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RESTORING THE HOLISTIC PRACTICE OF ACADEMIC WORK: A STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO PRECARIETY

Not many decades ago, university-level teaching in North America and many other Western societies was typically done by full-time faculty members holding tenure track positions with professional levels of remuneration and benefits, continuing employment, and progressive career trajectories. In the contemporary university, it has become an accepted practice, if not a matter of policy, for the majority of undergraduate teaching to be done by academic workers holding part-time contracts.¹

Maintaining contingent academic workers as a, if not *the*, major supplier of undergraduate teaching is a troubling sign that casualization has extended to work previously thought to be immune to it. In spite of their high-level qualifications and skills, contingent academic workers are subject to employment conditions similar to those experienced by semi-skilled and unskilled workers: low rates of pay, interrupted employment, minimal if any employee benefits, and no job security.²

Many critics, including the authors of this paper, associate this trend with the increasingly corporate bent of public universities.³ The corporate-style managements of most if not all universities seek to drive down academic labour costs to meet their bottom line and, in the process, they sacrifice educational quality and employment equity.

The plight of the "precarious academic worker" has thus rallied strong responses from critical commentators and activists, either as part of the broader social movement for labour justice and/or to resist the corporatization of universities. Unions have launched widespread publicity campaigns and job actions to secure more equitable conditions of employment for these workers and greater recognition of their value to the university's educational mission. In the spring of 2014, for example, strikes of contract faculty members and teaching and research assistants took place almost simultaneously at the University of Toronto and York University in Toronto, Canada. The striking workers coordinated their job actions so that the impact of their strikes would coalesce across these two university campuses— among the largest in the country. Even after the strikes ended, media reports and publicity campaigns heightened the public's awareness of these workers as highly skilled and dedicated teachers, whose value to public education warrants improved remuneration, better working conditions, and future career prospects. Similar mobilizations have been taking place in the US, such as the "Equity, Security, and Dignity" campaign launched in 2018 at Rutgers University in the US on behalf of part-time and adjunct professors who make up 70% of Rutgers' teaching staff.⁴

Associations representing full-time faculty members, such as the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the American Association of University Professors (US), the American Federation of Teachers (US), and the University and College Union (UK) have also weighed in to support the plight of these precarious academic workers. They have drawn attention, among other things, to the serious downsides to having the bulk of undergraduate teaching done by poorly rewarded and unrecognized colleagues. As well, these organizations have initiated days or whole weeks of action to pressure politicians and university administrators to address the unjust employment conditions and lack of recognition experienced by these colleagues.⁵

Without diminishing the importance and significance of mobilization efforts in support of academic workers who hold part-time contracts, we want in this paper to make a strategic intervention into this struggle by shifting the focus from academic workers to academic work, and by extending the notion of precarity from contingent academic work to academic work as a whole. Two strategic implications follow.

First, strategies undertaken thus far have focused on improving the pay and working conditions of academic workers who hold part-time/contract positions. These include recent efforts to advocate that full-time teaching-only positions be created for these workers as a means of providing improved benefits and the promise of continuing employment. As laudable as it is to try to gain these immediate benefits, such strategies do not directly address the ongoing fragmentation and tiering of academic work itself, which, as we will argue, have made precarity ubiquitous for all classes of academic workers.

Second, pursuing strategies that locate precarity in the experiences of only one class of academic worker misses an opportunity to mobilize a larger community of people to challenge the underlying processes that continually produce and reproduce precarity as a feature of all academic work. We are not claiming that precarity bestows the same conditions and consequences on all academic workers. Rather, we are claiming that most academics, in varying ways and to varying degrees, are increasingly subject to precarity and that strategies that focus on the precarity affecting only one segment of academic workers have the danger of exacerbating, rather than alleviating, their precarious position. For example, as much as the creation of full-time teaching-only positions may offer some immediate benefits to some—in fact a small proportion—of current part-time/contract faculty, we believe that it will further consolidate their marginality and vulnerability at the bottom rung of a continually tiered, and increasingly precarious, full-time academic work force. Strategies that respond instead to the processes producing precarity as a feature of all academic work will more effectively address the situation of any one segment of academic workers.

We begin by locating precarity in the context of a profound reorganization of academic work that has taken place over the past four decades along with, and as part of, the unfolding of corporatization.⁶ Through this reorganization, the wholeness of academic work has been fragmented into parts and redistributed to different categories, or tiers, of workers. Each tier's terms of employment differ to varying degrees from each other's in remuneration rates, ranges of duties and responsibilities, benefits and privileges, access to resources, and the ability of academic workers to influence the direction of their own and their institution's academic activities. Based on their location in this fragmented and tiered academic work force, academic workers perceive and experience the effects of corporatization in profoundly different ways, including, as we will argue, in their own form of precarity.

