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## The Nonperson Treatment in Higher Education: The Case of Contingent Faculty

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# The Nonperson Treatment in Higher Education: The Case of Contingent Faculty

## Cover Page Footnote

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2023 meeting of the Georgia Sociological Association. I would like to thank Molly Scarborough, Russell Scarborough, and the anonymous reviewers for taking time out of their busy lives to provide thoughtful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

# The Nonperson Treatment in Higher Education: The Case of Contingent Faculty

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**Abstract:** This article applies Erving Goffman’s conceptual theory of the “nonperson treatment” to the empirical reality of contingent faculty in higher education. According to Goffman, the nonperson treatment is a technique of diminishing the social status of a person, often foregoing all acknowledgement of a person’s humanity beyond transactional civilities. Contingent faculty in higher education experience job insecurity, limited opportunities for advancement, low wages, insufficient benefits, a corporate style of management, curtailed academic freedom, alienation from faculty governance, ineligibility for professional development, limited schedule autonomy, invisibility on campus, and limited access to campus resources. The inequities and exclusionary practices faced by contingent faculty are a classic case of the nonperson treatment. Beyond illuminating how contingent faculty experience the nonperson treatment, this article proposes policy recommendations for making higher education more equitable.

**Keywords:** Higher Education; Academia; Inequality; Contingent Faculty; Erving Goffman

## Introduction

Higher education is a bastion of liberal ideals, yet durable categorical inequalities exist within the academy. Contingent faculty—faculty in non-tenure-track roles, full-time positions without a tenure system, part-time faculty, and graduate student instructors—are a caste of “nonpersons” in the academy. The term “caste” is more appropriate than “class” because contingent faculty face substantial barriers to professional advancement, low occupational prestige, and many other occupational

deprivations (AAUP 2023c; ASA 2019).

Institutionally, contingent faculty are experiencing what Erving Goffman (1959, 1963a) calls the “nonperson treatment.”

Full-time, tenure-track positions are no longer the majority of instructional personnel in United States higher education. The U.S. academic workforce has experienced a shift from mostly full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty to mostly contingent faculty. As a whole, 68% of all instructional positions in American higher education were non-tenure track across all U.S.

colleges in Fall 2021, compared with about 47% in Fall 1987. Only 24% of faculty members in the U.S. held full-time tenured appointments in Fall 2021, compared with about 39% in Fall 1987. Colleges increasingly rely on part-time faculty; 48% of faculty members in U.S. higher education were employed part-time in Fall 2021, compared with about 33% in 1987. Women and underrepresented minority faculty members had higher rates of both contingent appointments compared to men and non-underrepresented minority faculty members. Finally, the number of graduate student employees increased by 44% from Fall 2002 to Fall 2021, compared to a 19% increase in full-time faculty during the same time period (AAUP 2023b, 2023c).

Faculty employment is no longer a stable, middle-class career. Academia is facing challenging times, but times are perilous for contingent faculty. Compared to tenure-track colleagues, contingent faculty in the U.S. confront job insecurity, limited opportunities for advancement, low wages, and insufficient access to employer-provided benefits. Additionally, contingent faculty experience a corporate style of management, curtailed academic freedom, alienation from faculty governance, ineligibility for professional development opportunities, limited autonomy in determining teaching assignments, invisibility on campus, and unequal access to campus resources. Erving Goffman's conceptual theory of the "nonperson treatment" aptly describes the institutional reality of contingent faculty in higher education. Of

course, there is much variation in the instrumental and symbolic inequities experienced by contingent faculty across various higher education institutions. This article examines many of the common institutional hardships confronted by contingent faculty in U.S. higher education.

