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WHY WE "PROFESS" RATHER THAN TEACH:

Implications of the Gendered Construction of Work for Academic Unions

Although connections between the gendered construction of work and institutional arrangements in higher education are seldom explored by researchers, the assumption that teaching is "women's work" is a key to understanding the social stratification of higher education in the U.S.—and to organizing higher education faculty. I sketch the implications of my analysis for faculty unions after describing the international context in which faculty organizing in the U.S. should be understood, in particular neoliberalism's project to make education a commodity and dismantle public education as "public good."

International Trade in Education

2.1. Unfortunately, organizations representing teachers and professors in the U.S. lag behindunions elsewhere in the Anglophone world in alerting and organizing their members about the profound impact international trade agreements are having on schooling. Global treaties are transforming the very definition of education, in particular the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). As two British researchers explain, GATS

is about trade across all sectors of education; primary, secondary, higher, adult and other. All forms of education provision are regarded as potential areas for trade, in the same way that we might trade in coffee or banana production. In other words, the mandate for education is transformed from a 'service to the economy and trade' to 'trading a service in the global economy'. (Robertson and Dale, 2002, p. 16)

2.2. Within the U.S. the drive to privatize delivery of educational services is well-documented. But what may not be apparent to faculty in higher education is that privatization and decentralization in K-12 schooling is part of neoliberalism's global strategy for education at *all* levels. Both powering and sailing on the powerful ideological winds of neoliberalism, transnational corporations eagerly seek the education market, the last domain of public service provision that is only marginally privatized (Weiner, 2005). In this paper I adopt Roberto Unger's definition of neoliberalism, cited by Robertson and Dale (2002, p. 7):

In its most abstract and universal form, neoliberalism is the program (and it is crucial to recognize that neoliberalism constitutes a new programme rather than merely a new set of policies) committed to orthodox macroeconomic stabilization, especially through fiscal balance, achieved more by containment of public spending than by increases in the tax take; to liberalization in the form of increasing integration into the world trading system and its established rules; to privatization, understood both more

narrowly as the withdrawal of government from production and more generally as the adoption of standard Western private law; and to the deployment of compensatory social policies ("social safety nets") designed to counteract the unequalizing effects of the other planks in the program. (Roberto Unger, 1998, p.53)

2.3. In order for education to be traded, it must be turned into a commodity like steel or bananas, something that can be sold and bought in the market, a process that erases the distinction between "education" and "training." In *Digital Diploma Mills*, Noble (2002) analyzes how learning and teaching are reduced to commodities in the fast-growing sector of for-profit online higher education. While training requires acquisition of "a set of skills or a body of information designed to be put to use, to become operational only in a context determined by someone other than the trained person... Education is the exact opposite of training in that it entails...integration of knowledge and the self, in a word, self-knowledge" (Noble, 2002, p. 2).

2.4. To commodify education, the relational interaction between students and teachers has to be eliminated. The totality of the educational experience has to be fragmented, broken into discrete elements: syllabi, lectures, and tests, taken together become the course "content." In the absence of copyright protections, course "content" is taken from the instructors who created it and sold on the market. In this way "the buying and selling of commodities takes on the appearance of education. But it is, in reality, only a shadow of education, an assemblage of pieces without the whole" (Noble, 2002, p. 3). The linchpin of Noble's argument about the transformation of education into a commodity is that quality teaching is, inescapably, labor-intensive, in other words, a transactional process between student and teacher. Note that in his discussion, Noble does not differentiate between teaching in higher education and teaching in primary schools. 2.5. The role of the U.S. government in subsidizing the growth of online education in the U.S., primarily through federal student aid and military training (Noble, 2002), emerges from neoliberalism's strategy to decentralize and privatize educational systems globally, so that education on all levels will be both tradeable and profitable. So far, of the four categories in which education is divided, neoliberal economists and governments have been able to include in the treaties only one, vocational training, termed "adult education," (Robertson and Dale, 2002), but advocates of "free trade" are pressing hard to include all sectors of education, from preschool through university, in treaties under negotiation.

