

[Skip navigation](#) [#begincontent]



[\[..index.html\]](#)

▲ [Home](#)

[\[..index.html\]](#) ◀ [Contents](#) [index.html]

College Quarterly

Fall 2011 - Volume 14 Number 4

Degrees of Alienation: This Paper is Definitely Not a HEQCO Funded Policy Report

By Jamie Magnusson

Abstract

Walter Benn Michaels has argued that our higher education policies have been fashioned through a diversity fetish, rather than grappling with class inequities produced through neoliberal restructuring. When I was asked the question of whether Benn Michael's analysis pertained to Canadian higher education, I found myself writing the present article within which I argue that pitting class against race is a liberalizing strategy that obfuscates how each ruling relation is interlocking and mutually constitutive. I then go on to show how such interlocking dynamics productive of racialized and gendered class relations currently function within the Ontario postsecondary system through the production of "tieredness", otherwise termed "system differentiation" in policy papers published by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO).

This essay initially grew out of an invitation to write a review of Walter Benn Michael's book *How to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*. When the invitation was extended to me I was asked if I could address the question of whether Benn Michaels' analysis, which is set in the U.S. context, has relevance to Canadian higher education. Although I had not heard of the author or the book, I agreed to write a review. After I finished reading the book, I was wishing for an opportunity to write more than a review. It occurred to me that the request to give journal space to this author (and to me, a white reviewer) rather than the work of the many notable Canadian scholars of colour who are writing on questions of race and class in academic contexts was in itself problematic. Further, I found myself having much to say about gender and race within the Canadian higher education context, recognizing that there were few analyses available within that particular journal, but likewise within the field of Canadian higher education studies, that dealt with the racialized and gendered neoliberal economic dynamics that is intensifying across our colleges and universities. This paper, then, is the essay that I wish I had been invited to write.

Because the paper grew out of my response to Benn Michael's analysis I will summarize my take on the book quickly in order to illustrate certain dynamics affecting equity politics within the Canadian, and in particular, the Ontario higher education landscape. These dynamics do not concern the college sector unto itself, nor the university sector unto itself, but rather spans the entirety of the system.

Benn Michael's text is a short read intended for a general audience, but the analysis is problematic from beginning to end. The essence of the argument is that "our" fascination with race (and other signifiers of difference such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.) has lead "us" to overlook how neoliberal economics has exacerbated class division. I use quotation marks around the inclusive language to emphasize how Benn Michaels seems to be assuming that equity scholars of colour are included among the "us" that have completely forgotten about poverty in the pursuit of analyses of the politics of race.

Benn Michaels is, according to the biographical statement at the end of the book, "a professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the author of *Our America*, and *The Shape of the Signifier*" (pp .243). He describes himself as white and male and heterosexual. My thought was "Great! 80% of full professors are white and male and heterosexual and economically privileged, and one of them has decided to write about how race and gender and sexuality don't matter in the production of class privilege. Like he'd know!"

What makes Benn Michaels' analysis so problematic has less to do with how he embodies privilege, and more to do with how he pits one kind of systemic oppression, race, against another, class. This kind of "extricating" runs counter to analyses produced by activist scholars, including many Canadian writers dealing with issues of race and indigeneity such as Himani Bannerji, Roxana Ng, Agnes Callista, Bonita Lawrence, Rinaldo Walcott, Sherene Razack, George Seifa Dei, Njoki Wane, Sharhzad Mojab, Linda Carty, Dionne Brand, Sunera Tobani, Kiran Mirchandani, Enakashi Dua, Angela Robertson, Patricia Monture, and so on. We have titles lining our shelves that include *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-racist Feminist Thought*, *Racism in the Canadian University* (Henry & Tator, 2009), *Back to the Drawing Board: African Canadian Feminisms* (Wane, Deliovsky, and Lawson, 2002), *Indigenous Women and Feminism* (Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, Barman, 2010), as only a very few examples, with thoughtful contributions from many academics of colour and some from indigenous locations. Each of these scholars writes and teaches about the importance of examining multiple oppressions as integrated systems. Far from ignoring issues of poverty and class, many begin with an analysis of neoliberal economic restructuring, and show how the class effects are both gendered and racialized, as in the work of Kiran Mirchandani or Shahrzad Mojab, or Roxana Ng, or Himani Bannerji for example.