### **The Nonperson Treatment**

Erving Goffman (1959, 1963a) coins the term "nonpersons" to characterize support personnel who are treated as though they are not really present. The "nonperson treatment" is a technique of diminishing the social status of a person, often foregoing all acknowledgement of a person's humanity beyond transactional civilities. Nonpersons are treated as if they are not a person at all. Goffman offers an example: "...the classic type of non-person in our society is the servant... While in some senses the servant is part of the host's team... in certain ways he is defined by both performers and the audience as someone who isn't there" (1959:151). Children, the elderly, and those who are sick are often treated as nonpersons in certain types of encounters. Conversations often occur among adults as if the young or the old do not exist.

The nonperson treatment dehumanizes an individual, often based on one's social identity. Goffman (1959:151-52) states: "the role of the non-person usually carries with it some subordination and disrespect." Nonpersons are considered to be of insufficient ritual status to be extended basic social courtesies or

acknowledgement of one's humanity beyond transactional civilities. The nonperson treatment involves denying an individual or a category of others these basic interpersonal dignities.

Goffman (1963a) elaborates on the notion of the nonperson treatment as one type of interaction occurring among unfamiliar persons in public places. When meeting a stranger in public, one may ignore the other altogether; provide the stranger with subtle, noninvasive forms of acknowledgment; or explicitly engage the stranger in some fashion. Goffman refers to these three types of interactions, respectively, as the nonperson treatment, civil inattention, and encounter. The nonperson treatment differs from the other two types of interactions because it allows one to ignore the other completely, treating them as if they are an inanimate object or as if they do not exist at all. Interactionally, some or all of the ritualistic courtesies associated with being a full member of society are discarded.

Stigmatized individuals or groups are at an especially high risk of experiencing the nonperson treatment. Others feel uneasy around the stigmatized and often give stigmatized persons the nonperson treatment, treating them as if they are invisible. Members of stigmatized groups often receive the nonperson treatment, including minoritized populations, foreigners in close-knit communities, patients in mental institutions, and panhandlers (Goffman 1961:45, 1963a:133-34, 1963b; Lankenau 1999).

Within a capitalist society, some categories of workers are often denied the ritualistic courtesies associated with full personhood. Support or technical personnel like broadcasting technicians or photographers often experience the nonperson treatment at work (Goffman 1959:151-152). Similarly, free-lance musicians (Frederickson and Rooney 1988) and professionals in higher education (Scarborough 2021) may confront the nonperson treatment in their professional roles. The nonperson treatment is not limited to occupations of limited skill; the nonperson treatment can occur in any group in which individual decision-making, autonomy, and power are nullified. Workers who experience the nonperson treatment often internalize a sense of low prestige for themselves and for their occupation (Frederickson and Rooney 1988).

### **The Nonperson Treatment in the Neoliberal Academy**

Dwindling state appropriations, administrative bloat, and declining enrollments have contributed to a dire state of affairs in higher education. The 1990 to 2020 period has seen a decline in public spending per student nationally, including three multiyear funding reductions coupled with subpar annual gains in positive years. From 1990 to 2015, public support per student fell by 20 percent. To make matters worse, the COVID-19 pandemic induced a new set of cuts (Newfield 2021; Quintero 2012).

Institutions have responded to this financial crunch by raising tuition, increasing class sizes, and reducing instructional costs by utilizing contingent labor. Contingent faculty are attractive to administrators because of savings in instructional costs, salaries, and benefits (Samuels 2009). Short-term contracts allow contingent faculty to be hired and fired at will (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019).

Contingent faculty appointments are the norm in higher education today, especially in the “teaching-only” sector of higher education (Cardozo 2017). In Fall 2021, 68% of all instructional positions were non-tenure track across all U.S. institutions. At two-year institutions, 82% of faculty positions were off the tenure track in Fall 2021 (AAUP 2023c). This shift to contingent labor is done in the name of fiscal responsibility, but evidence shows that hiring more contingent faculty does not solve the fiscal challenges of financially stressed colleges (Hearn and Burns 2021).