2.6. Two aspects of the treaties are especially dangerous to higher education's construction as a "public good." When a nation has signed a trade treaty through one of the arms of the World Trade Organization (WTO), it agrees that WTO tribunals, held in secret, can overturn decisions arrived at democratically in member countries, about any areas that are included the pact. In addition, the pacts do not permit a government to withdraw from one particular area of trade after the treaty has been signed (Kuehn, 2001). In a working paper for the Hawkes Institute, Australian researcher Marjorie Cohen (2000) warns that if higher education is included in new treaties as a tradeable commodity, local regulations that limit the acceptance of these degrees could be challenged as privileging one provider, the public institutions, and therefore certification purposes, for nurses, lawyers, doctors, or teachers, would be interfering with free trade. The University of Phoenix could demand the right if higher education is included as a tradeable service in the next round of treaties to have its graduates receive the same treatment as graduates of public universities. Cohen suggests that a key to preventing this scenario is for public research universities to shed for-profit ventures, so as to strengthen the case that they are not, in fact, the same as the commercial universities and therefore should not be considered competitors of commercial operations.

2.7. Another immediate threat to public institutions of higher education and faculty is neoliberalism's global drive to curtail public expenditures on social services. The World Bank enforces this policy in its loans, forcing recipients to curtail public services and to shift money spent on higher education to primary schooling. Using evidence that spending on higher education goes disproportionately to the middle classes, World Bank policy documents argue that "equity" demands that public expenditures in education be diverted from higher education to primary schooling (World Bank, 2003). Although the argument

about diverting funds in the name of "equity" has not yet appeared in the U.S., we should anticipate that it will, especially in light of bipartisan support for greatly increased military spending.

2.8. When money for higher education is diverted to primary schooling, the reality sharply contradicts the World Bank's claim that the policy promotes "equity." Puiggros (1996) describes how the rhetorical promotion of "equity" contradicts the reality of economic restructuring in Latin America. Although Puiggros' study was published several years ago, she critiques policies that are still very much in effect, promoted in the most recent report on providing services to poor people. The World Bank demands reduced public expenditures on all services, especially those that do not supply direct income or cannot be recouped right away, like public education. In this zero-sum game, education can be allocated only a small amount of money, and so resources for higher education are considered unwise. The historical experiences of Peru, Argentina, and Nicaragua with school reform forced by the World Bank clearly demonstrate that while colleges and universities lose funding, the money is not diverted to primary schooling. Control over primary education is decentralized and privatized, generating a few model school projects that yield considerable publicity. However, these successful projects contradict the more general reality of deteriorated schools, of teachers' salaries cut, and fees imposed for students' use of books, even lower grades, and of reduced enrollments and achievement.

2.9. Throughout Latin America, the World Bank has not only cut the amount of money to higher education but has also insisted on changes in the nature of faculty work. In Mexico, researchers must interrupt work in progress to pursue topics that generate immediately applicable results that give universities additional income because half of their salary is paid according to efficiency indexes. Teaching is given less point value than research, and merit pay raises provide far more income than the base salary of university professors (Puiggros, 1996).

Resistance of Teacher Organizations

3.1. Globally, teachers and their unions have been a primary target of the assault on public education as well as the leaders of resistance. To dismantle systems of public education, many developed a century ago as part of nation-building, governments carrying out World Bank demands for restructuring confront teachers and their organizations. As a World Bank report (1998) notes, "In almost every developing country teachers are the largest group of workers in the civil or public service and the largest item in the education budget" (Gaynor, 1998, p. 1). As public education has been assaulted, teachers unions in many countries have fought back, as in the Global Campaign for Education, a broad alliance of about 150 non-governmental organizations, teacher organizations, and child-rights activists (Jellerna, 2002).

3.2. The remark by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige that the NEA (National Education Association) is a "terrorist organization" (Goldstein, 2004) was widely criticized by the media. The remark takes on a different significance when viewed in light of teachers unions' struggles against neoliberal reforms internationally. Although Paige was swiftly criticized by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), neither organization related Paige's remark to ongoing confrontations between governments implementing neoliberal reforms and teachers and teacher organizations. In fact, Gayle Fallon, President of the Houston AFT local, defended Paige, speculating that he had made a joke that was misunderstood. Fallon used Paige's remark as an opportunity to criticize the NEA, remarking to a reporter that "The NEA isn't militant enough to be a terrorist

group...They're barely militant enough to be a labor union" (Goldstein, 2004, p. 19). In private correspondence with me (4 July 2004), Fallon explains that Paige's remark was no different from the sort he had made to her over the years, in exchanges of insults understood as friendly. But the context of

Paige's remark contradicts Fallon's explanation: Paige was briefing members of Congress from both parties about the Bush administration's educational policy, describing his frustration with the NEA's opposition.

