work-life balance:

> It was really difficult. It was really challenging. It was exhausting. You know there's no way to have work-life balance. There's no support, there's no mitigation from the institution, right? … Okay, I just want you to think about it. Your parent dies after you've been taking care of them. You're their power of attorney. You have all these responsibilities. Not only are you grieving but then you are told, "Your time is up, now get back to work." So that's what it's like, right? You're just like a zombie and we're also just labouring meat to the institution. Like we're not people (IP14).

Academic women with care work responsibilities also expressed frustration that this lived experience of providing care work and the additional workload that they took on went unrecognized by the administration. For example, one female professor explained that the male senior leadership saw the pandemic as an opportunity to become more productive with research work, disregarding the challenges that faculty members, especially women, with care work duties were experiencing:

> So there was one meeting I went to, right at the beginning, and it was a meeting of all the research directors and this VPRI, Vice President of Research and Innovation, so it's all the top researchers at the university … and a lot of them have huge grants and stuff like that and it's from all over the university so it's like Science and Engineering, you know, those vision people … and the VPRI was talking about how great this was right at the beginning of COVID, but at this time I'm not going to school. [They were saying] how productive it's been, how people are going to be able to get more publishing and research grants and then other kind of men in the group were nodding and agreeing … I was just sitting there, like "What, what is this person talking about?" and finally this woman was like "I'm sorry, I have … two high school boys. I spend all day trying to make sure they're on school and not on video games. I am exhausted and I can barely survive, I do not know what you are talking about, doing extra work" and all the women agreed, and then of course the male [speaker] was like "Oh no, no, yes of course, of course, you are right, we understand." But it's like, they don't, right? Like yeah you should totally spend lots more time because you have all this time to write grants so I thought there was a lot more disparity around that for sure (IP10).

Participants also reported that pressure from the university administration to keep up work productivity resulted in back-to-back Zoom meetings that would not have been scheduled in pre-pandemic times. This resulted in a blurring of work and home responsibilities as faculty members struggled to find a balance. For example, the same female professor from above who was frustrated with endless Zoom meetings chose to take a feminist stance against faculty being required to be present in every meeting by having their camera on as they did household chores while attending meetings:

> Now it's like "Oh yeah you can finish your comps … at 12:00 and make our meeting at 12:01. Because we can't have the meeting without you because we have to have 100% [attendance]". Everyone has to be in the meeting and cameras are on. So, I did try to go through this period once where I was taking the feminist stand where I was overtly folding laundry in front of the camera because I don't have to write everything down. I'm listening, I'm here. But too much is happening and this is the only way I can kind of balance my life and, as a tenured professor, knowing I can do that stuff, right? But that didn't really last very long and it kind of felt very stupid so I kind of stopped quickly. So now my camera's on and I don't fold laundry! (IP10)

Other women faculty reported that working remotely improved their work-life balance as they were able to better organize their day without the need to travel, making it easier to get small household tasks done throughout the day and take breaks in the comfort of their home (IP12, IP15). One female professor also expressed that the online nature of remote work and meetings made it easier to balance childcare and work after returning from maternity leave (IP11).

Participants also reported an increase in the amount of care work within the institution being undertaken to maintain the "status quo" of work productivity which disproportionality fell to women academics. For example, a female professor described the ongoing gendered disparity of service and care work in their department during the pandemic, with women taking on a lot of unrecognized work managing emotional labour:

> There is a gendered aspect to service work, there is a gendered aspect to supervision, and I mean, we know women's role in emotional labour, right? And the pandemic, a huge amount of it was emotional labour, right? Managing other people's expectations and stress and terrified students and terrified international students and our frontline teaching staff, right? Our CUPE members are teaching assistants who had to go back in person before we did because our Union's stronger and as faculty we have more rights, so a lot of that fell to women. There were a number of my colleagues who spent hours reassuring people and trying to change teaching assignments and let people teach online or allowing them to be sick and pivot to Zoom. Well, I don't know if my male colleagues did that. And so, I certainly think that if we talk about emotional labour there's a lot of that during the pandemic and that was not recognized at all. There is no kind of recognition that some people worked constantly, and other people sent out a couple of emails (IP4).

When asked further about what they would like to see done to reduce the emotional labour that is disproportionately taken on by women in academia, the participant replied that this was an ongoing problem that would require a shift in traditional gender norms explaining:

> I don't know. It's really frustrating. I'd like us to expect more from men, and not take for granted "Oh, I'm not very good at that," "I don't know, my graduate student he's not

> doing very well, don't know why. Maybe you could fix them." And so, I don't know what that takes, though. Does it take strong leaders who try and divide the work more equally? Does it take different types of expectations where, traditionally, we've let men skate and now we, I don't know, try and demand more from them? Do we reward men who are more engaged in emotional labour? Because several of especially my younger male colleagues are, and that's great. I mean, I think it's a classic thing of people realize how they can get out of doing work, and they do that, right? They might deliberately act in a way, or deliberately mess up in a way, and be like "Oh, you don't want me in charge of that anymore" (IP4).

This gendered aspect of service work was also observed by a male professor who described being able to say no to service work that conflicted with research time whereas he observed other female colleagues did not feel that they were able to:

> I think that those kind of socially driven expectations … all those stuff they talk about, the hidden labour stuff in academia, you know, where men are given [more leeway] and this is certainly something I've experienced and seen and know of it. It's a whole lot easier for me to say, "No, I'm not doing that" and "Got to do my research project" to a service commitment or something like that than it is for a lot of my female colleagues that are, they're still like, experiencing, feeling more pressure to be that support system for other people so they are given caregiving burden (IP8).

Another salient finding was the gender bias that students placed on women faculty compared to men. For example, one female professor described how students confiding in them about their circumstances also affected their own mental health:

> I mean, there's gendered expectations from students too. They expect their women instructors to be more helpful, more nurturing, more emotionally available, that kind of thing. I've had students who'd want to tell me really traumatic things that have happened to them. And I have to stop them and say, first of all, yeah, you shouldn't have to tell me this, I'm just going to give you an extension, don't worry about that. Secondly, I can't handle this, I'm not trained, and I don't want to know this horrible, horrible story because then I'm affected. Oh, that sounds callous to you, but neither of us, right, are in the right position. And so there is, I think, gendered expectations where my students do want to confide in me, do want some type of different relationship than with some of my male colleagues. And if you don't know where to draw the line, and we all never do, right? This is something we try and figure out along the way. That can be really difficult too (IP4).

Participants also reported spending more time addressing students' needs which added to the mental load of women academics. For example, when asked why women academics may be more stressed, a female professor described spending more time on student care and mentoring than her male colleagues:

> [Women] have all the mental load, they do more caregiving work in all aspects of the job, right? They care more for their families, for their children, they organize the household, and they also care more for students, to be honest. If I compare myself with my male

> colleagues, I spend way more time kind of helping, mentoring, and listening to students. And just even adapting my teaching and my way of relating to them to the fact that they may be experiencing stress and struggling, right? So that's conducive to anxiety, in a way. It takes more space in my head and my emotional life to do that too. I think a lot of women are in the same situation. They felt a responsibility to go the extra mile to be there for students. So many of my female colleagues kind of organize online events to discuss and make sure that faculty remain in touch with students and organize all those things. The men don't [do this] out of a sense of care. So, I think, yeah, if you add that to the home, caregiving, and the mental load, they are more anxious (IP9).

Relatedly, the lack of acknowledgment of the time and energy that faculty spend on care work within the institution was a source of stress for participants and affected their health. For example, one female professor discussed how the supervision of students required of full-time faculty often receives little recognition when it comes to workload expectations. When asked if this additional workload of providing care to students affected their health and levels of stress, the participant replied:

> Yeah, [I am] definitely more tired … more stressed, more tired, more headaches, grouchier. And I think what's really frustrating too is that's not kind of appreciated. There's no real, you know, I don't know if you know how we rank for things like tenure and promotion. You get research. You get teaching. You get service. There's no spot for graduate students. So, we can spend and should, right? Spend concerted quality time with graduate students reviewing and guiding and doing all of these things but doing it, well, you don't get any recognition and that recognition is sometimes necessary to show the

> administration just how much more you're working. Because it's not really something that shows up on your performance [review] to say, listen I've got 5 graduate students therefore I just have to do less service elsewhere, right? Because this takes up so much time, so much energy. So that's been a perennial complaint because it's just seen as this invisible time for the administration but it's so important and so that can really be part of the reason you feel so tired and so frustrated is because you spend this time, and you're like, yeah, that graduate [student] is really coming along, the project's really going well. And now I have to return to all of this other service work that I've been assigned because what I'm doing over here isn't recognized (IP4).

Impaired Social Connections

Impaired social connections during the pandemic was a recurring theme experienced by academics in my interviews. These lack of social connections between colleagues and between faculty and their students, were described by academics as challenging and left them feeling isolated. For example, one male professor described their experience with remote work as:

> [Remote work is] sort of the two sides of the coin where having a separation from work was in many ways a sense of relief and it allowed me to disconnect. In some ways it meant it was hard to stay connected and not to stop, keep things going and it was stressful to try and keep track of all the stuff that was going on without tangible physical reminders or interactions that linked stuff together (IP8).