There is a “two-tier system” in American higher education: tenure-track elites who possess institutional advantages and contingent faculty who are denied many institutional privileges, opportunities, and resources (ASA 2019). The social status of contingent faculty is diminished to the point where they are denied basic professional courtesies, face exclusion at work, and are often treated as if they do not exist. Goffman’s concept of nonpersonhood provides a useful lens to understand the broad range of categorical inequities and indignities

experienced by contingent faculty in higher education.

### *Job Insecurity*

Contingent faculty experience a high level of job insecurity. Contingent faculty were disproportionately impacted in the early COVID-19 pandemic. The number of contingent faculty appointments decreased 6.9% from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020, including a 2.9% decrease in full-time, non-tenure-track positions and an 8.7% decrease in part-time positions (AAUP 2022:15). As of Fall 2021, contingent appointments have not returned to pre-pandemic levels (AAUP 2023a, 2023c). These staggering “reductions in force” amid the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the precarious and tenuous nature of contingent employment.

By design, contingent faculty do not have job security. Being on a year-to-year or semester-to-semester contract means that the possibility of unemployment for contingent faculty is always a semester or academic year away. Renewable, long-term appointments are a luxury of tenure-track faculty.

### *The Adjunctification of Academia: Limited Opportunities for Advancement*

Full-time employment is out of reach for many in higher education. In fact, nearly 48% of all faculty positions in the U.S. are part-time positions (AAUP 2023c), including positions labeled adjunct, part-time, instructors, or other titles. Most part-time faculty are not

professionals who moonlight by teaching one course as a side gig. Conversely, many part-time faculty members work in academia exclusively, teach greater than full-time course loads, and may commute to work at multiple institutions.

Contingent faculty have limited opportunities for promotion within their institutions. Many contingent faculty appointments often have no defined "career ladders" for promotion or opportunities for advancement (AAUP 2023b; ASA 2019). On year-to-year or semester-to-semester contracts, contingent faculty often lack a defined path to transition into a tenure-track role, to acquire additional job protections, or earn seniority.

Career stagnation is exacerbated by other aspects of contingency. Contingent faculty's teaching duties often prohibit professional development. A lack of job security and low pay forces many contingent faculty to take on any classes that become available, often leaving little time for research or professional development that is necessary to be competitive for tenure-track jobs. On top of these challenges, contingent faculty are often stigmatized for working in contingent roles. This stigma often prevents securing a tenure-track appointment, resulting in a perpetual cycle of contingent appointments.

### *Income Inequities*

Contingent faculty pay is not proportional to work done (ASA 2019). Among faculty who primarily teach, excluding administrators or researchers, part-time faculty are paid about 75% less per course than full-time tenure-track faculty. Full-time contingent faculty earn about 40% less per course than full-time tenure-track faculty (GAO 2017). As a whole, contingent faculty make less than tenure-track faculty, but part-time faculty face significant pay inequities. Part-time faculty earn approximately 60% less than comparable full-time faculty when institutional salary is expressed on an hourly basis (Toutkoushian and Bellas 2003). In general, part-time faculty are often paid only for their teaching, receiving pay only for hours spent in the classroom (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019). Professional development, service, research, course preparation, grading, office hours, and other forms of work are uncompensated for part-time faculty. This unfair compensation is a chief concern among contingent faculty (Vincente 2017).

Compensation for contingent faculty lags behind other professionals with similar credentials. Contingent faculty often experience little or no wage premium for credentials, such as possessing a terminal degree in their discipline. To make matters worse, many contingent faculty positions lack a career ladder that provides a path to higher compensation (AAUP 2023b; ASA 2019).

Low income means that professional necessities are often cut out of contingent faculty members' personal budgets because there is insufficient surplus income left over after paying for food and shelter. Journal subscriptions, membership in professional associations, professional meeting attendance, and professional development are often untenable (ASA 2019:18). Foregoing these out-of-pocket expenses can harm contingent faculty's prospects of securing a position with higher compensation.