Critical commentators and activists have emphasized the material conditions that underlie these differences and the inequities that result from them. However, their attention has centred almost exclusively on differences and inequities between academics who hold full-time tenure track positions and those who hold part-time/contract positions, the former representing an upper tier of "privileged workers" and the latter, a lower tier of exploited "precarious workers".

To be sure, the primary fault-line along which academic work has been reorganized to date has been the division between full-time tenure track positions and part-time/contract positions. But we argue in this paper that it is not the only fault-line to emerge as corporatization has unfolded. In perhaps more subtle and less noticed ways, tiering has also taken place among full-time academic workers, creating for them distinctive forms of precarity that interact with and reinforce the forms of precarity experienced by members of other tiers.

To develop our argument, we need to trace the process whereby academic work has been reorganized over the past four decades, basing our analysis on the Canadian experience, which has much in common with other Western societies such as the US, UK, Western European countries, Australia, and New Zealand.⁷ As already noted, not many decades ago, academic work was accomplished predominantly by faculty members who held full-time tenure track appointments. To the extent that small numbers of part-time and full-time positions with limited terms existed, they mainly served specialized teaching needs such as in language and science labs, or in professional faculties such as business and medicine, where practitioners served as adjuncts to teach practical aspects of professional training. As well, some part-time positions—usually no more than one or two in a given department—were held by women who, without the benefits of maternity leave and pressures on male-dominated departments to hire more women into full-time positions, saw part-time work as their only option for maintaining their academic careers and raising their families.

Associated with this pattern, wherein the majority of faculty members held full-time tenure track positions, was a shared consensus (though sometimes debated) that a true university is an institution in which the activities of scholarship, teaching, and service are performed as an integrated whole by the full-time faculty. University

documents such as personnel handbooks and appointment contracts emphasized that the responsibilities of full-time faculty members included all three activities and, as tenure became entrenched in written policies and procedures, the professor considered to be worthy of tenure exemplified competence in all three areas.

However, in the 1970s,⁸ this pattern and the consensus accompanying it began to be disrupted. For one thing, the public monies that had supported university expansion began to dry up relatively quickly. For another, policy-makers began to base their projections on demographers' predictions of a sharp decline in 18-24 year olds, the age group presumed to be the feeder base of university enrolments.⁹ In Canada, these changes in policy direction took place just as its burgeoning graduate schools were producing new, Canadian-made, PhD graduates, many of them seeking careers in Canada's growing universities. Faced with the lack of full-time tenure track jobs, these new graduates found themselves adding to a growing cadre of unemployed or under-employed academic workers (Rajagoupal and Farr, 1989: 269).

As perspectives on universities' fiscal futures shifted from expansion to contraction, the stage was set for a major reorganization of academic work (see Newson and Buchbinder, 1988: chapter 1). On the one hand, universities looked for ways of maintaining, if not increasing, their share of shrinking public funds. In Canada's province of Ontario, for example, intense competition broke out among universities over the funding formula, the mechanism that determined how the government's operating grant was distributed among the province's fifteen universities. University administrations vigorously lobbied the Ontario Council of University Affairs (OCUA), the buffer body responsible for setting the funding formula, to establish a BIU to FTE ratio (Basic Income Unit to Full-time Student Equivalent) at a level that would be most advantageous to their institution. Similar struggles took place in other Canadian provinces throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.

On the other hand, since funding formulas were highly sensitive to full-time student enrolment levels, administrations were motivated to artfully manipulate their intake of students to maximize their share of provincial grants. The York University administration, for example, began systematically to take in increasing numbers of undergraduate students and, rather than adding full-time faculty members to teach them, instead drew on the growing cadre of unemployed PhD graduates to create one-course-at-a-time teaching positions. Full-time positions that became vacated because of retirements and resignations were not filled with full-time appointments but instead were divided into three one-course positions, corresponding with the normal three-course workload of a full-time faculty member. These one-course positions covered only the teaching aspect of the full-time position and lasted for only the length of each course— four months for a half course and eight months for a full course. The research and service responsibilities assigned to full-time positions were eliminated, as was time for designing and preparing courses. By the beginning of the 1980s, over 50% of the undergraduates at York University were being taught by people holding this type of part-time contract.

By harmonizing enrolment targets with academic labour policy in this way, several university administrations pioneered a strategy for enlarging their institutional advantage in a context where government funding was increasingly constrained. Over time, others followed suit. The economics were hard to resist, since remuneration for the teaching component of a full-time academic position could be set far lower than one third of the cost of a full-time faculty member. As well, by eliminating the cost of non-salary supports typically deemed necessary for full-time faculty appointments— offices, support staff, conference funds, and many others— the overall costs of academic labour were considerably reduced. The incentive was thus high to grow the number of part-time positions and to reduce the number of full-time positions.