Interview participants also reported missing social interactions with colleagues that would have organically occurred pre-pandemic. For example, one female sessional lecturer reported that the lack of informal social connection with colleagues made them feel isolated and alone.

> It is really isolating [working remotely]. You have virtually no contact with your colleagues. Those chats in the hallway they're not there. With those chats comes things like reassurances or “I can do that for you” or you might want to meet someone so none of that happens [while working remotely], you're just completely on your own (IP12).

A male professor reported how meetings over Zoom still resulted in a loss of social interaction among colleagues:

> [When] you're at work in a face-to-face [setting], you have colleagues next door. You step out of your office, you talk to your colleagues, "Hey, how's it going? What's happening?" Totally random thoughts. That interaction didn't exist. The only time you had interaction like that is if you scheduled a Zoom meeting with some people. But we weren't doing that, like you wouldn't just go "Oh!” That's just not normal. Meetings, yeah. But in meetings, they weren't like face-to-face meetings. In an [in-person] departmental meeting there's 50 colleagues there. You bump into people, you talk about whatever. When you're on Zoom and there's 50 little squares on your screen you don't interact because everybody can hear what you're saying. When you're in a big meeting, you and I can have a conversation and the person next to us doesn't know what's going on. So that was entirely different as well, and I would say in this direction, not a positive change, a negative kind of change (IP1).

The impaired social connection and lack of informal communication was brought up by many participants as being less comfortable and personal. For example, one male professor discussed that the lack of social connection among colleagues decreased research networking opportunities:

> That was the tricky part, people that I knew that I had projects [with] we could keep going by email but it was that same thing, everything was reduced to just work. Collaboration is what makes collegiality fun and interesting and meaningful and that went away. Zoom meetings are not the same. And with the lack of in-person conferences and things like that, all those informal times when you just bounced ideas, everything turned into a scheduled meeting that had a predictable topic and people were Zoomed out so we kept it short but we didn't have informal chats in the hallway or "Oh that's interesting I didn't hear about that, yeah we could do something on that." So, I think it turned collaboration for that period of time from being an inspiring fun part of the academic job into just more work with just more people that I owed stuff to. It became an obligation (IP8).

Another female professor described attempting to set up social interactions on Zoom but that these initiatives became less frequent as faculty members found themselves being too overwhelmed with spending so many hours online:

> For colleagues, it was hard to have the same level of closeness or collegiality because people are just busy. We started … doing some Zoom drinks or Zoom dates at the beginning, but then you just realized you were teaching all day and you were spending twelve hours on Zoom. It was way too much. So, I think everyone was just tired and that

was really hard to keep up. And the people who are more social have really felt that and still feel that (IP4).

These initiatives varied by department as another female professor reported that, within their own department, social interactions were limited to larger meetings with a total loss of social connection within their own department, so they had to rely on faculty level meetings:

> So with colleagues it was terrible. Nothing happened. I went to faculty council and it was … the time where I saw my colleagues or heard about what was going on, and the decisions we had to make as a college … It kept me connected a bit but it was once a month or less, but with my immediate colleagues in the department, nothing. We never met, we barely exchanged emails. It was two years of silence (IP9).

Many participants expressed that there was a disconnect with the formalized way that instructors were forced to connect with students during remote teaching. For example, a female sessional lecturer described how communications with students over Zoom felt very "one-directional," with students focusing on communicating with professors over email to express their concerns. According to this participant, this trend created additional workload for faculty in which it felt like communicating with students was never ending:

> So, I felt like it was very one-directional [Zoom communication] and if the students responded, they tended to respond to me, not to each other. That was really … kind of heartbreaking. I just felt like they're not learning from each other, you know what I mean? So there was that. There was far more, there was just sometimes avalanches of emails from students because that became their way of communicating with me. They

> didn't have anything else and so if they didn't ask in class then they would ask me by email and because I would hold virtual office hours, students rarely came. They didn't come to office hours so they either asked me at the end of class, which they still tend to do all the time anyway, or they'd send me emails. Which meant that the boundaries around question time was never [there], like they were gone. So there were always emails of students asking questions, and [in] the beginning in particular, like that first couple of weeks, it was just like this flood of anxiety. They were all about, "What's going on?" "What's happening?", just really stressed out emails from students for those first few weeks after lockdown started in March 2020. And I just found, it was kind of excruciating. I realized pretty quickly I had to write emails that I could post for the whole class, generic "This is how this is going to work" [emails] so that I wasn't repeating myself over and over and over again (IP12).

Furthermore, faculty members also reported challenges connecting with students due to the nature of Zoom online classes, where students would not turn on their cameras and so faculty were teaching to "a blank screen" and did not feel like they could really get to know students. For example, one male professor discussed the difficulty with virtual interactions during the pandemic especially in the context of addressing student mental health and well-being concerns in large undergraduate classes:

> An additional piece, particularly in the first year, we, as faculty, were constantly being told to take care of your students. Be concerned of their mental health and well-being and those sorts of things. And I think, if you were to check with the undergraduate students I've taught over the years, they will tell you I'm a fairly caring, compassionate kind of

> professor. I talked to them, and that's really difficult to do online, because when you're recording a lecture there's nothing. You're talking to a computer screen, not even talking to one person (IP1).

It was also mentioned by a female professor that providing care work and mentoring was challenging as the lack of informal social interactions were missing and this made it difficult for faculty to check in on graduate students they were supervising as well as other colleagues (IP10). Relatedly, another male professor described how providing informal additional support to students suffered during periods of online work:

> The formality of setting up a Zoom meeting to talk with somebody extra allowed a bit more engagement, but that was few and far between, and probably less than would normally happen with students coming up and chatting after class and then I do that. So, I think it was both a natural constraint about a fully online interactive system (IP8).

In other cases, faculty members found connecting virtually with students in smaller classes worked well. For example, one male professor reported that, for a small graduate class, the online format worked better than when the class had previously been in-person:

> Working on Zoom turned out to be really good with the screen and everything. Everybody could easily see the screen, and we were easily able to talk to people so that actually worked remarkably well. And I thought it was actually better than real life, for that section of that particular small course with just 14 students you see, you've got more on the screen. You can easily address everybody and go through everybody in turn. Each person could have a say … so it worked out quite well (IP2).

Several participants also described how returning to campus affected social connections with students. For example, one female professor described returning to in-person learning as a positive experience with higher student engagement in class, but they observed that the informal social connections more frequent in pre-pandemic times was still missing:

> I noticed it was quite palpable when we came back. We have a graduate seminar in our school and the students were so much more engaged in the graduate seminar when they were back in person, asking questions, and things like that. So that part is different … those chance encounters. My door is usually open, my students, if they were walking down the hall they'd drop in and say hello and ask me a question. It seems like everything had to be a bit more purposeful than pre-pandemic (IP15).

Another female sessional lecturer described that the lack of social interactions between faculty and students continued due to heightened student mental health issues, such as anxiety and stress even once in-person classes started up again, creating additional challenges when teaching:

> So, I went back in February of last year, when, after Omicron kind of subsided, and we could go back to in-person teaching in February [2022]. That was really, really tough. The students were anxious and a lot of them didn't want to come to class. The attendance was poor because they also knew I was going to record and they had five weeks already that were recorded. So, a lot of them just had not been in the habit of coming so I felt that attendance was weak and that was very demoralizing as a professor to see not all your students showing up for class. The other thing, they were anxious and that's hard too. You're sort of in front of a group of students who are dealing with a lot of stress and trauma and you feel that energy in the room (IP12).

Overall, it is clear from the findings that social connections between faculty members and their students suffered especially in large undergraduate classes where the nature of large online Zoom lectures meant numerous blank screens and one-directional communication leading to less student engagement. In comparison, some faculty members reported that connecting virtually worked well in smaller classes with better student engagement. Moreover, the formalized way in which colleagues needed to form social connections during periods of online work resulted in some faculty feeling isolated from a lack of social support and had a negative effect on faculty members' health and well-being.

Broken Institutional Communications

Another prominent theme among my interviews was the tensions between faculty members and the university's COVID-19 policy response that affected working conditions during the pandemic. There were several key issues that were reported by my participants. Firstly, the rapid pivot to online learning left faculty members scrambling to transition their classes to an online format with only a weekend to prepare on their own and with few institutional resources. Secondly, faculty members expressed that the resources faculty were directed to use in the university's communications to support online learning, mental health, and work-life balance did not reflect the reality of the situations that faculty members were experiencing. Thirdly, the policy process of accessing accommodations for care work was reported to be inequitable by some participants who had elder care responsibilities. Lastly, policy communications surrounding the transition back to in-person learning was a source of tension between the university and faculty members who felt that, at times, the health and safety of community members was not the school's priority.

