

from a weakened Weimar Republic, on which Hitler then capitalized to organize a new dynamic Germany whose enemies were defined mainly in terms of network-resistance. Decisions that would have been normally taken by constitutionally defined bodies were repeatedly devolved to ad hoc agencies, including courts, designed to organize the populace to deal with what had been deemed exceptional circumstances, a state of "permanent emergency." To be sure, Neumann wrote before Nazism's totalitarian and genocidal image had crystallized. Nevertheless, as someone who had been a lawyer and political scientist in the Weimar Republic, he was struck simply by the amount of collectively enforced and casually observed brutality that could be brought about by such an administratively haphazard regime. Perhaps something similar might be said about a society dominated by actor-networks?

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The Decline of Tenure in Higher Education: Three Analyses of Causes and Consequences

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At the turn of the twentieth century, university faculty—like other workers in the United States—were "at-will" employees. They could be fired whenever their employer deemed it convenient, for any reason. Faculty who challenged the political or economic *status quo* were often fired, and for every one fired, many more self-censored rather than suffer the same fate (Menand 2002: 411-20; Hofstadter and Metzger 1955: 413-67). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), founded in 1915, intended to change that situation. Its Declaration of Principles explained the rationale for replacing at-will employment with what it called "tenure":

The responsibility of the university teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of its own profession; and while, with respect to certain external conditions of his vocation, he

Off-Track Profs: Nontenured Teachers in Higher Education, by **John G. Cross** and **Edie N. Goldenberg**. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009. 196pp. \$30.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780262012911.

How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation, by **Marc Bousquet**. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008. 281pp. \$23.00 paper. ISBN: 9780814799758.

Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class, by **Christopher Newfield**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. 395pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780674028173.

accepts a responsibility to the authorities of the institution in which he

serves, in the essentials of his professional activity his duty is to the wider public to which the institution itself is morally amenable. . . . University teachers should be understood to be, with respect to the conclusions reached and expressed by them, no more subject to the control of the trustees, than are judges subject to the control of the President, with respect to their decisions (AAUP 1915).

The point of tenure, in short, was to protect the autonomy of professionally competent faculty vis-à-vis private actors who might otherwise succeed in shaping research agendas and course syllabi to advance their particular interests at the expense of the public interest. Professional autonomy and the system of tenure designed to protect it was thus understood as a public, not a private, good. This justification for awarding tenure to competent faculty applies not only to those with cutting-edge research programs, but also to those who teach their students and the public about what the best research shows and what this implies for different conceptions of the public interest.

Put another way, the balance between teaching and research in faculty job descriptions was not relevant to tenure eligibility as the AAUP understood it. Consistent with this, by 1940 when the AAUP and the American Association of Colleges agreed to an updated statement of principles, tenure-track jobs had become the norm in America's four-year colleges and universities, whether their focus was more on undergraduate teaching (as in liberal arts colleges), or on research (as in the so-called R1 institutions).

For a generation this norm endured, but by the 1970s, the share of tenure track positions was declining. It declined most completely in the two-year colleges, followed by private four-year universities, with four-year public colleges bringing up the rear, and R1 public universities at the tail-end of the rear (Dobbie and Robinson 2008). But by 2008, even an R1 like the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor relied on nontenure-track (NTT) faculty for teaching 36 percent of its undergraduate student credit hours; graduate student instructors (another type

of NTT teacher) accounted for another 24 percent. Tenure-track (TT) faculty—that is, those who are tenured or subject to tenure review—account for the remaining 40 percent.¹ Thus, by the turn of the twenty-first century, most higher education faculty in the United States were once again at-will employees.

Along with this statistical shift went a change in the understanding of tenure's purpose without which the erosion of tenure would have been much more difficult. Today, most academics and administrators understand tenure as a reward for extraordinary scholarly merit. In effect, tenure has been privatized—turned into an individual benefit like a big bonus or a corner office—to be auctioned off to the shrinking number of faculty willing and able to pay the cost of acquiring it. Of course, that cost rises as the share of tenure-track jobs in the academic labor market falls.

How did it come to this? Who was responsible for the decisions that led us here and what were they trying to do? What are the most important consequences of this shift? From very different perspectives, the three books reviewed here offer partial—and often divergent—answers to these questions.