Perhaps more consequential than fiscal payoffs, however, is that reconstructing academic labour policy in this way opened the door to thinking about, and reorganizing, academic work in terms of its parts— teaching, scholarship, and service— instead of as the integration of all three. Unbundling service from teaching and scholarship, and scholarship from teaching and service, made it possible to re-assemble the parts into new configurations, each with their own distinctive range of responsibilities and privileges. Furthermore, the parts could be divided into more parts. Teaching, for example, could be, as it has been, divided into marking, tutoring, lecturing, etc., each part with its own qualification requirements and rates of remuneration.¹⁰ Teaching resources could thus be re-packaged and re-distributed, providing university administrators from year to year with greater budgetary and curricular flexibility to reduce commitments to some areas and add them to others.

Over time, disassembling academic work and redistributing the parts in new configurations shifted the political landscape of universities in ways that have had long term and continuing consequences.¹¹ For one thing, the role and authority of the faculty in shaping the academic direction of universities has radically shifted, as the size and influence of university administrations expanded while the size and influence of the full-time faculty diminished.

Many activities that had once been part of the service responsibilities of the full-time faculty— student advising, setting class sizes, allocating teaching resources, choosing the curricular areas for new positions, etc.— were redistributed to the professional and managerial personnel who occupied positions in the increasingly specialized offices of expanding administrations.

For another thing, as teaching became increasingly institutionalized as a category of academic work performed independently of either scholarship or service obligations, separate tiers of academic workers were created, each tier being subject to a distinct political economy¹² that prescribed the range of obligations, entitlements, levels of remuneration, and benefits assigned to members of each tier. For example, ongoing scholarly activity and service were neither obligations nor entitlements of one-course-at-a-time positions. Consequently, people who held these positions were not allocated the time, resources, or remuneration associated with these activities, even though, in practical terms, they worked alongside full-time tenure track faculty, frequently as members of a teaching team or of committees responsible for the day-to-day functioning of departments and faculties.

But these disparities were not the only consequences of tiering experienced by part-time/contract faculty members. Full-time tenure track faculty had opportunities for shaping some aspects of academic policy through participation in collegial bodies such as departments, faculties, senates, and governing councils. By contrast, for part-time/contract faculty, opportunities to play a meaningful role in collegial governance were limited, if not non-existent, since one-course-at-a-time positions did not last beyond a four month or eight month teaching session.

Equally consequential has been an evolving disjuncture between the expected versus actual career trajectories of these contingent workers. In order to make an adequate level of income, a part-time/contract faculty member could, within a given year, develop and/or teach as many as six or more different courses and, in the next year, a new list of others. Yet the requirements for obtaining a full-time tenure track appointment heavily emphasized scholarly productivity primarily in terms of publications. Given all of this, only with great difficulty if at all could contingent academic workers maintain strong enough scholarly profiles to compete for the few full-time positions that came available. Once caught up in the cycle of contingent work, precarity and all of the working conditions associated with it has become their long-term career trajectory.

While for good reason, most discussions of precarity have focused on these inequities and their deleterious consequences for the lower tier of academic workers, little if any attention has been given to how the upper tier— the full-time tenure track faculty— has been affected by tiering and in the process, increasingly exposed to new forms of precarity. For example, since full-time faculty positions have often not been replaced and new ones infrequently added, the demands of running departments and faculties, and servicing greater numbers of students have fallen on a reduced complement of full-time faculty members. As well, full-time faculty members have responsibility for selecting, orienting, and supervising the work of substantial numbers of the peripatetic faculty, either in their roles as chairs and program directors in departments and faculties, and/or as directors of large courses to which several teaching assistants are assigned. These additional tasks have not only occupied an increasing proportion of full-time faculty members' time. They also have placed these faculty members in quasi-managerial relationships with their teaching assistants and part-time/contract faculty colleagues who work alongside them in teaching teams and committees.

Not surprisingly, tensions have heightened between the lower and upper tiers of academic workers, especially where one or both categories of workers are unionized, thus diminishing the possibility of them organizing collectively to resist or challenge the sources of their discontents. For example, many part-time/contract faculty perceive full-time faculty members not as colleagues or co-workers, but as aligned with "management." Many of them, or their spokespersons, express resentment toward full-time faculty as privileged workers who oversee, condone, or at the very least benefit from the exploitation of part-time/contract workers. On the other hand, full-time faculty members have their own reasons for being resentful and feeling a sense of injustice about their situation. Because of the increased demands on their time, they too have experienced interruptions in, and obstacles to, their careers and professional development. At the same time that their influence in decision-making has been reduced and re-allocated to managers, they have been downloaded the most stressful and divisive aspects of overseeing an increasingly fragmented academic labour force.¹³

So far, we have focused on the effects of a tiering process that reorganizes the teaching aspect of academic work separate from service and scholarship. However, another form of tiering has been underway that reorganizes scholarship separate from teaching and service. This form of tiering has had consequences as profound, though more subtle and less visible, as those we have discussed so far. Through it, substantial segments of the full-time tenure track faculty have been exposed to forms of precarity distinct from those experienced by part-time/contract faculty.