### *Insufficient Benefits*

Contingent faculty are less likely than tenure-track faculty to receive benefits from their employer, including health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, or retirement benefits. Preventative health care, dental work, and retirement savings are often luxuries. A medical issue can be a prelude to financial ruin. Contingent faculty face a precarious reality if they are unable to secure benefits through a second job, a spouse, or pay out of pocket.

Many contingent faculty are classified as part-time or are paid by the course, which makes them ineligible to receive employer-sponsored benefits like health insurance or employer contributions to retirement plans. Thus, contingent faculty have lower rates of enrollment in health insurance and retirement plans than tenure-track faculty. Part-time faculty are especially unlikely to have access to benefits (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; CAW 2012; GAO 2017:39).

Data from Georgia paints a grim reality when it comes to benefits access for part-time faculty. Among part-time faculty positions in Georgia, only 19.4% received retirement benefits, 7.1% received health insurance, and 9.3% received life insurance. Full-time contingent faculty fared better. Among full-time contingent faculty positions in Georgia, 97.9% received retirement benefits, 78.8% received health insurance, and 91.5% received life insurance. Full-time tenure-track faculty had higher rates of benefits coverage than contingent faculty. Among tenure-track faculty positions in Georgia, 99.1% received retirement benefits, 89.3% received health insurance, and 91.4% received life insurance (GAO 2017:39). These data show that part-time faculty are at an especially high risk of not receiving benefits from their employer.

In sum, there are significant benefits inequities between full-time tenure-track faculty and full-time contingent faculty, but the gaping inequities in benefits coverage are between full-time and part-time faculty. Part-time faculty receive very few benefits from their employers and many go without coverage or secure coverage from a source other than their employer.

### *Corporate Management in Higher Education*

The corporate management style that is pervasive in neoliberal capitalism is now institutionalized in higher education, resulting in dehumanizing labor practices. College



administrators increasingly adopt a corporate management style. Additionally, there has been an increase in employment of administrators, non-faculty professionals, and support staff in higher education in recent years. Spending has also shifted to cover student services and athletics. Expanding use of contingent faculty is attractive to administrators because of savings in instructional costs and benefits. Short-term contracts allow faculty to be hired and fired at will, generating additional savings (ASA 2019:8; Cardozo 2017; Samuels 2009). This model is fueled by an inexhaustible abundance of underemployed Ph.D. graduates who accept contingent employment to stay in academia (ASA 2023).

### *Curtailed Academic Freedom*

Respect for academic freedom has declined as have the protections that it once guaranteed. When speech inside and outside the classroom is censored for fear of reprisal or job loss, higher education ceases to be an independent forum for expression and free inquiry. The risk- and conflict-averse institutional practices in higher education undermine academic freedom for academics of all stripes (AAUP 2023c; ASA 2019).

Contingent faculty do not experience the same level of academic freedom as tenure-track or tenured faculty. Contingent faculty are at risk of non-reappointment if their lectures, research, or public speech attracts negative attention. Nonrenewal or termination can result from a student complaint to an administrator, public

backlash over lecture content or classroom exercises, or negative press related to research on divisive topics.

Contingency disempowers and silences. Those who lack job security are less likely to take risks in the classroom or speak truth to power. Without the protections of tenure, academic freedom is diminished and contingent faculty are uninsulated from the whims and biases of administrators, legislators, and donors.

New laws, mostly from Republican state legislatures, further undermine academic freedom for all faculty. Recent legislation defunds diversity initiatives, erodes job protections and due process for faculty, eliminates majors or fields of study, cuts courses like Introduction to Sociology from general education curricula, or disallows teaching concepts like critical race theory. These laws threaten the academic freedom of all faculty, but the academic freedom of contingent faculty is even more precarious due to a lack of job security.