3.3. Neither Fallon nor Paige's critics made the connection between his remark and World Bank documents that assail teachers and their unions for impeding global prosperity (Devarajan and Reinikka, 2002). The World Bank working paper about how to make services work for poor people attacks teachers unions as hampering delivery of quality social services in poor countries. The authors contend teachers and teachers unions perpetuate poverty by not doing their jobs well, for instance not showing up to work, and because "the lion's share [of public money for social services] goes to wages and salaries. With their political power, teachers and doctors are able to protect their incomes when there is pressure for budget cuts." (Devarajan and Reinikka, 2002, p. 6). The report explores the benefits of replacing the existing workforce with far less qualified applicants and contracting out educational services, noting that in Benin this has been done.

3.4. The EI (Education International) is an international federation of teacher unions with 311 affiliates and 25 million members (American Federation of Teachers, 2003). Responding to the World Bank working paper, Linda Asper (2003), EI Deputy General Secretary, defends the role of teacher unions in developing countries. Asper notes teachers are themselves among the poor, paid months late, and often below the poverty line, working second jobs to support themselves. I explore the role of the AFT and the NEA in the EI elsewhere (Weiner, 2005), but a brief discussion is important to understand two contradictory processes in the EI's operation. One is the EI's clear defense of the right of teachers to organize unions. It has consistently come to the rescue of teacher unionists imprisoned for their activity and mounts international campaigns drawing attention to their plight. On the other hand, EI's more temperate opposition to neoliberal restructuring more closely mirrors the ideological stance of the leadership of the AFL-CIO than it does of teacher unionists in the developing world. In addition, questions remain about the extent to which the AFT, through its involvement in AFL-CIO international operations, is involved in subverting popular resistance to neoliberal reforms (Scipes, 2002).

Class and Gender in Higher Education in the U.S.

4.1. The gendered construction of work may seem unrelated to dangers to higher education posed by education's inclusion in WTO treaties, but in fact, both phenomena emerge from neoliberalism's presumption of capitalist social relations, social relations that cannot be understood without reference to gender oppression. Because neoliberalism's agenda is not (yet) actualized as fully in this country as it is in developing nations, teachers elsewhere in the world are likely to see in a way we do not in the U.S. how World Bank demands to cut funds to public education, and the arrest and assassination of teacher union leaders, are related to one another and to capitalist social relations and neoliberalism's ideological assumptions.

4.2. Wood (1995) argues that capitalism can and does use gender oppression, but criticizes the focus on "extra economic goods—gender emancipation, racial equality, peace, ecological health, democratic citizenship" noting that "the socialist project of class emancipation always has been, or should have been, a means to the larger end of human emancipation" (p. 264). She contends that identity politics obfuscates the structural primacy of the working class and the centrality of class politics, observing that "Capitalism could survive the eradication of all oppressions specific to women as women while it would not, by definition, survive the eradication of class exploitation" (p. 270).

4.3. Briefly put, my theoretical argument against this reasoning is that Wood (and others who make this case) ignore a dynamic defended elsewhere in her argument about the salience of class: the necessity of understanding capitalist social relations, as a system, in a specific historic context. One can even grant her

assumption, unsupported by evidence, that capitalism could theoretically exist as a social system without gender and race oppression and still maintain that "extra-economic" forms of oppression are so deeply embedded in existing capitalist social relations that it is impossible to understand the institutional arrangements and formation of class identity without reference to these extra-economic considerations. For example, it is theoretically possible that capitalism could have developed with forms of social organization that were not gendered. However, it did not. There is now both theoretical and empirical work "showing the connection between power and organizations...suggesting a close empirical link between the modern organizations found in Western societies and particular forms of gender inequality" (Savage and Blackwell, 1992, p. 9). The emergence of the bureaucratic career depended on the presence of women who would complete menial tasks, freeing men to advance more quickly to more responsible jobs in the bureaucracy. It also assumed a "female 'servicer', his wife, who would be expected to carry out a range of duties for her husband, so allowing him to devote more time to the organization's affairs" (Savage and Blackwell, 1992, p.11). So it is possible that capitalism might have developed without work being constructed as men's responsibility, and women's sphere of influence being the home. But it did not develop in this way, and we see the results of gendered institutional relations quite clearly in education at all levels.