From the late 1970s onward, a new policy direction began to take form in a wide range of nations, including Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Western Europe, and Eastern Asia (Buchbinder and Newson, 1990; Currie and Newson, 1998; Gibbons et. al., 1984; Marginson and Considine, 2000; Newson and Buchbinder, 1988; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Polster, 1994; Polster and Newson, 2015; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). Through various means, universities were encouraged to link up with external funders, such as well-resourced corporations, to produce knowledge and products that would enhance national economic competitiveness and to generate additional revenues for universities to address their underfunding problems. In the process, scholarship, especially commercializable scholarship, began to be conceived as a new and potentially lucrative revenue source for universities.

In Canada, the three national research-granting councils— the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Medical Research Council (MRC), now named the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)— played a key role in implementing this policy direction. As a first step, they designed matched-grant funding programs that encouraged universities and university researchers to develop university-corporate partnerships and pursue research that served the economic objectives of their partners. Other, more extensive and highly-funded programs followed, such as the Networks of Centres of Excellence program, the programs of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program. Through these programs, universities and their researchers were increasingly motivated, even compelled, to compete with each other for the available research dollars and to exploit the commercial value of their research resources.

The various dynamics that these and other research funding programs and policies generated have led to a further disintegration of academic work. Scholarship is both separated from, and also prioritized over, teaching and service, leading to the emergence of a new— and elite— tier of academic workers who only or mainly engage in research.¹⁴ Whereas some faculty members (namely, top grant producers and successful academic entrepreneurs) are only informal members of this tier of research stars, a growing number have received official designation through mechanisms like prestigious research chairs that have been created at institutional, provincial, and federal levels.

The benefits that accrue to those faculty members who occupy this elite tier— which include greater access to institutional funds and other resources, increased institutional power and influence, and reduced service and teaching expectations— further squeeze the resources, time, and energies of regular full-time faculty, adding to the already greater burdens that stem from the growing use of part-time/contract faculty. These benefits also enhance the ability of top tier academics to secure additional resources (more internal and external funding, graduate students, etc.) and opportunities (including media access and other means of building public profile and reputation) that help cement their star status and the inferior status of regular full-time faculty.

Whereas these dynamics may produce only a subjective sense of insecurity or precarity for some tenured full-time faculty,¹⁵ the failure to achieve star status or to demonstrate star potential may objectively threaten the positions of untenured full-time faculty, either temporarily or permanently, when, for example, tenure-track appointments and/or tenure are delayed or denied. Further, given that tiering dynamics play out not only at the level of individuals, but also at the level of departments and faculties, all full-time academics within those departments and faculties that are not identified as high performers may experience both subjective and objective precarity by being threatened with or subjected to fewer or no new hires, budget cuts, or even shutdown.

The threats posed by the new tier of elite academics to the subjective and objective well being of regular full-time faculty are leading the latter to work ever more intensively to defend or advance their individual and/or units' status. Among other things, faculty members are spending more time learning about, and developing the skills to be effective in, competitions for grants and well-resourced or influential research partners. They are also working to shift in their favour the strategic directions, priorities, and assessment criteria used in their own institutions and others, including granting agencies. Additionally, faculty are trying to open spaces within their professional associations, disciplines, or research areas, by establishing new associations (or subgroups within existing ones), journals, awards, and ranking systems and institutions, to better compete with if not displace established elites. They are also using a variety of means to build and exploit their own academic and public reputations. Whereas some of these means are legitimate, others are unseemly if not unsavoury, such as shameless self-promoting through a growing array of publicity measures, sabotaging the prospects of competitor faculty or units, and engaging in various forms of academic fraud and dishonesty (Polster, 2016). To free up the requisite time to participate in this expanding arms race for elite academic status, many full-time faculty are cutting back on traditional forms of service work, particularly those that benefit the collective well-being, thereby further ceding institutional governance to university administrators. Some are also devoting less time to their teaching work and other interactions with students.

In addition to complicating relations between and among regular and elite full-time faculty, the further fragmentation and tiering of the academic profession have a number of implications for relations between full-time and part-time/contract faculty. On the one hand, they give some full-time faculty incentive to support the university's continued reliance on— and exploitation of— part-time/contract faculty. Research stars, in particular, rely on these faculty to free themselves from teaching responsibilities when and if they elect to exercise the option. However, part-time/contract faculty also serve the interests of regular full-time faculty by reducing some of the extra teaching burden produced by research stars that would otherwise be born by them, and by freeing them to take advantage of occasional teaching releases (provided through sabbatical leaves, grant buy-outs, etc.). Part-time/contract faculty can also be assigned the new classes and large undergraduate classes in their departments, allowing full-time faculty to regularly teach the same classes and the smaller classes that make fewer demands on the time they feel compelled to devote to research-related activities.