At the same time, these authors do not overlook the role of racist culture as a dimension that cannot be simplistically reduced to economics. Racist ideology is the unspoken and unexamined (i.e., hegemonic) backdrop to policy decisions involving economics, trade, immigration, and other matters of state. Gargi Bhattacharyya's *Traffick: The Illicit Movement of People and Things* (2005) does a particularly good job examining economic policies from a global perspective, and how these policies reinscribe colonial relations as emergent forms of neocolonialisms and imperialisms. That is, the neoliberal economic policies have neocolonizing consequences that are racialized and gendered and sexualized and classed. However, the lens through which such policies enter into the political imaginary in the first place has to do with the way in which the culture of that political space is invested in white supremacist ideology. Canadian anti-racist scholar Sherene Razack has produced several important books examining these dynamics within Canada, including *Race, Space, and the Law* (2002), and *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (2008), wherein she argues that racism can not be simply reduced to economics. As all of these authors argue, though, economics likewise cannot be ignored in analyzing racializing processes. Moreover, each instance of classed oppression is rooted in the organizing logic of others: these are multiple and integrated systems. How can we understand racialized violence without also examining how women of colour experience this violence differently from men of colour? How can we understand the violence of heteronormativity (the cultural and economic bias in favour of opposite-sex relationships, and against same-sex relationships) without exploring how it is shaped through patriarchy, and relations of race and class and colonialism?

These are not games of identity politics, but rather political strategies of intersectional analysis developed by activists in their community work as they attempt to negotiate issues such as violence against women, gay bashing, poverty, homelessness, racialized state violence or whatever issue is on the table. The intersections important for particular issues are dynamic and rooted in particular community struggles whose circumstances change as political negotiations take place. To illustrate the dynamic nature of these struggles, consider how the politics of race and class within labour

struggles may look different as labour negotiations proceed and certain progressive changes begin to take place, or, alternatively, certain political resistances to change take place. Trade union politics, presumably advancing working class interests, have also been guilty of curbing competition in labour markets by "imposing exclusions based on race and gender" (Harvey, 2010, pp 61). Presumably, trade unions understand neoliberal restructuring, and their current struggles are designed to mediate the impact of neoliberal policy on the working conditions in the manufacturing sector. The deliberate focus on neoliberal restructuring in this limited arena of class struggle, taking place while simultaneously imposing exclusions based on race and gender, illustrates how Benn Michael's analysis in fact is invested in these very same exclusionary politics.

Yet another illustration is available in terms of how the politics of citizenship, surveillance, and race changed dramatically post-9-11 in Canada, and continue to change globally through the racialized articulation of "terrorists" with Muslim identity. What these examples illustrate is that when activists talk about "race" and "class" they are not talking about "academic categories" that are static "signifiers", but rather historically and materially grounded processes: working-class Irish who are "white" have been racialized; Jews who are "white" have been racialized. Many of us whose activist work is more focused on higher education and adult learning have adopted this historically grounded "integrative framework" to understand how equity dynamics are played out in the college and university context.

However, in fairness to Benn Michaels, and I believe this is the message of his text which was unfortunately delivered in a way that was very problematic, certain liberalizing policies can construct categories as static and extricated from one another, and the implementation of these policies can therefore have consequences that reproduce, rather than alleviate, certain inequities. That is, we can succeed in reproducing economic elitism when we only focus on one dimension of diversity without considering how it's integrated with class. However, equity scholars such as Himani Banerji have always made this argument (e.g, 1995; 2000), but at the same time have used a much more sophisticated analysis of racial politics that is more effective in understanding how to form progressive policy. In the next section I try to show how these dynamics work in the case of Ontario higher education politics by examining the college system in conjunction with the university system in this historically two-tiered tertiary education system.