4.4. Teaching in most Western societies is considered an extension of the female responsibility for caring for children. Real work occurs outside of the home; work inside the home, caring for children and maintaining the family, is constructed as dichotomous to paid labor. However, teaching, when it occurs as paid labor outside the home but entails the sort of work that is unpaid in the home, defies categorization in this traditional framework. It carries the stigma of being "women's work" and hence has low status and little respect from the society at large (Biklen, 1995), although historically certain groups, for instance African Americans, have looked upon teaching as a service to the community and have given the occupation considerable respect. Teaching, like mothering, is assumed to require little intellectual ability, to come naturally. This construction of teaching extends to colleges and universities, "notorious for their lack of attention to teaching and academic advising, especially the schools that are striving for or have achieved a level of prestige within the competitive work of academia" (Freedman, 1990, p. 254). In reality, "caregiving" aspects of teaching are often as important as intellectual labor and ideally cannot be separated. Although Noble does not refer to the gendered construction of work and teaching in his analysis of how education is turned into a commodity, his argument depends on the same assumption: quality teaching on any level requires the hard work of personal interaction between teacher and student.

4.5. The gendered assumptions about teaching that underlie its social devaluation also underlie the neoliberal program for education globally. Mexico's neoliberal restructuring of higher education with its allocation of more points for research than for teaching translates the ideological assumption into a formula. The World Bank identifies schooling as one service, extending from primary years through the university, but in the U.S., teaching at the university level and in lower schooling are considered different occupations (Grant and Murray, 1999). The devaluation of teaching so prevalent in most Western societies is not universal and does not hold throughout the U.S. In many immigrant groups and historically in the African-American community teaching is highly respected occupation. а However, Gordon (2000) suggests that so powerful is the dominant perception of teaching in the U.S. that as minorities come in contact with white, middle class culture, they tend to adopt the attitude that teaching is not valuable work.

4.6. Although several authors have examined the class stratification of higher education in the U.S. (Aronowitz, 2000a; Linkon, 1999; Shepard et al., 1998), including its vocationalization (Aronowitz, 2000b), they have missed the gendered nature of the stratification and the vocations students select. Working class and lower middle class women who attend four year colleges are likely to be in school so that they can be teachers (Christopher, 1995). In fact, teacher education was the engine for the growth of public higher education in the U.S., as normal schools grew to state teachers colleges and then to teaching

universities, or masters-level institutions (Herbst, 1989). Teacher education still drives enrollments in higher education, especially at the graduate level. Teacher education is "big business" in a nation that has over three million teachers (Holmes Group, 1995, p. 1). Schools of education contribute to about 25% of all master's degrees awarded in the U.S. and 20% of all doctoral degrees (Holmes Group, 1995). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data on Master's degrees conferred by discipline and by the number and kind of degree-granting institutions show that in 2001, a total of 468,476 Master's degrees were awarded in the U.S. Of those, 129,066 were in education; 11,645 in business; and 43,617 in health professions and related sciences (NCES, Higher Education General Information Survey, table 253). In master's institutions, (defined as those offering a full range of BA programs and awarding at least 40 master's degrees per year, across 3 or more disciplines), liberal arts faculty who teach graduate courses are probably teaching prospective or current teachers.