At the same time that increased tiering gives full-time faculty new incentive to support the continued use of part-time/contract faculty, it also increases the threats the latter may pose to full-timers' well-being. For instance, as precarious part-time/contract faculty adopt time-saving strategies (such as multiple choice exams and shorter and simpler writing assignments) to lighten their workloads, and as they provide more "edutainment" to increase their popularity and chances of continued employment, regular faculty who insist on providing more demanding education may be penalized by students who are progressively less prepared for, and appreciative of, this practice.¹⁶ This may further intensify the subjective and objective precarity experienced by the regular faculty, given that teaching quality (which is often equated with high student evaluation scores) is increasingly important to the career prospects of all full-time faculty members, but especially to those whose research performance is not deemed outstanding.

Whereas the deterioration of their own security and working conditions could, in theory, lead regular faculty to find compassion for and common ground with part-time/contract faculty, in practice, their growing insecurity more often has the opposite effect. On the one hand, the more they focus on defending or enhancing their own well-being, the less inclined and able they are to take up plight of their part-time/contract colleagues.¹⁷ Further, as is often the case in hierarchical structures, regular faculty generally identify more with the research stars above them whose ranks they wish to join than with the less advantaged teachers who occupy the ranks below them. Indeed, the very existence of a class of workers below them may help ease the sting and anxiety associated with the loss of status that regular faculty are experiencing as the tier of elite academics (and perhaps a tier of super-elite academics) is institutionalized.¹⁸ Finally, the new context may lead regular full-time faculty to have other complex feelings that militate against identifying and allying with part-time/contract faculty. For instance, some may feel guilt or shame for resorting to the same time-saving teaching strategies for which they previously criticized part-time/contract colleagues. Regular full-time faculty, particularly limited-term and untenured faculty, may also harbour fears of becoming more like part-time/contract faculty or even sharing their fate, as failure to perform incurs harsher formal and informal penalties in many Western universities, including delayed promotion, demotion, and the application of pressure to move on or retire.

In the context of the more severe forms and consequences of precarity faced by part-time/contract faculty, as well as workers in so many other public and private institutions, some may be hard pressed to muster sympathy for worried and overworked full-time faculty members. However, to dismiss their concerns is a mistake on at least two counts. First, the various strategies full-time faculty members use to protect and advance their status relative to one another and to research stars are terribly wasteful of institutional talents and resources, given that the latter are increasingly invested in competitions (for grants, special chairs, status, etc.) in which many participate but few actually win. More than simply yielding low returns to those academics who participate in them, these competitions offer little value for money to the taxpaying public, as growing shares of university resources are directed toward advancing academics' private interests rather than the public interest. Indeed, as noted, some academics are actually sacrificing the public's interests, be it by compromising teaching quality to free up time for research-related pursuits or using university service work to advance particular needs and interests at the expense of the collective. In ignoring full-time faculty's concerns and responses to those concerns, we allow this dysfunction, and the associated financial and lost opportunity costs, to persist.

Second, and perhaps more relevant to this discussion, is that in dismissing these concerns, we lose the opportunity to fully understand and better respond to the issue of academic precarity. We restrict our gaze only to a part of a more complex whole, which not only limits our understanding of that whole, but also our ability (and the availability of resources) to redress it. As we have been suggesting, academic precarity is not caused by the mistreatment of a particular group of academic workers. Rather, it arises out of the fragmentation or tiering of academic work which generates an ever more complex array of competing interests and opportunities that leaves all academics more

divided and vulnerable to administrators and each other. From this it follows that to successfully alleviate academic precarity, we should not focus on ameliorating the particular terms and conditions of employment of one class of academic worker. Instead, we should try to untier or reintegrate the structure of academic work itself.¹⁹

We do not have the space here to elaborate on a particular program or set of prescriptions that would accomplish the reintegration of academic work we are advocating. Even if we did, it would be neither possible nor desirable to do this, as the specific actions people take should be tailored to the particular histories and circumstances of their local institutions. As such, we close by offering a more general, two-pronged strategy to help orient peoples' thinking and organizing toward the goal of reintegration, and provide some examples of how it might be implemented.

The first prong of our strategy focuses on diminishing, with a view to eliminating, the uppermost tier of academic work that is occupied by those officially and unofficially designated as research stars. This requires that both the material and ideological supports that hold this tier in place be undermined. To weaken this tier's material supports, academics and others could lobby governments to scale back or abolish programs that create and support top tier researchers. In Canada for example, they would lobby the federal government to wind down the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) programs, which are two of the main programs that sustain elite researchers in the country²⁰. If successful, such a campaign would directly diminish the number of researchers who receive star status and treatment. It would also indirectly reduce their number by easing the pressures these programs place on provincial governments and individual universities to create elite research positions and programs of their own in order to expand and protect their local stocks of elite researchers (which are continually threatened by those regions and universities that receive greater shares of federal research chairs).