While faculty members understood the need for the institution to switch in-person classes to online instruction in March of 2020, my discussions with participants revealed that this rapid shift in work structure was a key source of tension between faculty and the university administration. Participants described the pivot to online learning at the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020 as being very stressful given that the university quickly implemented this policy response and offloaded the responsibility and execution to faculty and teaching assistants to deal with in such a short time span and without supports. One female professor described the rapid pivot to remote work, which occurred over one weekend, as a "getting by scenario, surviving, inventing solutions" (IP11), while another female professor reported that the lack of resources and support from the university created stress and additional teaching and care work for faculty members and teaching assistants:

> But in terms of teaching that's probably been the biggest thing [the lack of support] because when we first started in 2020, it was that pivot, right? Everyone kept saying "Pivot" as if we're going to quickly do online and things are going to change in 2021 and we will be back to normal. And then it just continued. We didn't design our courses to be online. We didn't get a lot of help in translating to be an online class. So, for a lot of people, including me, it was a lot of trial and error. It was a lot of trying to figure out what students wanted. It was a lot of comforting students because students were panicked, they were scared. They were worried about getting ill. Some of my students had family members die. And it felt like from the university's point of view, continue as normal but in a pandemic situation, online. So, it kind of fell to the faculty and our teaching assistants who are closest to the students to pick up everything. To somehow

> manage students … They still had to pass … It fell to us trying [to] move things along and that was really stressful (IP4).

Faculty members also described how, during the pivot to online work, supporting colleagues was also a source of stress. For example, one female professor reported that:

> It was fairly easy to get organized for myself but for my colleagues who were in different situations and who had different challenges, their questions came to me and that was stressful because a lot of things I had no answers for. And there was no answer from the top and everyone's trying to figure it out (IP11).

This was also echoed by another female professor who described helping colleagues with the growing workload demands of the university during the shift to online teaching:

> Colleagues were really worried. I had colleagues who broke down in meetings, crying. Oh, I had colleagues who, you know, were expressing they didn't know how to do this, they weren't very tech savvy. All of this shift to online teaching really threw them. They were spending hours and hours so you try to comfort them, offer tips, offer to share things with them, help them through Zoom and then on the administrative side, they kept wanting us to do more. You'd log into a department meeting and they'd say here's the Dean's new initiative, they also want us to do this. And that was just, you know, on top of everything, right? You've had a really long teaching day, and you're trying to finish [your research] and then right, the administration wants you to do a lot more (IP4).

Faculty members also discussed that the approach the university took to provide resources in its policy communications was not always helpful as they were often catered to all faculty members and were time consuming when faculty may just need support with a particular issue as reported by one female professor:

> The problem when the university offers supports, it's a webinar or a workshop and I don't have time for a workshop, especially workshops that are always catered to everybody. I don't need to know how to set-up an e-class for chemistry teachers, I need to know only what I need to do and I don't have time to sit through a whole webinar. So, I find those kind of supports frustrating. On the surface they are seemingly helpful but they're actually not that helpful (IP10).

One female professor shared that they did not feel that the university communications regarding work-life balance were sufficient in addressing the increased workload that faculty members took on during the pandemic as the pressures and expectations from the administration were part of the problem of poor work-life balance:

> And I mean universities, for all we talk about good work-life balance, we don't do that. We got the administration … sends out those Wellness Wednesdays emails. Those would send me into a rage every Wednesday during the pandemic because they were so facile right? Take an hour just for yourself, for lunch, and I look at my calendar and, I'm like, I have a lunch meeting that you scheduled, right? And we know companies have these programs so they don't have to do the big structural changes. It would be nice if we actually took ourselves seriously at some point. And when we talk about work-life balance actually did something about it, instead of just sending us an email (IP4).

A female sessional lecturer also expressed their disappointment with the communications sent out by the university and lack of material supports:

> We were dealing with a lot more email, a lot more virtual communication and extra stress around the mode of teaching, and yet I felt the university failed to acknowledge that adequately so we would get all these very chirpy and cheerful emails like, "Oh, you're doing a great job" and "We're all in this together" and "You guys are amazing!" We get these little peppy sort of emails, but it didn't materialize in anything, I felt, you know? … I don't think they adequately acknowledge the stresses of the particulars of teaching online and the correspondence, responding to all the student emails online without some real practical solutions to support us … I also was teaching a course at [another university] during that time and [they] gave a $200 bonus to every instructor. Okay, $200 is not a ton of money but it was helpful. It was also a nice gesture. It was a way to say, "We acknowledge you're working more than you normally do, so here's a little extra money" (IP12).

Another source of tension between faculty and the university administration communications was a lack of recognition and support from the administration about how the shift to online learning and the increase in student's mental health needs was affecting faculty workloads and their own mental health. For example, one female professor described the increase in emails they received from students needing mental health support and counselling and had turned to faculty for support as they were unable to access the university resources in a timely manner:

> So, students typically email me about late assignments or sick family members or the stress they feel. But of course didn't stress skyrocket during the pandemic? And we also

know that students would tell me that when they approach the crisis counseling that there would be delays. Well, they would have to wait weeks and as an instructor you don't have a lot to offer them, right? I can offer them an extension and I can say "Hang in there and take some time and try and deal with it." But as for services, we can really only, as faculty, direct them to other places. We're not trained counselors. We can't offer counseling. I don't have the ability to offer counseling. So, there was a lot of students saying, "I've lost several family members," "I have to maybe travel somewhere for a family funeral," "I'm really, really stressed. I don't know what I'm going to do," and I could say of course I can give you an extension, don't worry about that, but for the rest of everything you're talking to me about, here's some list of what [the university] offers and I hope they can fit you in. But that's all I could do. There's a lot of that type of email, and you don't forget that, right, that people say that they've lost multiple family members. I had students who say they work frontline, Shoppers Drug Mart, or security guard at the airport, and they were worried every day about getting sick. They're worried about the idea of bringing the virus back to the people who live with them and that's something that stays with you. So that type of interaction increased. There's a lot more of it. It took a lot more time and a lot more effort (IP4).

Contract faculty members reported that they felt the demands by the administration for faculty to create and deliver courses for both an online and in-person learning environment, while being flexible and accommodating to students, resulted in increased workloads with no additional compensation (IP5, IP12). This led to sessional faculty taking on unpaid labour in order to meet

university expectations even after their contracts were completed. For example, one female sessional lecturer reported:

> I think the university was trying so hard to support students through it, which is commendable, but they would say things to us like "You must be flexible around deadlines." "You must be flexible around expectations." "You must provide access to your material." So all these things we had to do to ensure students had access, that they could submit in a way that was not overly stressful, like we were kind of working in this trauma-informed framework. What I think the University neglected to do, and this was a really big mistake, I think, was to acknowledge that we were also working in the same trauma. One time, it just kind of slipped a little bit like I can't even remember what I said, just something about COVID in my family or something, and honestly, a few students were like, "Oh!" it dawned on them, "Yes, I too am living in a pandemic," and I remember feeling like this is unbelievable. I felt the University had to take some responsibility in that because it was all about the students. It was about, "You have to support them" and that's where I think, they were not helping us to absorb that. They just said, "Do it" … [but] there's no extra funding. Like I was grading, and this is the thing, it really bothered me, I'm a CUPE instructor, right, I'm not tenured, and so a contract might end at the end of April, I don't get paid anything after that. And yet because of this flexible deadline thing, it meant I was grading exams, grading papers well into May, which was the expectation that I would, but I wasn't getting paid for that, right? The expectation was you're just going to absorb it, and so there was just, the university was doing what it thought was best for the student body, but they weren't putting in place

> supports that would allow us to do that and also stay well, you know? We were being overworked, and nothing was really happening there (IP12).

Some contract faculty reported being out of the loop regarding resources and accommodations provided for care work duties (IP5, IP12). For example, one female contract faculty member stated that they felt isolated and alone trying to balance their elder care responsibilities and paid work:

> I personally felt that I am there for my students over and above, in every capacity. But I didn't always feel my employer was there for me … I understand, my students come first, and they do come first. But there are times that [the university] needs to just be the employer and … let me know what supports are out there for me, what options if I do have to take 4 days to move my mom out of long-term care. I just felt that we all had our own individual struggles. None of us could complain about our own struggles (IP5).

Another female professor discussed their challenges with trying to access care work accommodations during the pandemic for elder care. This participant reported that the policy process requires faculty members to coordinate coverage themselves and, when requesting additional accommodations such as course release, they needed to speak to the Dean directly:

> Our caregiving accommodations are in our collective agreement and, they're basically, you can ask for 4 weeks but you got to go around and find people to cover you during those 4 weeks. I know that there are people who got, who had children … get course release. That was not available to me and in no way, these are people who went and made their individual cases to the Dean (IP14).

This professor also described how the current practice of asking for coverage due to care work responsibilities results in a loss of dignity:

> You have to disclose all this personal stuff to try and get people to do you favours like cover for you or explain why you can't be at a meeting. So, there's the lack of dignity around that, having a system where basically if you have to do any care work, bereavement work, or you yourself are ill, you are obligated to disclose your situation (IP14).