### *Alienation from Faculty Governance*

Disregarded as nonpersons, contingent faculty members are disallowed a voice or a vote in the academy. While many colleges permit contingent faculty to attend faculty or department meetings, they are often denied the right to vote on institutional matters. Contingent faculty often report feeling disenfranchised, noting that they do not possess the same kind of

voice as tenure-stream faculty (Vincente 2017). Contingent faculty are institutional Plebeians, nonpersons who are denied a voice in faculty governance. Contingent faculty often have limited input in institutional affairs that impact their own livelihood. For example, contingent faculty are often marginalized from committee work associated with curriculum development and strategic planning that shapes college priorities. Contingent faculty often have no formal representation in matters that shape their professional realities. Some faculty senates may include a position or advisory body that represents part-time faculty interests, but most faculty-directed policies and practices are organized by and serve the interests of tenure-track faculty over contingent faculty (AAUP 2023c; Vincente 2017).

### *Ineligibility for Professional Development Opportunities*

Beyond being ineligible for promotion, contingent faculty are often ineligible for professional development opportunities, research funding, or awards. Many opportunities in higher education are reserved for tenure-track or full-time faculty. Contingent faculty are commonly ineligible to apply for institutional opportunities, such as fellowships, professional development opportunities, formal mentorship programs, or research support (Danaei 2019; ASA 2019). At many institutions, tenure-track faculty are eligible for paid sabbaticals to work on research. The closest opportunity to a sabbatical that contingent faculty might receive

is unemployment insurance. Ineligibility for professional development opportunities from their departments, colleges, and professional organizations results in marginalization and career stagnation for contingent faculty.

Contingent faculty are often categorically excluded or not considered for symbolic awards within departments, on campus, and in professional organizations (ASA 2019). Contingent faculty, especially part-time faculty, are often ineligible for professional recognition, including awards like being named Professor of the Year, Scholar of the Year, or Teacher of the Year. Contingent status disallows recognition despite one's successes in the classroom, publication record, professional development, or service.

### *Limited Schedule Autonomy*

Contingent faculty often have little autonomy in selecting their teaching assignments. Contingent faculty may not be able to voice preferences about the number of classes they teach, when they teach, the modality of instruction, or select the courses that they will offer. In academia, tenure-track faculty often get to teach specialized, upper-level courses, while contingent faculty tend to teach introductory, lower-level courses. Contingent faculty often accept more courses than they can teach in order to pay bills or as a protection against courses being cancelled at the last minute (ASA 2019:18). In some cases, the relative

powerlessness of contingent faculty silences faculty from making any scheduling requests.

Contingent faculty lack the autonomy to choose whether they work part-time or full-time schedules. Most contingent faculty are contingent by necessity, not by choice. A large percentage of part-time faculty aspire to be full-time faculty. In other words, if they had the choice, many contingent faculty would prefer full-time, tenure-track positions (ASA 2019:11; GAO 2017).

### *Invisibility*

Contingent faculty are often forgotten, excluded, marginalized, or treated as if they do not exist. Along with concerns about fair compensation, marginalization is a chief concern among contingent faculty (Vincente 2017).

Administrators and tenure-track faculty often exclude contingent faculty from social events, meetings, newsletters, emails, or professional development opportunities (ASA 2019:20). Contingent faculty are "often framed as laborers and not as professionals" (Kezar and Sam 2011:1421). Some tenure-track faculty do not know part-time faculty at all, although they are colleagues in the same departments. Similarly, many contingent faculty do not appear on college webpages or personnel directories. In many cases, they do not have office space or a mailbox on campus. Contingent faculty are alienated from the intellectual and social life of the academy.

Much of the work performed by contingent faculty is invisible institutionally and often uncompensated. Contingent faculty's research, service, mentorship, and professional development are often unacknowledged. Especially for those paid on a per-course basis, labor outside the classroom is invisible. Contingent faculty may volunteer for college or departmental service in hopes that this uncompensated labor will increase their job security (ASA 2019:20). In many cases, this uncompensated labor is not considered by administrators who make decisions that dictate a contingent faculty member's future.