At the same time, academics and others could seek to limit the additional benefits many universities bestow on elite researchers— over and above those that are attached to their prestigious positions— such as preferential access to additional research funds, more formal institutional power (including greater say on future university appointments), and the option to participate in aspects of academic work that are required of all regular full-time faculty, including teaching and university service. This would not only diminish some of the inducements that lead academics to seek these positions but also help narrow the differences that separate elite and regular full-time academic work.

Many steps could also be taken to weaken the ideological supports that uphold the elite tier of academic work. Beyond publicizing the contradictions and complications alluded to above, academics and others could publicize some of the many other ways in which this tier of academic work negatively affects universities, science, and the public interest. For instance, as Polster has noted elsewhere, the CRC program has harmed Canadian universities and the national university system by strengthening managerialism and eroding democracy in universities, diminishing university autonomy, and undermining inter-university solidarity, all of which pose risks to the public interest (Polster, 2002). More generally, the allocation of more and more research funds to fewer and fewer research stars is harmful to science as it may restrict diversity and capacity in the research system, limit the contributions of "average" science in such areas as training the next generation of researchers and opening up new fields of inquiry, institutionalize the "monolithic pressures of scientific orthodoxy", and support only research of a recognized kind in established fields (Atkinson-Grosjean, 2001: 51-52). This, coupled with the multiple dysfunctions that increased competition for elite research positions is producing (which include more "gaming" in and of the research system as well as more academic dishonesty, fraud, espionage, and sabotage) (Rhode, 2006; Polster, 2016) also bode poorly for citizens' well-being.

A more general assault on the growing culture of stardom within universities would also help undermine ideological support for the elite tier of academic work. This could include opposing and boycotting those formal and informal practices that reinforce this culture (such as incessant recognition events or the according of greater respect and deference to university stars), and attempting to revitalize or create new practices and institutions on campus that promote egalitarianism and solidarity.

The second prong of our strategy for addressing precarity focuses on the lower tier of academic work: that is, the tier currently comprised of academic workers who mainly hold part-time/contract teaching-only positions and to a lesser degree, research-only post-doctoral positions. Since increasing numbers of these workers are represented by unions, collective bargaining has become the primary means of rectifying the precarity experienced by these contingent workers. One collective bargaining strategy for achieving this objective that has recently gained political currency, including support from some university administrations, has focused on creating a new full-time teaching-only

stream of academic positions, with attendant improvements in salaries and benefits, opportunities for career advancement, and job security.

Based on our analysis of precarity as a growing feature of all academic work, we propose an alternative approach. We have argued that strategies that focus only on academic workers instead of academic work are ultimately counterproductive. For instance, although it may make life better for some individuals, creating full-time teaching-only positions will nonetheless solidify their location at the bottom rung of a tiered labour structure, closing off opportunities, probably permanently, for those who hold them to move into regular full-time faculty positions. Moreover, such positions would continue to be vulnerable to policies and practices (including technological displacement) that maintain universities' financial flexibility, which may explain why some administrators are in favour of them. Additionally and importantly, this strategy normalizes, institutionalizes, and increases the tiering of academic work. In so doing, it reinforces and further complicates the diverse and conflicting interests of academics within and among the various tiers, making it ever more difficult for academics to recognize their mutual interests in un-tiering or reintegrating academic work, let alone to join forces to make this happen.

We believe that, rather than further institutionalizing fragmented segments of academic work, collective bargaining should move in the opposite direction: that is, in the direction of re-composing these segments into a holistic practice of academic work. An important feature of a strategy such as this is to strongly resist proposals that, directly or indirectly, lead to the creation of a new and lower tier of full-time, teaching-only positions. Instead it would develop and seek to negotiate proposals that, both in substance and in the associated terms and conditions of employment, re-instate an integrated practice of academic work.

Some progress in this direction has been made by unions that have successfully negotiated the conversion of part-time/contract positions into regular full-time positions. Granted that a limited number of academic workers who have served for long periods in part-time/contract positions benefit from these conversion proposals, but nevertheless, they move in the direction we have proposed. Another bargaining approach that also moves in this direction is to not only press for fairer rates of remuneration and benefits, but to also build back in the segments of academic work that have been excluded from existing teaching-only/research-only positions: for example, by negotiating for such things as research time (e.g. short, funded sabbaticals after a specified number of courses taught), funds for travel to conferences, research grants, seniority credit for service on committees, and opportunities for research-only appointees to serve on teaching teams. Over time, single-focused positions begin to look and function more like regular full-time faculty work, undermining arguments often made by administrations that they are of less value. At the same time, the cost of the higher remuneration, improved benefits, and add-back-ins decreases the overall economic advantage of maintaining academic services through part-time/contract positions, thus removing the budgetary incentive of lower labour costs and making it more economically attractive, not to mention politically prudent,²¹ to create full-time, regular faculty, positions.