This professor further expressed how during the pandemic, the process of requesting accommodations for care work duties was inequitable as they felt the university administration prioritized childcare over other types of care work such as elder care:

> Well, it's strange, right, because you know you're trying to protect your family, you're also trying to negotiate things with family who are also maybe fed up. But at the same time you need to, like especially for me when it comes to elder care, I have to be super careful not just for my sake that I don't get infected, which you know my institution doesn't seem to care about, but also that I then don't in turn go and infect my mom and then, when my dad was still alive, my father and apparently that family formation, the vulnerability of that family formation is irrelevant to and invisible to the institution. The only thing that they care about is "Oh well, if you have to do schooling at home then your colleagues should cover you." It's like, what? … I think everyone should get the support they need irrespective of family formation, be it that you have children, be it that you have elders living with you, be it where you yourself are your own family and vulnerable. But the university seems to have one really—and our union—a very dominant idea of

> what the family is and therefore all other family formations and the vulnerabilities that they invite are erased, right? (IP14).

Another source of tension between faculty and the university was the transition back to in-person campus learning and the way in which this policy change was communicated to faculty. One female contract faculty member reported that they felt the university should have allowed some flexibility in offering options for faculty to choose their mode of instruction especially as the COVID-19 situation kept evolving:

> There was one time where they announced we were going back, and I think a lot of faculty reached out to students and said, "We've already started online. If we want to just continue online, I'm okay with that, is everybody in agreement?" And then we got an email that said, "Well you can't do that." The university said "We've stopped online and you have to go back in-person" and I mean, I felt like, where is my professional judgment in this? I do want to go back in-person, but I've got some worries about going back in-person … you're going back now when we've prepared entire courses for online purposes. Like we got this, I know what I'm doing, and I've got this. So, things like that, I would say, even pushed me to the point of why don't we actually just do what's best for the students? (IP5).

There were also tensions between the policy decisions being made by the senior level university administration and the perspectives of the faculty level administration. For example, one female professor who held an administrative position reported that they felt returning to in-person work in the winter semester of 2022 was a mistake:

> I think that coming back to campus in February before reading week fully was a mistake, I do … but I think we weren't adequately prepared, there wasn't adequate technology there. In fact, our school wanted to keep teaching remotely because it was going quite well and we knew [going back to in-person] the resources wouldn't be there and it was made pretty clear that was not an option. So, I know that the [university administration], for example, said that for student's mental health they needed to be back on campus and I can see that point. But for some classes that didn't work very well and student's mental health was also jeopardized by having to be on campus and not knowing about COVID or not knowing what would be done and there are students for all kinds of reasons who would not get vaccinated and I think that many of the students that I talked to who wouldn't get vaccinated just came from a background where they hadn't always been treated well by the health care system and there was a big mistrust of the health care system and particularly Indigenous and Black students. So, I think that they were disproportionately put at a disadvantage because they couldn't come to campus if they didn't have a vaccine. But then there was no provision for us to teach remotely, like in a hybrid fashion. So, I think that wasn't fully thought out and that classes with students who couldn't come to campus should have been allowed to continue remotely (IP15).

Faculty members also reported that they did not agree with the university administration's assessment of public health and safety risks in terms of lifting the mandates such as masking and vaccination (IP4, IP14) or that ventilation in classrooms were up to necessary standards (IP1, IP4). One female professor described the tensions between faculty and the administration surrounding the return to in-person work and health and safety concerns:

> It was a lot of fights with the Union when the [university] administration was like, “Well, we want everybody back,” and the Union is pointing out what public health measures show. We shouldn't all be back and I know it's difficult, you know, the university is a business and all of these things, but there was a lot of extra stress in fighting the administration as well as also then trying to continue teaching online. If we didn't have that, that could have made it a bit easier (IP4).

Faculty members also expressed frustration at the inconsistencies of how public health guidelines were being followed by the universities. For example, one female professor stated that:

> Half the province, half the institutions in the province have a mask mandate, so why can't we have one? And … you know, [the] provincial government has public health, you know, they're following public health guidelines. These public health guidelines don't follow the science (IP14).

Another female professor also expressed their disappointment and frustration with the lifting of public health measures by the university and the lack of a preventative approach to health:

> Honestly, I'm really disappointed about the lack of masks, especially in the classroom. Some of those classrooms are really, really, really small. And I know [the university] has not been as effective in talking about its ventilation and the Union has launched a grievance and there's an independent evaluator determining how effective the air distribution is … I teach masked, and I bring my air purifier to class and pop it in and have that going. So that's been a little stressful … I wish the administration would take this a little more seriously. I just feel like, just like with the province, we're going to wait

> until maybe there's some kind of spike in numbers and then suddenly they'll say, “Wow, you guys should really maybe mask” or something. It's just too bad that we're very reactionary and it's too bad that the same vulnerable people are going to experience the disproportionate weight of this again (IP4).

Overall, participants reported that they felt unsupported during the rapid shift to online teaching especially as workload demands increased. Furthermore, work productivity expectations remained the same despite the steep learning curve many faculty members experienced. First, they had to switch in-person designed classes to online formats with no compensation for the additional time these tasks took and then they had to tackle the sharp increase in care work faculty members provided to both students and colleagues during this stressful period. This was further followed by another period of stress as the university demanded that established online formats be transitioned back to in-person instruction when public confidence with the health and safety measures taken by the university was not very high. These evolving situations during the pandemic and the perceived lack of institutional support contributed to faculty members experiencing more stress and poorer health and well-being.

Unexpected Gains in Terms of Accessibility

The most prominent positive theme from the pandemic that was reported by participants was that remote work created opportunities for more accessible teaching, service, and research work. This shift in work structure opened doors for equity-seeking groups that have largely faced challenges with work-life responsibilities who had more options to participate in academic work especially

for those with care work responsibilities. One female professor described the ways in which maintaining virtual options post-pandemic would be beneficial:

> I think that there were some really great things that we learned, I hope, from working remotely [such as] having more accessible meetings and I'd really like conferences and different administrative meetings to always have an online option. I'm certainly pushing this for my own department. There's a lot of people who want to get back and have cookies and pretend the pandemic's over and, I mean, I'm masked at all points in the office and teaching, and I don't want to have parties in the office yet. I don't feel comfortable doing that. I'd also like to have an option where we can just remotely link-in to meetings. I think that's great for people … who have kids at home or caregiving duties or a few of my colleagues moved out of [city name] … so I think for them, to make sure that they're linked to the office, always having a hybrid practice would be great. So yeah, largely I'd like to keep a few things. I am teaching in-person in both classes this year, but I'd like to teach at least an online class once in a while going forward. I think there's some good things and I hope we remember the good things and not just kind of shift back to in-person and forget everything we've learned (IP4).

Some faculty members also reported that this increase in accessibility applied not just to faculty members, but also to students with different life and family situations (IP14, IP15). One female professor discussed how, in their online graduate courses, both sides were able to accommodate each other, reporting "[My students] have busy lives, too. They're older. Many of them have families … They found the technology very accommodating to their lives" (IP14). This was echoed by another female professor who discussed feedback they had received from students

with care work responsibilities and how different forms of teaching and remote learning helped improve accessibility:

> I think we could invest in better technology and I also think that the idea of a flipped classroom [worked well] … where you put your lectures online, students can study [and] watch them at their leisure, which several of my students said was really fantastic. One of them was a mom of a 2-year-old and so she would watch the lectures after the baby went to bed and that worked better for her. So, I think having more of a blended format and then when we do get together in person, then it's really about discussion, critical thinking, that sort of thing rather than information sharing. And I think that whole idea of information sharing can be done better using technology. And then, you know, sort of fostering discourse as the main purpose of getting people together rather than just lecturing to them (IP15).

Other faculty members also reported that continuing online options for teaching can create more inclusive work and learning environments for faculty and students with disabilities and those who are immunocompromised (IP3, IP4). A female professor cautioned that, while it is important to have more flexibility regarding online course options, the possible exploitation of student populations, in particular of international students, needs to be considered (IP4).

The unexpected gains experienced by remote teaching were also echoed by sessional lecturers who found it more accessible to connect with students and colleagues and to access online resources provided by the university. This is important as sessional lecturers often work multiple jobs. In the case of one female sessional lecturer who had a full-time job elsewhere, remote work

allowed her to participate and meet colleagues and feel more connected to academia than compared to pre-pandemic when all teaching and training was primarily in-person (IP3).

Several faculty members also discussed that the shift to remote work during the pandemic provided them with an unforeseen opportunity to move away from their location of work and live with their family (IP6, IP7, IP8, IP9). Some participants moved away to live in other cities or provinces (IP7, IP9), while another professor was able to move to Ontario from abroad while continuing employment at an institution in another country before transferring to Ontario University (IP6). Faculty members who were able to move closer to family described feeling happier, more socially connected, and having a better work-life balance, with several participants stating that they were able to take on more care work duties both at home and outside their household. For example, one female professor discussed how moving to be closer to family allowed them to take on childcare duties during daycare closures for family members who were front line health care workers during the pandemic (IP9). Faculty members also discussed how the flexibility of remote work helped them be more productive. For example, one female professor stated:

> I still had a lot of service work and because we could just log on to Zoom, I think actually that might have helped me, being able to commit to so much service work, it's been 2 years of quite intense service work (IP7).