Race and Equity in the Knowledge Economy in Ontario

In order to understand how equity is being played out within Ontario postsecondary education I will sketch out some rough statistics, some policy trajectories, and finally some organizing concepts useful in understanding equity implications. Many equity scholars of education suggest, and I agree, that the neoliberal restructuring of our higher education systems is exacerbating inequities in ways that are racialized and gendered and classed¹. The following discussion, which uses the term "knowledge economics" as a short hand to capture the weaving of education through neoliberal economic policy, shows how.

Currently in Canada we are seeing a situation unfold in which contingent faculty, rather than tenure stream faculty, are doing an increasing proportion of teaching (Rajagopal, 2002; Muzzin, 2008). Contingent faculty can be professors hired into full-time but contractually limited appointments, professors hired into part-time appointments, or professors hired on a course-by-course basis. Approximately 50% of undergraduate teaching in universities is carried out by contingent, rather than tenured or tenure-stream, professors who have little or no job security, have reduced or no benefits, and who can be teaching as much or more than full-time tenure stream faculty, but at a much-reduced cost to the institution (Findley, 2011). The proportion of teaching carried out by contingent faculty may be even higher in certain institutions, but as Smallman

(www.chicagococal.org/downloads/Unions-Canada.pdf [<http://www.chicagococal.org/downloads/Unions-Canada.pdf>]) points out, gathering precise statistics has proven challenging because it is not in the institution's best bargaining interest to gather this information. The various communication sources available during the York University Strike in 2007 asserted that 56% of undergraduate teaching was in the hands of contingent faculty (e.g., Hashemi, 2009). Pankin and Weiss (2011), working from a U.S. context, claim that as of 2011, only one-third of faculty in colleges and universities enjoy full-time status.

With regard to Ontario colleges, a 2007 brief to the College Compensation and Appointments Council by the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology pointed out:

"Over the past 15 years, from the fall of 1988-1989 school year until the fall of 2004-2005, the total number of academic full-time staff has decreased by 21 percent while full-time enrolment has increased by 49 percent, according to the Association of Applied Arts and Technology (ACAATO) 2006 Environmental Scan. In that same period, full-time support staff has fluctuated and now remains at about the same level as it was in 1988-1989. Administrative staff/management has increased by approximately 16 percent in the past six years. There are now close to 17,000 women and men working part-time in Ontario community colleges, while full-time contingent is 15,000 workers. Moreover, part-time workers are now fulfilling key functions both in support staff and teaching, where part-time faculty are now offering core courses in core programs." (submitted by Roy Couvrette, 2007 www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/council%20brief.pdf [<http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/council%20brief.pdf>] accessed November, 2011).

In Ontario colleges as much as 80% of courses are being taught by contingent faculty (Dietsche, 2011). Although there are a few professional academics who teach from time to time on a sessional appointment, a growing class of contingent faculty depends on teaching as its primary or only source of income and yet teaches on a comparatively reduced salary and with few benefits and no job security. For example, consider those who are part-time faculty yet teach four courses per semester across different institutions, and with no time off in the summer because they need to piece together several sessional appointments across more than one institution to make ends meet. It is this sector of professors, often termed the "freeway flyers" sector, which I will refer to as the "precarious workers in the knowledge economy". From the above information concerning universities and colleges, when one glances across Ontario's two-tiered system, it appears as though the dependence on part-time teachers has undergone an intensification in the university sector and an even greater degree of intensification in the college sector. The greater degree of intensification in the college sector is logically consistent with the characteristics of holding a second-tier status within the higher education system and the knowledge economy. Moreover, we see marked hierarchy with respect to knowledge production and who has access to resources such as time, funds, and other infrastructure to do research. The kernel of the equity problem can be summarized as follows: access to the means of knowledge production within a knowledge economy is almost exclusively given over to a minority privileged sector of university professors that is dominantly male and dominantly white. The following two paragraphs elaborate on this point, first examining the university sector, and then examining the college sector.