Needless to say, progress made on either of these two general strategic objectives can advance progress on the other. For example, if and when resources expended on elite researchers are reduced and redirected, some of the pressure on, and justification for, universities to employ large numbers of precarious faculty will also diminish. Similarly, as the working conditions and benefits of part-time/contract and regular, full-time academic workers become progressively similar in nature, faculty members may be less likely to take for granted or accept the tremendous privileges that elite researchers currently enjoy.

In closing, redressing academic precarity by reconstituting academic work as a holistic endeavour will serve a number of socially valued purposes. For the many new and the many longer serving PhD graduates who hold part-time/contract positions, it will open up opportunities to fully employ the intellectual skills and capacities they developed over a long period of training, and to use them for public benefit. Having to either abandon their intellectual aspirations entirely or accept much diminished and under-valued substitute careers on the bottom rungs of the academic labour hierarchy is demoralizing, wasteful, and, frankly, unjust. For the academic profession as a whole and university administrations, it will mitigate, if not eliminate, many reasons for the interpersonal tensions, competition, and adversarial relationships that currently permeate many campuses, contributing to lowered morale and excessive individualism and also threatening the support and respect that the public extends to universities. Further, as secure and solidary faculty members are more able and willing than are precarious and divided ones to put students' and the public's needs and interests squarely front and centre, those whom the university is meant to serve also stand to benefit significantly from the recomposition of academic work. Thus, academics not only have good reason to actively support the reintegration of their work, but they have a responsibility, as public servants, to do so.

NOTES

¹ Throughout this paper, we use the phrase "part-time/contract" to refer to single-course teaching positions since these terms are used by the unions that represent academics who hold them. Also, we refer to the people who hold them as "part-time/contract faculty" or "contingent academic workers." We avoid using the generic term "part-timers" because, although the positions are for teaching a single course, and are typically held for a four month or eight month teaching term, many people hold more than one of them at a time and thus view themselves as full-time workers.

² In making this comparison, we don't mean to justify the terms of employment of these other workers: indeed, we believe that they also suffer from inadequate pay, benefits, and job security. Two recent reports that address growing precarity in academic (and other professional) work may be found at <https://cupe.ca/new-report-highlights-impact-precarious-work-post-secondary-sector> and <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/no-safe-harbour>.

³ We do not have the space here to expand on our approach to the corporatization of Canada's universities and the relationship between this process and the trend toward precarity in academic employment. Readers who are interested in understanding more about this approach should consult the introduction to our book *A Penny For Your Thoughts* (2015). For this paper, we simply note that we do not see the relationship between these developments as causal (with corporatization being the cause and precarity the effect). Rather, we see these developments as mutually constitutive and reinforcing. Further, we do not see corporatization as a completed state, but as an ongoing accomplishment. Hence, it is subject to various forms of intervention, including those we advocate in this paper.

⁴ As reported in <http://equitysecuritydignity.org/2018/04/13/beyond-signs-slogans-rutgers-adjunct-faculty-want/>

⁵ Recent actions include the conference on precarious work organized in 2015 by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA); the National Day of Action carried out in the US on April 15, 2015 in support of adjunct faculty; the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) campaign for a \$15,000 (US) per course rate announced in February 2015; and the University College Union's Stamp Out Casualization campaign launched in 2016 (UK), as well as many others.

⁶ See our other work that expands on how the reorganization of academic work intermingles with, or is an aspect of, processes that advance corporatization, including Newson and Buchbinder, 1988; Newson and Polster, 2010; Polster and Newson 2015.

⁷ Our tracing is based primarily on our knowledge of the Canadian, and to some extent, US and UK university systems. However, we believe the analysis we present applies to other university systems as well, though with variations in terms of historical development, in government and institutional policies, and in political dynamics. We would be grateful if readers who have detailed knowledge of, or experience in, these other systems would contact us via email about how they are similar to or different from what we present here.

⁸ This discussion of the 1970s-1980s context draws from Newson and Buchbinder, 1988, supplemented by other accounts of this period, including Axelrod, 1982; Rajagoupal and Farr, 1989 and 1992; and Newson's personal records and communications as an officer of the York University Faculty Association from 1975 to 1985.

⁹ In fact, these predictions of dramatic enrolment decline were mistaken, as shown by University of Toronto demographer David Foot, who pointed out that new pools of university enrolment, such as women and older age groups returning to university for upgrading, were growing. See Foot, David. 1983. "University Enrollments: Challenging Popular Misconceptions." In *Ontario Universities Access, Operations, and Funding*. Toronto: Ontario Economic Council: 166-176. As William Farr and Indhu Rajagoupal point out, by the late 1970s in Ontario and other jurisdictions, enrolment growth was outpacing provincial funding to a significant degree (Farr and Rajagoupal, 1989: 269).