John Cross and Edie Goldenberg were Deans of the School of Literature, Science and the Arts (LS&A) at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in the 1990s. Cross, an economist, is now Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance at Bloomfield College, and Goldenberg has returned to her position as a Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at UM. Marc Bousquet, now an Associate Professor of English at Santa Clara University and Co-Chair of the AAUP's Committee on Contingent Faculty and the Profession, draws on years of participation in the academic labor movement, particularly as a graduate student union activist at New York University. Finally, Christopher Newfield, Professor of

¹ These data are from the University of Michigan, shared with the union of nontenure-track faculty there as part of the collective bargaining process. The School of Literature, Science and the Arts (LS&A) accounts for about half of all undergraduates enrolled at the University of Michigan's "flagship" campus in Ann Arbor.

English, also at Santa Clara, brings to his analysis the perspective of a tenured professor who has been in the thick of California's "culture wars," defending affirmative action and the idea that the public university's mission is to deliver high quality education to all who are willing to work hard, regardless of family income.

How do our authors explain the erosion of tenure? Cross and Goldenberg offer a complex answer to this question. They argue that central administrations in R1s are not inclined to increase resources to meet growing teaching needs by hiring expensive and relatively inflexible TT faculty, because teaching is not their top priority (pp. 71–2). This encourages departments to hire NTT faculty for this purpose. This tendency was exacerbated in the 1980s and 1990s by the vogue for "responsibility-centered management" (RCM) budgeting systems imported from the private sector with the aim of incentivizing schools and departments to cut costs and raise more revenue from external sources. Schools and departments responded to these new incentives in various ways, one being the decision of many units to hire more NTT faculty for undergraduate teaching and allocate the money saved to the competition to attract and retain faculty research stars (pp. 90–93).

Both departments and central administrators thus have some responsibility in this approach. The intermediate level in the institutional structure—the Schools and their Deans—can also play an important role, though the authors do not have much to say about this. For example, in the mid-1990s, UM's School of LS&A declared that no new Lecturer hires would include a research component—something that had been fairly common to that point. This meant that all new Lecturers hired had a 3/3 teaching load, as against a TT load of 2/2 or 2/1. The cost savings per course from hiring NTT faculty was thereby increased, and with it, the incentive to hire NTT faculty to teach undergrads.

Cross and Goldenberg think that R1 administrators' reluctance to hire TT faculty to teach undergraduates has increased as the competition among R1s for top 10 ranking (based largely on the research prowess of faculty stars) has intensified. They are highly

critical of this competition, noting that when a department increases its ranking in the national league tables from 3 to 2, another must go from 2 to some lower number: "From a national standpoint, what has been accomplished? What may have been an enormous resource commitment will serve no additional students. It has built no new buildings, and it will not likely change the quantity or quality of research carried out. . . . What it will do is enhance the reputation of one university compared to another, raise a few salaries, and cost a lot of money" (pp. 62–3). They go on to say that, particularly in public universities facing declining state transfers and relatively small endowments (compared with the Ivy League competition), "competition for stars consumes financial resources, leaving less for other faculty." This reinforces the other incentives for hiring NTT faculty (p. 64). But then, having mounted this powerful critique, Cross and Goldenberg state that the R1s cannot declare a unilateral cease-fire and abandon this costly and irrational competition, because that would quickly result in the loss of star faculty and star students, too!

Newfield agrees that inter-university status competition is a key driver among R1s (and would-be R1s), endorsing David Kirp's (2003: 234) statement that NYU's attempt to raise its status with star faculty hires required that it shift 70 percent of its undergraduate teaching to "exploited adjunct" faculty. But Newfield does not agree that R1s are caught in a collective action problem. He attributes the refusal of public university presidents and provosts to stop playing this game to a failure to maintain a clear vision of the distinctive mission of the public university. Absent such a vision, there is no recognition that in the futile competition with much better endowed Ivys, the public R1s are sacrificing the two characteristics that define their unique value in American higher education: accessibility to high quality education for all through low tuition; and research that focuses on our most pressing social problems, particularly those that private actors are exploring inadequately. Newfield traces this failure of vision to the "culture warriors'" success in promoting the neoliberal assumption that organizations must adapt individually to "market forces,"

rather than acting together to change market dynamics by altering the rules governing competition (pp. 234–5).

Bousquet, in Chapter Three, does not agree that university administrators have been “captured” by a corporate market mentality. Rather, he sees them in Gramscian terms, drawing on the available corporate culture to construct a new hegemonic discourse about the purposes of today’s universities. He sees this effort as a response to the loss of control that administrations experienced when students and faculty organized and mobilized in the 1960s and early 1970s. From this perspective, increased reliance on graduate instructors and nontenure-track faculty is partly about saving money and increasing flexibility, but it is also about creating divisions among faculty that undermine their common professional identities, rendering organization and collective action more difficult. Tenured faculty are complicit in this shift, driven by their desire to improve their departments’ rankings, but they focus on rankings because they have succumbed to the “wildly successful social engineering of faculty culture” that university administrators have effected over the last 30 years (p. 13).