### *Unequal Access to Campus Resources*

Contingent faculty often do not have access to the same campus or professional resources as tenure-track faculty. Many contingent faculty members are denied office space that provides privacy for meeting with students, doing course preparation, and storing their personal belongings. Contingent faculty may not have access to college-issued computers, telephone lines, school systems, photocopying, office supplies, library access, or access to on-campus support (ASA 2019). Lacking access to these professional and campus resources means that many contingent faculty perform their duties without key tools and resources that are necessary to do their job. In many cases, contingent faculty must pay for supplies and services out of pocket.

## **The Costs of Institutionalized Contingency**

This article examines the challenges and dehumanizing reality of contingent faculty in higher education today, including inequities in compensation, lack of opportunities for advancement, stigma, and many other occupational deprivations. Administrators and institutions rely on contingent faculty as a cost-saving measure. Tragically, the costs are steep for everyone in higher education.

Contingent faculty labor is precarious and stressful. For contingent faculty with a tenuous foothold in academia, they are often one personal misfortune, dependent care responsibility, medical emergency, or economic downturn away from unemployment or financial disaster (ASA 2019:18-19). Contingency produces stress. On top of the stresses that all faculty members face, contingent faculty deal with precariousness, invisibility, low pay, a lack of benefits, and other stressors. Marginalization and disenfranchisement are often fixtures of contingent employment. It should not be a surprise that contingent faculty are at high risk for depression, anxiety, and stress. Comparisons to tenure-track faculty often produce feelings of self-blame, stress, and a sense of lost possibilities among non-tenure-track faculty (Feldman and Turnley 2004; Reevy and Deason 2014; Vincente 2017). Even when controlling for salary and hours worked, contingent faculty experience "relative deprivation," which results in negative career attitudes and job behaviors (Feldman and Turnley 2004).

It is an understatement to say that contingent faculty are denied the symbolic and professional rights and privileges of tenure-track academics. The institutionalized inequities and challenges faced by contingent faculty in higher education amount to what Erving Goffman would call the nonperson treatment. Although their instructional activities are vital to the function of higher education today, contingent faculty viewpoints and emotions are disregarded. The wellbeing of contingent faculty is a tertiary priority in higher education. Contingent faculty are a caste without a formal voice or vote, marginalized from advocating for changes to their institutional reality in today's neoliberal academy.

It is important to emphasize that the challenges of contingency are not just experienced by a few folks on the fringes of higher education. A majority of faculty in higher education today are contingent faculty; 68% of all instructional positions were non-tenure track across all U.S. institutions as of Fall 2021. The percentage of faculty in contingent positions was even higher before substantial cuts to contingent faculty ranks amid the COVID-19 pandemic (AAUP 2023a, 2023c). Contingency is institutionalized in U.S. higher education.

The decline of tenure-track appointments has a range of negative consequences for colleges, faculty, and students. Contingent faculty generally undergo the same professional socialization as tenure-stream faculty, but they often face added challenges at work. In part due

to a lack of belonging on their campuses, there is evidence that contingent faculty are less likely to incorporate innovative teaching methods and practices into their instruction. While the teaching practices of full-time contingent faculty closely parallel those of their tenure-stream colleagues, the teaching practices of part-time contingent faculty differ in important ways from full-time faculty. Teaching a high number of sections across multiple institutions or limited access to campus resources often forces part-time faculty to compromise best practices in their instructional activities (Baldwin and Wawrzynski 2011; Umbach 2007).

The institutionalization of contingency devolves the university from a community of scholars into a work center of academic contractors. The role of faculty is shifting away from research and intellectual leadership to a short-term contract model. Additionally, the decline of tenure-track appointments results in a less cohesive faculty where tenure-track and contingent faculty rarely interact. The integrity of college's core function of educating our youth is threatened as work is divided piecemeal among a rotating cast of graduate instructors, part-time instructors, and short-term lecturers. The quality of instruction, the cohesiveness of the curriculum, and integrity of academic programs are undermined (ASA 2019).

Contingent faculty experience the nonperson treatment at work, but it is important to realize that they are not the only victims of higher education's dehumanizing bureaucracy.