¹⁰ Technological mediation has opened new opportunities for dividing teaching activities between human teachers and technologized teaching systems in ways that offer cost advantages to universities. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* reported recently on the Georgia Institute of Technology's use of robots as teaching assistants "to answer routine, information-based questions that often 'bog down' human TAs." See <http://www.wsj.com/articles/if-your-teacher-sounds-like-a-robot-you-might-be-on-to-something-1462546621>.

¹¹ Fuller accounts of this change in political landscape can be found in Newson and Buchbinder, 1988: chapters 2 and 3; and Cassin, M. and J. G. Morgan. 1992. "The Professoriate and the Market-Driven University: Transforming the Control of Work in the Academy" in W. Carroll et. al. (eds.) *Fragile Truths: Twenty-five years of Sociology and*

Anthropology in Canada. Ottawa: Carleton University Press: 247-260. An influential book that promoted the shift from collegialism to managerialism is Keller, G. 1983. *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹² This separation between the political economy of teaching versus research has advanced to its ultimate end in the UK, where the public funding that supports teaching versus research comes from separate envelopes. Based on a complex system of performance measures, universities and their faculty compete annually for their share of these separate funds. More recently, public funding of teaching in the social sciences and humanities has ceased entirely. The government has diverted teaching funds to the student loan system, thus requiring universities, their faculties, their departments, and their individual faculty members to compete for student enrolments in order to maintain their teaching programs. An even more dramatic initiative has been launched in a recent White Paper, proposing that student choices become the mechanism for determining which courses and programs are offered at a given university, thus introducing even greater precarity for academic workers' future prospects, whether they hold FT or PT positions. For detailed analyses of these UK policies and proposals, see Collini, Stefan. 2010. "Browne's Gamble." *London Review of Books* 32, no. 21: 23-25; Collini, Stefan. 2013. "Sold Out." *London Review of Books* 35, no. 20: 3-12; Collini, Stefan. 2016. "Who Are the Spongers Now?" *London Review of Books* 38, no. 2: 33-37.

¹³ The tensions and divisions between FT tenure track and PT / contract faculty have played out significantly in contract negotiations. Managers have often capitalized on these divisions to secure collective agreements favourable to their interests; while academic workers, in complex ways, have been dis-united in their efforts to resist managerial initiatives. A longer discussion of these complexities is found in Newson and Buchbinder, 1988: 45-48.

¹⁴ A related development that we don't have space to pursue here is the emergence of a lower tier of research-only academic workers. Similar to the "teaching-only" lower tier, research-only lower tier workers are largely comprised of PhD graduates who have not been able to secure regular full-time academic positions, but through securing post-doctoral research positions, have become a source of valuable research labour at low cost for many universities and for the elite tier of tenured faculty who have sufficient research funds to employ them.

¹⁵ By a "subjective" sense of insecurity, we refer to a feeling that one is, or could be, at risk or on shaky ground. Whether or not this feeling is warranted by objective conditions, it can be very difficult and painful to experience.

¹⁶ We are not implying that all part-time/contract faculty employ these practices, nor are we blaming those—including growing numbers of full-time faculty—who adopt these individualistic solutions to cope with systemic problems. Our aim is to call attention to ways in which the fragmentation of academic work complicates and strains relations within and among the various tiers of academic workers.

¹⁷ Although elite academics have no colleagues above them to worry about, they must worry nonetheless, both about protecting their status against those who would displace them and continuing to please those supporters and sponsors who invested their hopes and resources in them. This too promotes the self-absorption, instrumentalism, and other responses that militate against solidarity with other academic workers.

¹⁸ There is some evidence that a tier of "super-star" researchers is also coming into being, through measures like the multi-million dollar Canada Excellence Research Chairs.

¹⁹ We are aware of the extensive debate about whether research and teaching are necessarily interdependent and mutually supportive aspects of scholarship (Barnett, 2005). We can't engage this debate here except to say that, under very different circumstances, an argument may be made for faculty members choosing to focus more time and energy on one of these activities over the other. However, this argument is not relevant to the situation we have been tracing. In this situation, the separation of teaching and research is, as Marx would describe it, a forced division of labour, having been accomplished not for pedagogical or epistemological reasons, but to apply cost-saving labour policies.

²⁰ Although there is strong support for these programs, there is also much potential to build a coalition to oppose them. In addition to those academics, academic organizations, and others who are concerned about the harms these programs produce, leaders of smaller and less research intensive universities (which are allocated fewer of these positions and are less able to attract research stars to the few position that they do receive) have reason to support winding these programs down, particularly if the substantial funds they consume were to be more equitably distributed. Others, such as members of Parliament who represent ridings in which those universities are located, might also be inclined to oppose these programs, given the relative disadvantages and opportunity costs they generate for those universities and their surrounding communities.

²¹ By "politically prudent" we want especially to highlight the political costs to administrations of recurring and long lasting strikes, such as have taken place at York University in the Spring of 2018, the fourth since 2000 and each one longer, more costly and disruptive to the academic session, and severely damaging to the university's reputation.

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