In Chapter Six, Bousquet sees widespread acceptance of what he calls “job market theory” as evidence of most faculty’s incapacity to think their way out of the neoliberal cultural box that university management has constructed for them. Job market theory says that the erosion of tenure is caused by an excess supply of PhDs who prefer NTT jobs to quitting academe. This surplus means that departments do not have to promise a shot at tenure to attract PhDs to academic work; they can also cut wages dramatically. The real problem, Bousquet argues, is quite different: universities are steadily reducing the share of TT jobs, and accepting more non-PhD candidates for these NTT positions. As a result, under what were supposed to be conditions of PhD oversupply, only 60 percent of new hires between 1985 and 1992 had PhDs, compared with 70 percent of the senior faculty (p. 204).

What are the most important consequences of the erosion of tenure? None of our authors attempts to gauge the impact of this erosion

on the quality and breadth of public policy debate or civic engagement. Newfield does not devote much attention to this issue, so I will not discuss him further here. For Bousquet, the most important consequence of the shift has been the dramatic increase in the exploitation of graduate students and NTT faculty, and the assignment of less qualified and inexperienced teachers to undergraduate teaching. Thus undergrads pay more and work harder to get a lower quality education. In part because of the increased wage work they must do to pay for higher tuition, less than half of those who start higher education complete it (p. 148).

Bousquet does not present evidence directly bearing on the quality of undergraduate teaching. For him it is obviously true that NTT faculty running back and forth between three different universities, without their own office, without health care and so on, cannot possibly offer the kind of quality that more secure TT faculty with a lower work load can. There are many NTT faculty in this situation, particularly in lower tier public universities and community colleges, and for this group, I think he is right. But there are also many NTT faculty—particularly in the relatively well-off R1s—who teach full-time at one university, have multi-year contracts, and are paid a salary rather than by the course. It is not obvious that their teaching will be worse, on average, than those who do not specialize in, or care as much about, undergraduate teaching because they have research and graduate teaching responsibilities that compete for their time and attention. Lower pay could result in lower effort, and with it, lower quality teaching. Indeed, this might be the economically rational response, but professional identity and values, as well as concern with the welfare of our students, pull us in the opposite direction. It is an interesting question, then, how these opposing forces work out.

Cross and Goldenberg offer the only direct evidence bearing on this question found in the volumes under review—culled from 12 years of student evaluations in the upper and lower divisions of six LS&A departments at the University of Michigan—noting that none of the other universities they examined had such data. They find higher average

scores for NTT faculty in all six departments for both upper and lower division courses (p. 124). While recognizing that student evaluations are an inadequate measure of teaching quality, they argue that if specialization is such a powerful force for improved quality in other domains of economic and social life, it should not be so surprising that NTT faculty—if they are given full-time positions and a reasonable teaching load—make excellent undergraduate teachers.

To conclude, the books reviewed here offer a range of answers—at odds with one another in important respects—to the questions posed in this review. None provide the kind of systematic comparative analysis that would allow us to assess the relative merits of the competing hypotheses that we can derive from their discussions. Moreover, all of these books focus primarily on the R1 universities—a small though important piece of the larger story of American higher education. It is remarkable, given how long these trends have been under way, that we are only now beginning to generate detailed hypotheses about why this is happening and with what results, but that is where we are. Each of these books contain important insights,

outrageous assertions and frustrating omissions. This reviewer found Bousquet's penchant for hyperbolic declarations, and Cross and Goldenberg's largely unsubstantiated claims about what NTT unions have done and can do, particularly exasperating. But the books nonetheless represent an important start. There is much for sociologists—notably absent from the sources cited by these books—to do.

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The Modern Research University: Outside and In

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Marketization. Privatization. Commodification. Deprofessionalization. These words, as hard on the ears as on the spellchecker, are commonly used to describe the growing influence of market logic on higher education. The lack of euphony, however, is itself telling. The length of the words represents the magnitude of the effects generated by this change, while the need for neologisms signals that these are emerging processes (the requisite “-ation”) that are difficult to define precisely, especially if we limit ourselves to existing words and concepts.

In part, the growing influence of this market logic is hard to describe because, although pervasive, it is often also subtle and gradual: a request for new data about

Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University, by **Gaye Tuchman**. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 256pp. \$25.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780226815299.

Professing to Learn: Creating Tenured Lives and Careers in the American Research University, by **Anna Neumann**. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 306pp. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780801891311.

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