Institutions find efficiencies by extracting as much labor as possible from tenure-track faculty to maximize profit. Similarly, college staff have long been subject to the nonperson treatment. Much staff labor is undercompensated and often invisible. Staff's essential functions on campus are undervalued and seldom celebrated. Even students experience the nonperson treatment. A reliance on contingent labor and increasing class sizes prioritize institutional profit over student learning. Students are often deprived of mentorship opportunities when most of their faculty members are overworked contingent faculty. Additionally, students cannot benefit from faculty knowledge about college resources when the faculty consists of a rotating cast of contingent faculty members. Though this article has focused on contingent faculty, the nonperson treatment is an epidemic in American higher education that impacts all college constituents.

### **Confronting the Nonperson Treatment in Higher Education**

Acknowledging the inequities faced by contingent faculty is a prerequisite to changing dehumanizing practices in higher education. Too often, a blind eye is turned to practices of power consolidation, boundary work, and discrimination on our own campuses and in our own departments. Any departure from full professional courtesy, full institutional privileges, and full human rights segregates contingent faculty categorically as a disenfranchised caste of nonpersons. Treatment in the academic

workplace should not depend on whether a faculty member is tenure track or non-tenure track (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019). A manifold range of institutional reforms are warranted if equity in higher education is the goal.

Improving pay and providing access to benefits for contingent faculty could stymie the growth of these positions. Contingent faculty positions would be less attractive to administrators if they did not provide cost savings relative to tenure-track positions. Reforms to employment practices can mitigate the low pay and limited job security faced by contingent faculty. A good start to address low pay among contingent faculty would be promoting equal pay for equal work. Pay inequities can be addressed by making pay proportional to work done. Similarly, institutions of higher education should provide contingent faculty with retirement benefits and health insurance regardless of their job title. Expanding access to healthcare and retirement benefits for contingent faculty would reduce the precariousness associated with non-tenure-track employment. Additionally, employment offers should be provided well in advance of starting dates. Institutional practices related to staffing and scheduling should be adjusted to provide as much short- and long-term job security as possible (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019).

Additional reforms are necessary to make our campuses more inclusive for contingent faculty. It is paramount to protect academic

freedom for all faculty, irrespective of their job title. All faculty should be included in institutional governance, including contingent faculty. It is unlikely that circumstances will improve for contingent faculty if they are excluded categorically from faculty governance. Representation in faculty governance is essential for overcoming the nonperson treatment and achieving a reality where contingent faculty experience belonging at work. Academic labor issues are also diversity issues (Cardozo 2017). Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging strategies on college campuses should place an emphasis on incorporating contingent faculty into campus and department social life. Faculty and those in leadership positions must include contingent faculty in communications, meetings, and events. Non-tenure-track faculty can benefit from professional development and mentoring opportunities. Additionally, all faculty, including contingent faculty, should be eligible for academic awards and eligible to participate in professional development and intellectual opportunities (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019; Danaei 2019).

Professional organizations must recognize and address inequities related to contingency in higher education and their disciplines. The American Sociological Association and other organizations representing academics can take additional steps to be accessible to contingent faculty. Recognizing inequities faced by contingent faculty is a prerequisite to achieving social

change. Fees and dues should be structured to make organizations accessible to contingent faculty. Professional organizations can also make meetings affordable and welcoming for students and non-tenure-track faculty. Additionally, professional development opportunities and mentoring programs should be open to contingent faculty (AAUP 2023b, 2023c; ASA 2019; Danaei 2019).

Erving Goffman's concept of the nonperson treatment provides a conceptual lens

to understand the experiences of those who are marginalized. This article examines how contingent faculty experience the nonperson treatment in higher education, but Goffman's conceptual theory can be applied to other groups inside and outside of higher education. Acknowledging these inequities is a prerequisite to enacting institutional reforms that can make our campuses and our departments more equitable places.

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