Participants who were academic mothers or interested in starting a family also discussed how beneficial the flexibility of remote work was for balancing paid work and care work responsibilities, with one participant stating “all my meetings are online and that is amazing. I

can be still here with my kid. I have meetings with my child at my feet for childcare situations" (IP11). Another female professor discussed that living far from family had been a barrier to better work-life balance and that having the option to continue with online teaching would be beneficial:

> For so many reasons, I would be able to [have] a better family life. For instance, I would be able to have a child without the stress of having two parents in different cities which would be great. It's something I want in life. So I would really love, personally, to be able to continue teaching online. That said, I don't know how the administration can implement online teaching. I'm realistic about what the administration can do, right? They can't just go "Oh, whoever wants to teach online can teach online". It has to be a well thought plan and there has to be coordination between the professors who want to teach online and the students who want to receive online education and we have to think about the cost of, you know, offering more courses online and what the unanticipated consequences of that might be (IP9).

It is clear from the findings presented that the pandemic allowed for some positive opportunities for both faculty members and students. From an equity-seeking perspective, continuing remote work options can remove barriers that some social groups face, such as parents, people with disabilities, and people who live further away from campus, providing these social groups with options to engage in post-secondary education that may have been difficult for them to access in pre-pandemic times.

Altogether, the findings from my interviews illustrate how the COVID-19 pandemic policy response exacerbated the gendered organization of work in academia, with some social groups being more overwhelmed, stressed, and burnt out than others. Much of the "invisible" labour undertaken by women faculty, including care work responsibilities both at home and within the institution (e.g., service work, support for students and colleagues, etc.), are longstanding issues that academic women have experienced pre-pandemic. My findings show that these issues have worsened during the pandemic. Moreover, faculty members highlighted the importance of connections with others and how the absence of the informal social interactions from both colleagues and students in their day-to-day interactions left faculty members feeling alone and isolated. Some faculty members also reported difficulties coping during public health restrictions due to the disconnect between the institution's pandemic policy response and their own situations. Faculty were expected to quickly pivot their class structure from in-person to online, and later on switch back to in-person classes despite their own concerns surrounding health and safety. In addition, some female faculty members with care work responsibilities, such as elder care, faced challenges accessing accommodations so that they could better manage their paid work and care work commitments.

Lastly, there were positive outcomes from the pandemic as observed by how new work structures and policies related to online teaching made accessibility more readily available to both faculty members and students. Improved work-life balance for different family structures for both faculty and students, better accommodations for disability, enhanced ability to work remotely, and reduced burden to staff performing administrative and service tasks are just some

of the various positive takeaways that participants mentioned that the university should keep in mind as they look towards the future of academia in a post-pandemic world.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Policy Recommendations

In this study, I set out to explore how the policy response during the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the experiences of university faculty members in Ontario, Canada. I used feminist political economy (FPE) as an overarching framework to understand how the class nature of capitalist society maintains gender and health inequities in academia. In my discussions with participants, I followed an interpretative phenomenological approach to better understand faculty members' unique perspectives and lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research on this topic used a mixed-methods approach by administering an online survey to collect quantitative data from my participants, including socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., class, gender, race, etc.) and three different Likert questionnaires to measure stress, burnout, and work-life balance. In addition, I collected qualitative data through open-ended questions in my online survey and through semi-structured follow-up interviews. Within my mixed-method approach above, I also conducted a critical analysis of COVID-19 university communications in combination with my other methods of an online survey and semi-structured interviews to triangulate my data to understand how COVID-19 policies have impacted and organized faculty members' lived experiences.

It is important to note that my study sample that participated in the online survey and follow-up interviews consisted mostly of women. My survey sample was composed of sessional, contract, tenure-track, and tenured faculty members, with the largest group being tenured women. The majority of my interview sample also consisted mostly of tenured women. Interestingly, I had fewer untenured full-time faculty participate in my study; this could be partially explained by the lack of free time these faculty members may have as they need to maintain research and teaching

productivity for future tenure and promotion evaluations in order to obtain job security. The limited number of part-time contract faculty in my sample of survey respondents and interview participants may indicate that these individuals did not have the time to participate in my study due to them having higher workloads and having to juggle other employment commitments. In my study, more women than men participated. This may be due to more women wanting to have their voices heard and their lived experiences shared with researchers to help shape future policies.

According to scholarly literature, women academics in Canada experienced more stress and lower well-being during the pandemic compared to men (Davis et al., 2022). I captured similar health issues in my research through three Likert-style questionnaires: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), and the Work-Life Balance Measure. I found significant differences between women and men for all three measures, with women who participated in my survey having more stress, more burnout, and worse work-life balance compared to men. I also found differences along the lines of gender in terms of the type of work that women and men undertook during the pandemic that impacted their stress levels, with women reporting that teaching was the highest source of stress and men reporting that lack of time was reported as the top source of stress during the pandemic.

Structural Conditions that Shaped Faculty Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

My study is guided by the work of feminist political economists and shows how neoliberal practices, such as austerity and funding cuts to the public university sector, have shaped class relations in academia. Examining these relations enables an understanding of the structural

factors driving inequitable working conditions under a capitalist economic system and how these conditions have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on a FPE approach, I identified two key themes: 1) The corporatization of the university has driven inequitable class relations in academia and 2) Care work is incompatible yet indispensable to the demands of academia. In the following sections, I take a closer look at how the paid and unpaid working conditions of faculty members in my study were shaped by various social locations. While I intended to explore the intersecting relations of class, gender, and race as informed by FPE and the literature, my analysis below focuses primarily on gender and indicators of class, such as precarity of contract labour, as I did not have the diverse sample size to look at racialized impacts on faculty working conditions during the pandemic. To better understand the working conditions of faculty members during the pandemic, I situate academic work within the broader context of neoliberalism and the corporatization of universities in Ontario. Using my theoretical framework of FPE and from my qualitative survey responses and interviews with university faculty members, I examine the structural and social factors driving inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect on why these inequitable conditions exist in the academy.

The Corporatization of the University has Driven Inequitable Class Relations in Academia

In the Canadian context, neoliberal policies such as austerity measures and decreased funding to the public sector have driven the restructuring of academic institutions to function as corporate businesses (Baker, 2012; Brownlee, 2015; Romard & Robinson, 2023). While the nature of academia is traditionally hierarchical, with a class society comprised of secure and non-secure positions of full-time and part-time faculty, previous research has documented that declining government funding to universities has resulted in the corporatization of universities across

Canada and driven the proliferation of contract and sessional positions to cut teaching labour costs at these institutions (Brownlee, 2015; Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Romard & Robinson, 2023). Through this process of corporatization, university administrations focus on operational efficiencies, such as reducing labour costs, and take on a consumer-focused model of operations, where learning is commodified and students are treated as customers (Brownlee, 2015; Council of Canadian Academies, 2012; Kuehn, 2018). Previous studies have documented that, under this business model, academic faculty experience working conditions that are characterized by higher workloads and less resources (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Webber, 2017; Baker, 2012; Council of Canadian Academies, 2012) and, in particular, contract faculty experience increasing precarious work (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023; Pasma & Shaker, 2018; Romard & Robinson, 2023; Rose, 2020).

Looking specifically in Ontario where the current study took place, in response to austerity measures, including decreased government grants and freezes to domestic tuition, universities have developed an over-reliance on tuition fees from international students and on cost-cutting measures, such as hiring more contract faculty and increasing class sizes (Romard & Robinson, 2023). This reliance on precarious workers as a means for universities to cut teaching labour costs has resulted in a widening class divide in the Ontario academic labour market. Within this class hierarchy there are two main classes of secure and non-secure positions. The first class is composed of full-time faculty, which includes tenure-track and tenured professors, whose work activities include conducting research, teaching classes, and performing service work such as taking on administrative positions or committee work for their department or the university as a whole (Romard & Robinson, 2023). The second class of faculty includes contract and part-time

lecturers whose role is to focus solely on teaching, though they often take on other forms of unpaid work such as care work for students, administrative work, and committee work not related to their contracted teaching work (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Romard & Robinson, 2023). This rise in the casualization of teaching labour has widened the socioeconomic gap among faculty class relations and, prior to the pandemic, previous reports have documented the poor working conditions of contract faculty members and the health impacts of mental health and stress (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Nichols, 2023).

My study shows that these pre-existing socioeconomic conditions and structural factors resulted in the university sector being unprepared for the disruption to learning and working conditions by the COVID-19 pandemic and further shaped the neoliberal corporate policy response by the university administration which impacted the health and well-being of faculty members during the pandemic. Based on the corporatization of academic institutions and the university administration's growing trend of treating students as customers, it is not surprising that my WPR analysis of the university's policy communications revealed dominant narratives emphasizing the need to rapidly pivot to online learning and continue classes during the pandemic lockdowns, the need to be flexible and provide accommodations for students, and, later on, the need to return to in-person learning as soon as possible for student's mental health and well-being. While this policy communication discourse emphasizing the need for learning continuity by the university administration may have had the best intentions for student academic success and well-being, my survey and interview findings revealed tensions between these policy discourses and the lived experience of faculty members doing this work. My survey and interview participants described the stress and anxiety that impacted both full-time and part-time

faculty members surrounding the swift pivot to online work with minimal resources for new teaching and learning technologies. In addition, some of my participants, especially those with teaching and supervision responsibilities, reported feeling overwhelmed and overburdened by the time spent on care work for students who needed support throughout the pandemic.