4.7. The high proportion of students attending graduate school for degrees in business and education makes master's institutions especially vulnerable to competition by for-profits, which make money by tailoring programs to demands of employers who pay for their employees' schooling. The practice of having businesses control course content is commonplace in programs of business administration. For instance, University of Phoenix allows 15% of coursework to be directly controlled by an employer (Cox, 2003). There are indications that teacher education is undergoing this same process. If teacher performance is gauged by student performance on standardized tests, as the neoliberal project insists it should be, the sensible choice to provide professional development to teachers is the test developer. Increasingly, for-profits like the Princeton Review and the Educational Testing Service provide "professional development" for public school teachers. Stanley Kaplan has developed online master's degrees for teachers. In the near future the for-profits may offer graduate degrees for teachers, linked as is the course work in business administration, to what school districts want teachers to learn—how to make their students get high scores on standardized tests.

4.8. Teacher education is a "cash cow" for most institutions of higher education, including research universities. It is much more lucrative than liberal arts training because of the way "field experiences" are organized. Teacher education students generally complete a semester-long, full-day, internship in a public school classroom, for which they pay full tuition but receive no pay. The university's only expense is salary of the college instructor paid to supervise the student on a few visits. Often the instructor is a graduate student or adjunct. The intern is taught by a host classroom teacher, who receives little or no compensation, usually no more than a voucher from the university for an education course. Rarely do programs of teacher education receive back from the university resources that are equivalent to the monetary contribution the programs make to the institution's budget (Holmes Group, 1995). Faculty who do the work of teacher education typically have heavier teaching loads and lower salaries than faculty in other areas, heavier even than colleagues within schools, colleges, and departments of education (Zeichner, 1999). The disparity is gendered: One study found that female faculty in education have heavier advising, supervising, and teaching loads than do male faculty (Ducharme, 1993).

Implications for Strengthening Academic Unions

5.1. Analyzing strategies and problems in organizing higher education faculty using the lens of gender generates both new problems and solutions. An account of graduate student organizing in research universities (Johnson, Kavanagh, and Mattson, 2003) observes that senior faculty often oppose unionization (of anyone) because of their insulation from the effects of corporatization of higher education. Tenured status and the closer relations with administration that senior faculty enjoy give them greater institutional power—and less proclivity to use it to defend wider interests of the academy. Although the chapter notes a contradiction between the expressed political sentiments of left-leaning faculty and their reluctance to join faculty unions, the analysis ends with a conclusion that appeals

to faculty should be "not to their self-interest but to the larger social goals of education" (Johnson, Kavanagh, and Mattson, 2003, p. 37).

5.2. A telling omission in this analysis is the internal stratification of the research university, one that results from the gendered construction of work and with it the devaluation of teaching. I suggest that a more promising organizing strategy is targeting the faculty whose self-interests *would be advanced* through the creation or revitalization of a faculty organization that addressed inequalities that arise from the devaluation of "women's work." To conclude, as the authors do, that all appeals to faculty self-interest are futile ignores those full-time faculty who are most likely to teach in departments that are under-financed, especially in relation to their program's significant contribution to the university coffers; faculty who have higher teaching loads; faculty who have often worked previously in one of the few workplaces in the U.S. that remains highly unionized—public schools or hospitals; and faculty likely to experience the devaluation of their labor. I describe, of course, faculty in schools of education and nursing, and in particular, female faculty.

5.3. Or take Johnson's argument (2003) that the extent of casual or contingent labor is drastically underestimated in the NCES data because it fails to consider the employment of graduate students who teach discussion sections of large lecture courses. Johnson is correct that faculty who rely most on these institutional arrangements are those at research universities with large doctoral programs who use Ph.D. candidates to teach entry-level lab and discussion sections of courses. The article assumes that senior faculty will avoid teaching these classes whenever possible but doesn't question why this is the case. What explains the inverted reward structure that has the *hardest* teaching, to first and second year undergraduates taking required courses in which they are likely to have little interest, done by faculty who have the *least* institutional support and *least* experience as college instructors? Were teaching really valued, as all institutions of higher education claim it is, the practice would be reversed, and faculty with the most expertise as instructors would teach the courses most pedagogically challenging.