My findings also revealed that, from a class perspective, not all faculty members experienced the working conditions during the pandemic in the same way. This increased workload at the onset of the pandemic and throughout had economic implications for sessional instructors whose income were based on pre-determined hourly contracts that did not reflect the amount of additional work undertaken by faculty members teaching during the pandemic. Part-time contract faculty were expected to take on additional unpaid administrative and care work to abide by the university's policy for flexible deadlines and accommodations for students to keep their employment. When one of my participants, who was a part-time sessional lecturer, approached university management about compensation for these additional hours of work, they were told that there was no extra funding available to pay them for this work. This response by management can be explained by the fact that universities did not receive any additional funding from the province during the pandemic. This example of the additional unpaid work undertaken by the often-marginalized workers who teach part-time in post-secondary education align with previous studies documenting longstanding issues of precarious work and income insecurity (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018; Pasma & Shaker, 2018; Rose, 2020).

Due to the limited number of contract faculty that participated in my study, I was unable to make further comparisons between classes of the university faculty workforce or the intersection of

class and gender. It is possible that this precarity in part-time sessional contract faculty is the reason for the lack of participation from these cohorts as these faculty members may have had minimal time and energy to participate in this research during the pandemic. The findings from my study shows an academic institution that is hierarchical and structured along the lines of class. The increasing corporatization of the university, in response to the underfunding of the public sector, has shifted towards supporting precarious work as a way to cut costs. Another consequence of this is that it redistributes the burden of non-teaching work (i.e., research, service, supervision and care work for students) to full-time faculty as universities hire less of these positions, resulting in academic women increasingly being burdened to take on more unpaid work as I will discuss more in the following section.

Care Work is Incompatible yet Indispensable to the Demands of Academia

My study's exploration of paid and unpaid labour in academia contributes to the research done by feminist political economists to highlight the gendered and inequitable ways that care work is performed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of schools, daycares, and of admissions to long-term care and retirement homes reversed gains made in the redistribution of care work to the public economy back into households, disproportionately impacting women with childcare and elder care responsibilities who were also working in the paid economy. By using FPE to analyze my study findings, I found that care work is incompatible and undervalued with the structures and process of promotion and tenure and that this type of work was made even more difficult during the pandemic.

The challenges of juggling care responsibilities while pursuing an academic career in Canadian academia is well documented in the literature (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; James et al., 2021; Wilton & Ross, 2017). In the public university sector, the overall context of the pandemic created stressful conditions for faculty with care work responsibilities. For example, during periods of lockdown, there were closures of schools, childcare centres, and long-term care and retirement homes throughout the province, which resulted in academics taking on additional care work inside and outside the home, in addition to the care work they performed for students. Previous studies have documented the challenges and issues for Canadian academics with care work responsibilities during the pandemic, especially its negative impact on academic mothers (Davis et al., 2022; Gordon & Presseau, 2023; Smith-Carrier et al., 2021), and academics with elder care responsibilities (Davis et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2022; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). This present study, informed by FPE, extends this growing body of work to look at the tensions between the COVID-19 policy communication discourses surrounding care work and the lived experiences of academics working at a university in Ontario during the pandemic.

According to the scholarly literature, feeling stressed and exhausted while struggling to balance care work responsibilities and paid work were common experiences among academic parents during the pandemic along with having concerns regarding work productivity and career progression (Davis et al., 2022; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). Drawing from a FPE perspective, my study revealed tensions between policy and practice for academics with care work responsibilities during the pandemic. Several participants in my study reported that, while issues with balancing work and childcare responsibilities was acknowledged by the university policy

communications discourse, expectations and pressure by the university to continue or even increase research productivity remained in practice. This has implications for the academic gender gap as women may have fallen further behind during the pandemic due to their focus on care work that was essential (albeit unrewarded by the university).

My WPR analysis surfaced several dominant representations: the need to prioritize health and safety of students, faculty, and staff while continuing classes online, the need for faculty members to be flexible and accommodating due to the disruptions to work and home lives during the pandemic, and the need to adhere to public health guidelines and the university mandates, such as masking and vaccination requirements, framed as a community of care approach. Within these framings of the dominant representations, my WPR analysis of the university policy communications discourse revealed that the language used when referring to care work was gender neutral. This is problematic as, according to James et al. (2021), a gender-neutral university that encourages family-friendly policies (e.g., parental leave, tenure stop-out policies) in a non-gendered way makes the disproportionate impact of care work on women less visible and diminishes its importance. Further, while universities may claim that their tenure track process is gender neutral, this is evidently not the case as traditional conceptions of productivity that typically advantage men, such as publishing and securing external funding, remain the ultimate key to career success in academia (Gaudet et al., 2022; James et al., 2021). This has implications for tenure and promotion as some academic mothers in my study expressed concern with falling behind due to care work as, even with the implementation of the one-year tenure stop-out policy, in practice one of my study participants who used this policy reported that they were unfairly being directly compared to other faculty members who did not use the stop-out.

This finding is in line with previous research conducted by James et al. (2021), who found that the tenure stop-out was not enough to reduce the structural barriers that women face when their research productivity is impacted by childcare responsibilities. Women with care work responsibilities are forced to make up lost gains that can take longer than one year such as projects that were paused, grants submissions and collaborations that have passed, and papers that were not published. Also, in some cases, women responsible for care work are further burdened with having to explain their gaps in research productivity during evaluations for tenure (James et al., 2021).

Another key source of tension between policy and practice identified across my WPR analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of my discussions with participants was the lack of acknowledgement of challenges faced by faculty members with elder care responsibilities during the pandemic in the university policy communications. The communications provided by the university administration, rarely, if at all, recognized and shared available supports for those with care work responsibilities for elders within their households or in long-term care or retirement homes. In my study, some of my participants performed care work for elders within their households and outside their home. Participants who talked about elder care responsibilities in my study were mostly women and reported needing additional support and accommodations yet were unable to access them. Furthermore, they expressed that they felt the accommodations for different types of care work was inequitable as some leave options were only available to people with childcare responsibilities due to school closures and were thus not an option for those experiencing challenges with elder care. This reveals that the university placed higher priority in providing supports for one type of care work, in this case childcare, over elder care,

minimizing the impact of elder care responsibilities undertaken by faculty. This decision by the university can partially be explained by the financial constraints and reduced resources that universities have to work with due to underfunding from the provincial government as discussed previously.

My IPA of participant interviews revealed that academics with elder care responsibilities had complex struggles and experiences performing this care work during the pandemic. Several of my participants reported feeling stressed and overwhelmed while caring for elderly family members, including worrying about their health and safety, coordinating their care during the evolving pandemic restrictions around family visits to hospitals, long-term care, and retirement homes, as well as dealing with grief and after life arrangements for loved ones who passed away. These findings are consistent with previous literature documenting the experience of academics with elder care responsibilities during the pandemic (Jones et al., 2022; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). According to a report by the Auditor General of Ontario on pandemic readiness and response in long-term care homes, during the pandemic, long-term care home staff had insufficient numbers and training to provide adequate and appropriate care, and restrictions on family visits negatively impacted residents and resulted in a deterioration of their physical and mental conditions (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2021). These findings emphasize how crucial family members' visits were for long-term care home residents and how these efforts, while requiring a lot of attention and sacrifice from faculty members already juggling so much, were very important for the well-being of this vulnerable population. These findings from my study, coupled with the profitization of the care industry for seniors, resulted in women taking on more of this work especially in the context of the pandemic, while also revealing

structural inequities in the way that resources and accommodations were distributed to support academics with care work responsibilities.

My theoretical lens of FPE also led me to further investigate the gendered organization of care work within institutions. My WPR analysis and IPA of my interviews with participants revealed tensions between the lack of recognition of emotional labour in the policy discourse and the lived experiences of faculty members, in particular women academics. In my discussions with participants, both women and men observed that women academics took on more emotional labour with regards to assisting students and colleagues who needed support in managing issues during the pandemic, such as learning new technology, mental and physical health issues, and housing insecurity due to unsafe conditions. These findings align with previous studies that found that academic women spent more time supporting students and faced more pressure and expectations from students to do this work compared to their male counterparts, resulting in more work and greater stress for women both pre-pandemic (Dengate et al., 2019) and during the pandemic (Pettigrew, 2021). This emotional labour, unlike other forms of work such as research publications, is not recognized during tenure and promotion evaluations as it does not bring revenue or prestige to the corporate university, as discussed earlier in this study and documented by other scholars (Gaudet et al., 2022). Previous studies have also noted that this gendered division of work, which allows for some academic men to focus more on research while academic women take on care work roles within their departments, with little to no recognition of this work, will only widen the gender gap in terms of career advancement between academic women and men (Dengate et al., 2019; Pettigrew, 2021).

Overall, this dissertation has highlighted how pre-existing conditions of government underfunding, the casualization of teaching labour, and the gendered organization of service and care work in academia have worsened during the pandemic and disproportionately impacted academic women compared to men. Post-pandemic changes to working conditions in the post-secondary education sector in Ontario and across Canada continue. As mentioned earlier, in response to decreased government funding, universities across Canada have increasingly been relying on international student tuition fees to make up lost revenue. In 2024, the federal government announced a cap on international student enrollment (Government of Canada, 2024). The initial response by several universities in Ontario has been to cut programs and reduce resources to departments (Pickel, 2025). The impacts on the working conditions of university faculty members across the province remains to be seen. As universities once again restructure in response to changes in government policies and funding, a focus on health and equity is needed to improve the working and learning conditions of faculty and students. I discuss the policy implications of my findings and some recommendations to improve the working conditions of academics in Ontario below.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

In order to improve the working conditions of faculty members at universities in Ontario, policymakers need to address the broader issues facing universities, specifically the lack of public funding and the adoption of corporate and managerial strategies that result in an increased emphasis on efficiencies and cost-cutting measures. There is no solution that would reduce inequities in academia that does not require transformative change given the unique nature of the present-day university as a co-capitalist institution whose role is to reproduce the labour force

with greater attention to contributing to a capitalist economy rather than the intellectual and personal development of future generations. As previous work on the funding landscape of Ontario universities have suggested, increased investments in public funding are needed to support universities so that some of the measures taken on by universities as a response to neoliberal policies and corporate practices can be reversed (Romard & Robinson, 2023). More financial support from both the federal and provincial governments is needed so that university finances can become less reliant on tuition fees. Furthermore, this increase in funding should also be allocated towards hiring more full-time positions to reduce precarious teaching labour and to improve working conditions for the betterment of faculty and students alike. In the wake of the federal government's international student cap and economic uncertainty of universities in the province, the Ontario government has announced a $903 million Postsecondary Education Sustainability Fund that will provide funding to universities in financial need (Government of Ontario, 2024). The outcome of this funding program and its impacts on the public university sector and workforce remain to be seen.

At the institutional level, changes to policy and practice are also needed to address inequities in academia. A common recommendation by Canadian researchers is the need to re-examine how academic success is evaluated and to address the underlying systemic differences in these processes (Davis et al., 2022; Gordon & Presseau, 2023; McLachlan, 2023; Oleschuk, 2020; VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). This is a sentiment echoed by many of my study participants who expressed that they took on an unsustainable amount of unpaid work to support their families, students, and colleagues during the pandemic. Not only was this work unpaid but this extra work also put them behind in their career progression as the current systems and practices in place for

tenure and promotion emphasize other types of work, such as research publications. According to Oleschuk (2020), faculty members across Ontario universities have voiced that university administrations need to create and maintain governing practices that are democratic, transparent, and accountable to address the impact of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic on academic career trajectories and working conditions.

Another common policy recommendation among researchers is the need to restructure assessments and evaluations for tenure and promotions to mitigate gender differences experienced during the pandemic (Davis et al., 2022; McLachlan, 2023; Oleschuk, 2020). Davis et al. (2022) propose that we need to move beyond the traditional focus on measuring publication outputs and instead implement a comparative analysis by gender and racialized status when tracking and assessing workloads to ensure systemic inequities are addressed. This type of assessment model should also utilize storytelling and narrative so that academics can share their experiences to give insight into the privileges and disparity present within institutions. My study findings contribute to this literature as my participants' lived experiences showcase the hardships and sacrifices that faculty members experienced during the pandemic and how these experiences shaped faculty members' health and well-being. Furthermore, tenure and promotion committees should also reconsider how their evaluation models can include the gendered inequities in labour distribution that impact academic women's productivity, especially for women with care responsibilities of children, elders, and other dependents. It is also important to consider that some faculty members in my study reported taking care of multiple family members at different life stages, potentially compounding work impacts; these complex scenarios should be kept in mind when looking at developing better, more inclusive ways to evaluate academic productivity.

Other researchers urge caution when evaluating the current policies for tenure and promotion that have been implemented to address the disparities among genders during the pandemic. Gordon and Presseau (2023) warn that the common policy of providing tenure clock extensions to early career researchers may have unintended effects and further widen gender inequities, such as the gender pay gap, by delaying the tenure and promotion evaluation process. As shown in my critical policy analysis, Ontario University implemented this policy approach and offered tenure-track faculty members the option to defer applying for tenure or promotion by up to one year. Some participants in my study expressed frustration at how this "tenure stop-out" policy was implemented due to a lack of transparency and how the overall structural inequities of the process remain unchanged as research outputs of those who were given this stop-out for tenure were being directly compared to faculty who did not require the tenure pause. Additional work is needed to update this policy as currently its implementation still leaves those who needed the extra year disadvantaged. It is not yet clear if this policy will have the intended effect of improving the situation of those academics whose work productivity was most affected by the additional care work at home and teaching work they took on during the pandemic.

Other targeted policy recommendations to address the impacts of the pandemic on academics responsible for care work include adjusting workloads and providing additional funding (McLachlan, 2023; Oleschuk, 2020). For example, this could be achieved by providing more teaching assistants, more opportunities for course releases, and more funding for hiring help at home (McLachlan, 2023). These recommendations align with what I heard from the few part-time faculty members that participated in my study who were frustrated and exhausted from the high levels of unpaid labour that they had to take on to comply with the university's expectations

that instructors need to be more flexible to support student's well-being. Further, my study findings showed that there is a need for better communications from university management to faculty members and more resources for transitioning to new systems and methods of teaching. These changes would better support working conditions and reduce stress and anxiety experienced by faculty who may be unfamiliar with new teaching technologies.

Moreover, other policy suggestions that could be implemented to support faculty members with care work responsibilities include identifying and developing departmental and institutional support systems and utilizing language that recognizes the impact of the pandemic on faculty members in relation to their various social positions, clarifying expectations of faculty members to reduce stress and anxiety about work performance, and lastly, working towards adjusting the expectations involving gender, care, and research work within institutions (Oleschuk, 2020). One of my study participants suggested that a more inclusive care work accommodation and leave policy should be open to different ideas of family formations and care work, whether that pertains to elder care, childcare, or self-care, allowing faculty members to tailor their requests for support according to their personal circumstances. Another point raised in my study findings was that some of my participants reported challenges with accessing leave for elder care responsibilities as the process of requesting leave involved reaching out directly to the Dean and requiring other faculty members to provide coverage. They reported that this process was uncomfortable and necessitated giving private information and asking for help in a way that, they felt, resulted in a loss of their dignity. Following these experiences, I would recommend that a formal, more transparent policy process be created, not just in case of another pandemic, but also if faculty members need additional accommodations for leaves due to care work responsibilities

or health issues. Ultimately, such measures would help reduce the stress of all faculty members and support both their work and life responsibilities.

Study Limitations

As the primary focus of this research took place at one post-secondary institution in Ontario, the findings from this study may not be applicable to other jurisdictions. Moreover, as discussed earlier, despite my best efforts to obtain a representative study sample of the local academic population, compared to the overall university faculty headcount at OU (and compared to overall Ontario data), my participant sample was limited in size. There was also limited diversity among my study participants, as most were full-time faculty members who were non-racialized, limiting my ability to fully utilize my FPE theoretical framework to look at the intersections of class, gender, and race. As I had a small number of contract faculty members participate in my study, I was not able to fully identify the effects of precarious employment that could adequately inform a FPE lens. However, I propose that this lack of data is in itself a finding consistent with my review of the literature, which shows that contract faculty members are often overwhelmed and may not have had time to participate.

My critical policy analysis using the WPR framework was also limited due to the data available. I focused on policy communications from the university to faculty members as there were no formal policy documents published as part of Ontario University's pandemic response. Although there may be limited generalizability to broader contexts, it is important to note that decision-making during the pandemic in Canada was, in many ways, locally determined. While the various provinces and territories had decision-making power over public health mandates (i.e.,

lockdowns, masking, social distancing, etc.), some individual universities continued public health restrictions such as masking and vaccination mandates for longer (Cadloff, 2022).