5.4. To even pose the issue of respecting the skilled, labor-intensive nature of teaching illuminates how its devaluation is assumed in higher education-and in discussions of organizing higher education faculty. Seldom are the unequal rewards for teaching and research critiqued, yet the assumptions underlying this reward system legitimize the widespread hiring of adjunct and graduate students to teach entry level courses and the failure to offer them adequate support. Organizing instructors at all levels of higher education requires a new grammar and vocabulary for describing faculty work that rejects the gendered devaluation of teaching. The authors who analyze the failed organizing effort of graduate students at University of Minnesota grasp for this vocabulary to explain how their membership's concerns conflicted with the organizing strategy and structure of the AFT (Brown, et al. 2003). They mention conflicts with the AFT about how to conduct an organizing campaign and conclude that "We lost by emphasizing numbers rather than the nature of our membership. Most important, we failed to sustain a spirit of purpose that could inspire commitment to our union" (Brown, et al. 2003, p. 185). Although they do not define the "spirit of purpose" that was lost, except in organizational terms of creating a non-hierarchical structure that functioned less bureaucratically than a typical union. I suggest this "spirit of purpose" was a(n unnamed) desire to be rewarded and respected for the work of teaching. If I am correct, then key demands for bargaining emerge from valuing the work that graduate students and adjunct faculty do as teachers, supporting their personal interactions with students, for example by paying adjuncts and graduate students for office hours and course development, providing resources for their teaching, like office space, clerical support, and if they wish, advice about teaching the difficult courses to which they are assigned.

5.5. Gender is clearly a factor in the widespread use of contingent labor in higher education. A 1997 report from the Office of Higher Education of the NEA notes that the proportion of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty has gone from 18.6 percent to 27.3 percent, with most of the increase due to female faculty; that NTT women now make up more than half of the faculty at 2-year and masters-level institutions; and that

women faculty who are NTT are likely to be employed in traditionally female fields and to make less money (Chronister et al., 1997). Although the study does not identify the "female fields" in which women NTT are employed, one area is most certainly education and another nursing. This suggests that faculty unions, especially in community colleges and masters-level institutions, ought to encourage independent commissions or caucuses of nursing and education faculty to identify areas of inequality or special concern.

5.6 In many K-12 teachers unions, activists are considering how to address classroom concerns that are important to teachers but that fall outside the purview of collective bargaining agreements (almost always because legislation granting collective bargaining also sharply limits the scope of bargaining). The debate is germane for higher education as well, and research on how K-12 unions deal with this problem has valuable insights for activists in higher education. Studying teachers unions in three different school systems in the U.S., Bascia (1995) found that teachers expected their union to protect against excessive interference in their teaching, to provide a voice for them in decision making, to obtain resources, and to work for recognition and respect for realities of teaching. She concludes that "Union leaders or others who discount as 'unprofessional' teachers' calls for union intervention with respect to traditional protection and representation issues are likely to alienate rather than inspire teachers" (p. 85). Bascia's conclusions apply equally to academic unions, which have nothing to gain from masking their intent to defend faculty salaries and working conditions, vigorously.

5.7 Bascia (1998) also studied how male and female union activists viewed their participation. Both linked union activity to concerns about the quality and nature of support for teaching. However, women also viewed union involvement as a way to develop and explore their abilities, in contrast to the attitude of male activists, who saw themselves taking their turn at serving in office or solving practical problems. The presidential position and its authority were considered masculine, though women dominated in other levels. Although I have read no studies about the representation of women in positions of leadership in higher education unions, I suspect that Bascia's findings about female leadership in K-12 teachers unions hold for academic unions. For the same reasons that affirmative action is important in hiring in the university and society, it is important for academic unions to encourage and support women to assume titular leadership. This may mean creating new modes of exercising formal leadership within the union, for instance allowing authority to be shared by co-presidents.

5.8 Grumet (1995) argues against the "false dichotomy" of home and classroom that has historically driven attempts to raise teaching's status by transforming it into an occupation like the archetypal professions, law and medicine. Extending her argument, I suggest that the failure to understand teaching in the university as the same sort of work as teaching in the lower grades is a false dichotomy that obscures the real dangers to higher education and academic unions in neoliberalism's powerful assault on education. To counter corporatization of higher education, Johnson et al. (2003) propose a vision of higher education rooted in education's role in a democratic society. I concur, wholeheartedly. But insofar as we ignore the gendered construction of work that leads to devaluation of teaching and sustains inequality in the academy, we miss the chance to expand our vision of democratic possibilities, and higher education's role in that process.

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