Future Research Directions

The aim of this research was to extend the critical discussions of the different challenges and situations that academics experienced in Canada during the pandemic. As my sample was limited in terms of diverse participants, it is imperative to perform further inquiry focused on understanding how gender and its intersections with other social positions (e.g., class, race, ability, Indigenous ancestry, etc.) impact the health and advancement of women academics in Canada. In addition, studies that focus on issues of precarity, in relation to class, with more representation from contract faculty should be conducted to further examine the structural inequities under the current capitalist economic system. As previously mentioned, my dissertation focused on one university within Ontario and is not representative of the experiences of academics in other universities across the province, country, or world. To better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic policy response has affected and continues to impact academics in a broader context, research on this topic at other institutions in different geographical jurisdictions would be useful to compare the differences in micro and meso level policymaking, and discourse, as well as differences in neoliberal institutional ideology. Research findings from these inquiries can help inform the creation of more inclusive and equitable solutions and policies to improve the working conditions and health of faculty members in the post-pandemic context.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Online Survey

Online Survey

Demographic Characteristics

1. Please indicate your academic discipline/field of study:

- ☐ Business/Management
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Environmental Sciences
- ☐ Fine and Applied Arts
- ☐ Health Sciences
- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Life Sciences
- ☐ Mathematics and Statistics
- ☐ Physical Sciences
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

2. Please indicate if you are:

- ☐ Professorial stream
- ☐ Teaching stream
- ☐ Other (Please describe) _____
- ☐ Not Applicable

3. Please indicate your current faculty appointment:

- ☐ Sessional Lecturer
- ☐ Contractually Limited Appointment (CLA)
- ☐ Assistant Professor
- ☐ Associate Professor
- ☐ Professor
- ☐ Professor Emeritus
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

4. Please indicate if your current faculty appointment is:

- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ CLA-contract
- ☐ Full-time tenure-track
- ☐ Full-time tenured
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

5. Over the past three years have you held an administrative position in your unit?

- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Associate Dean
- ☐ Chair
- ☐ Director
- ☐ Graduate Program Director
- ☐ Undergraduate Program Director
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
- ☐ Not Applicable

6. Please indicate your highest completed level of education

- ☐ Bachelors
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

7. What is your ethnicity/racial background?

The Canadian Census Program identifies the following categories in its Census of Population. Please indicate how you self-identify. (Please select all categories that apply)

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Black (e.g., African, African Canadian, African Caribbean, etc.)
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Indigenous (First Nations, Inuk (Inuit), Métis)
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Latin American (including Indigenous persons from Central and South America)
- ☐ South Asian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- ☐ Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.)
- ☐ West Asian (e.g., Afghan, Iranian, Lebanese, etc.)
- ☐ White (European descent)
- ☐ Category not listed (Please specify) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

8. What gender do you self-identify as?

(Please select all categories that apply)

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Two-Spirit
- ☐ Category not listed (Please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

9. Do you self-identify as 2SLGBTQ+?

(For example, persons who self-identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, genderqueer, questioning, or who otherwise express gender or sexual diversity)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

10. Do you self-identify as a person with a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

11. What is your age range?

- ☐ Less than 20 years
- ☐ 20–29 years
- ☐ 30–39 years
- ☐ 40–49 years
- ☐ 50–59 years
- ☐ 60–69 years
- ☐ 70 years and over
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

12. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married or Common-law
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Other (Please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

13. What is your estimate annual income range?

- ☐ Less than $20,000
- ☐ $20,001–$40,000
- ☐ $40,001–$60,000
- ☐ $60,001–$80,000
- ☐ $80,001–$100,000
- ☐ $100,001 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

14. What is your estimate annual household income range?

- ☐ Less than $20,000
- ☐ $20,001–$40,000
- ☐ $40,001–$60,000
- ☐ $60,001–$80,000
- ☐ $80,001–$100,000
- ☐ $100,001 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

15. Do you have dependent(s) in your household?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (please specify)

If yes, please indicate if your dependent(s) is/are:

- ☐ Child(ren) under 18
- ☐ Adult(s) in need of care
- ☐ Both child(ren) and adult(s)
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

If yes, please indicate your caregiver status:

- ☐ I am the primary caregiver
- ☐ I share caregiving duties with another person(s)
- ☐ I am not the primary caregiver
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

16. Do you have any caregiving responsibilities outside of your household?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

If yes, please indicate if you are the caregiver of:

- ☐ Child(ren) under 18
- ☐ Adult(s) in need of care
- ☐ Both child(ren) and adult(s)
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

If yes, please indicate your caregiver status:

- ☐ I am the primary caregiver
- ☐ I share caregiving duties with another person(s)
- ☐ I am not the primary caregiver
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

17. During the COVID-19 pandemic have you been residing primarily in Ontario Canada?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

If no, please specify other location _____

Stress and Sources of Stress

18. Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988)					
The questions below ask you about your feelings and thoughts during **the last month**. Please respond to each question by selecting the response representing **how often** you felt or thought a certain way.					
	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?					
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?					
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?					
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?					
In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?					
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?					
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?					
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?					
In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?					
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?					

19. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti et al., 2010)				
Below you will find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the response that corresponds with each statement.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I always find new and interesting aspects in my work.				
There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work.				

It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way.				
After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.				
I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.				
Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically.				
I find my work to be a positive challenge.				
During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.				
Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work.				
After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities				
Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks.				
After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary.				
This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing.				
Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well.				
I feel more and more engaged in my work.				
When I work, I usually feel energized.				

20. Please indicate the three main sources of stress (in order of priority) you experience in relation to your job (Examples: research, teaching, supervising students, service work, work/life conflict, employment insecurity, lack of time etc.)

_____

Work-Life Balance

21. Work-Life Balance Measure (Brough et al., 2014)					
When I reflect over my work and non-work activities (your regular activities outside of work such as family, friends, sports, study, etc.), over the past three months, I conclude that:					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.					

I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities.					
I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right.					

22. Faculty member workload during the COVID-19 pandemic						
Please select the response that best describes your workload during the COVID-19 pandemic.						
	Significantly Decreased	Somewhat Decreased	Remained the Same	Somewhat Increased	Significantly Increased	N/A
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my research outputs (i.e., publications, books, presentations, etc.)						
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my time spent on teaching……						
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my time spent on administrative tasks….						
During the COVID-19 pandemic my time spent on committee work……						
During the COVID-19 pandemic my time spent on student supervision…..						
During the COVID-19 pandemic my time spent on caregiving at home…..						

23. Do you feel the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your career trajectory in academia?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (Please describe) _____

If yes, please describe_____

24. Do you have any other pandemic concerns related to your work?

_____

25. Do you have any post-pandemic concerns related to your work?

_____

26. Is there anything else you would like to add?

_____

27. We are interested in learning more about faculty members' diverse lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they relate to health and well-being. We hope to understand what types of policies, practices, or services could support faculty members in the future. Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up interview to further discuss your experiences and perspectives?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please provide your email address for us to contact you_____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

General probes for all questions:

- You mentioned _____ can you tell me more about that?
- You mentioned _____ can you describe what that was like for you?
- How did you feel? How has that changed over time?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions:

1. Can you describe what your day was like yesterday? What tasks (both work and home responsibilities) did you have to do from the time you woke up?

2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people working remotely reported feeling isolated and overwhelmed, while others felt they had more time to spend with family and were able to achieve a better work-life balance. There may be other alternatives that were not documented. What was your experience?

   Probe: Can you describe a moment where you felt stressed that you are comfortable sharing with me?

   Probe: What was it like connecting with students? Did your teaching strategies change? Did your strategies for supervising students change? Did the level of support you provided to students change?

   Probe: What was it like connecting with colleagues and collaborators (both within and outside your institution)?

   Probe: Were there any supports/resources provided by your department and/or the university to facilitate working/teaching remotely? If so, did you use any? Did you find them helpful?

3. During the pandemic there have been changes to daily work and life routines. How was your experience with these changes?

   Probe: How did these changes to your work and life routines make you feel?

   Probe: How has your relationship with others such as family and colleagues been affected?

   Probe: Did you experience any benefits? Challenges? If so, how did you cope?

4. During the pandemic some people have reported that they feel more or less pressure to maintain the same level of productivity at work as before the pandemic. How was your experience?

   Probe: Did you take on any additional work or was your workload reduced?

Probe: Did you spend any more or less time on certain aspects of your work such as research, teaching, service, or care work?

5. During the pandemic there have been changes to the way people can access health care. How was your experience?

6. During the pandemic some people struggled to take time to engage in self-care while others found it easier to practice self-care. How was your experience?

7. Have you returned to campus for in-person work during the pandemic? If so, what was this transition like?

   Probe: Did you experience any challenges with transitioning back to in-person teaching? Were there any changes to your workload such as preparing for lectures, hybrid teaching, or supporting students? If so, how did you cope?

   Probe: Were there any supports/resources provided by your department and/or the university to facilitate the transition to in-person work? If so, did you use any? Did you find them helpful?

8. The survey you took part in showed that women experience higher levels of perceived stress compared to men. Why do you think this may be the case?

   Probe: The literature talks about this difference being possibly from women taking on more work at home and/or feeling pressured to take on more tasks at work. What do you think?

9. In the survey you took part in, some people reported that they have found it hard to keep up with the evolving COVID-19 policies at the university. Did these policy changes affect you in any way?

   Probe: How was your experience with the policy changes? For example, the changing mask and vaccine mandates, capacity limits, social distancing etc.

10. In the survey you took part in, some people have suggested that instead of focusing on "getting back to normal" the university should focus on creating a "new normal". What do you think about this idea? And what does this "new normal" mean to you?

    Probe: What are some changes that you would like to see? In terms of changes to policy? Teaching? Research? Workloads?

    Probe: What would you like to see continued?

11. Thank you for participating in this research study and for all the valuable information you have provided today. Do you have any other comments or questions you would like to add?