In universities, tenure-stream or tenured professors move up a ranking system from assistant to associate to full professors. Tenured or tenure-stream professors are expected to do research, teaching, and service. In contrast to the increasing sector of precarious workers, tenured or tenure-stream professors are full-time, have job stability, and a full benefit package. Their teaching schedule is often the equivalent of three or four courses a year (that is, one or two courses per semester, with one semester off for research), but can be less if individual faculty can negotiate a smaller teaching load in

order to do more research. These kinds of negotiations often take place when faculty are successful in obtaining research grants, for example. That is, those most privileged within a knowledge economy are paid to do research, and have teaching schedules that ensure that some time each year is devoted to research or creative activities. The more they research, write, and publish, the better their salary, and the better their mobility in proceeding up the ranks from assistant to full professor.

With respect to colleges, although some have pointed out that colleges can be, and are, a site of research production, the fact is that Ontario college faculty are not expected to publish research as part of their contracted duties. The college faculty that do this are almost always working above and beyond their contracted duties, and thus are not being paid for this work. The primary function of community college faculty in Ontario, from the state point of view, is to teach. The system was designed historically as a second tier to university education: colleges had no transfer function and awarded certificates and diplomas rather than degrees. More recently, localized efforts have been put into developing partnerships between certain programs in colleges and certain programs in universities, thus making transferring from one institution to another a possibility. From the perspective of equity, this has been a progressive, if somewhat sporadic, movement that alleviates the tiered characteristics of colleges and the structural limitations that severely impact the children of the working class who are funneled into this lowest tier of this system, not to mention the classed distinction between college and university faculty.²

Now for the intersectional analysis that reveals the systemic inequities in the overall system. Approximately 80% of full professors in Canadian universities are male and white (gleaned from statistics published on the CAUT website). In contrast, the precarious sector of the knowledge economy is the most gendered and racialized of all sectors, with approximately 50% to 60% of non-tenure track university contingent staff comprised of women (once again from the CAUT website). Currently in Ontario we are witnessing relative attrition to the tenure-streamed sector, and at the same time the sector of precarious workers is growing. Whereas full professors are expected to integrate their research with their teaching, precarious workers are only paid to teach. Many precarious workers do research in order to elevate their chances of securing a tenure track position, in the case of universities, or a full-time faculty position in the case of colleges. However, they are not paid to do this research, and their chances of securing, say, funding from a national funding body are very slim because they are not in a tenure-stream position. In other words, in contrast to the dominantly white tenured sector, the upward mobility of the gendered and racialized workers within the precarious sector of the knowledge economy is structurally limited.

Policy pundits are documenting an increase in student enrollments into all the different parts of the post-secondary sector in the province of Ontario, and these students are paying tuition fees that have never been higher. The implications of the scenario sketched so far is that students are paying more money for courses for which enrollment is relatively higher (i.e., larger class sizes), and are increasingly taught by exploited workers comprising the precarious sector of knowledge workers. As a former coordinator of a graduate program, I can attest to the pressure, just after the McGuinty budget implementation (spring 2005) of many of the key points within the Rae review, to increase enrollment into graduate school, with a particular pressure to create 10 course master's cohorts (i.e., guaranteed enrollments set at a particular number so as to make the cohort profit-generating) requiring no thesis, and therefore no one-on-one supervision. The students in these cohorts are all part-time, and so do not receive the funding package given to the very few full-time students admitted into the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, and pay more fees than non-cohort students. That is, we are seeing a new tier of graduate students emerge who are structurally marginalized within a two-tier graduate education system, in relation to the very privileged tier of fully funded full-timers who receive intensive one-on-one supervision and mentorship.

To illustrate how this scenario connects with global economic policy trends, consider the shifting role of credit. Many of the students in these second-tier programs take out student loans to pay off their higher education expenses. Over time, given a neoliberal policy trajectory, more and more of these students will be dealing directly with banks or credit institutions as the state system of student loans slowly erodes and perhaps fades away entirely, as was recommended by Bob Rae in 2005, who suggested having the corporate banks and private credit institutions take over this credit function. That is, the neoliberal policy trajectory involves moving away from a state organized credit system favouring the debtor (i.e., government student loans), toward a credit system favoring the creditor at the direct disadvantage of the debtor (i.e., bank loans or credit cards). This shift brings the student-loan credit system in alignment with a global economic system within which banks and creditors have become dominant. Economists such as Michael Hudson refer to this shift as a "new form of feudalism". Even though Ontario has not yet rid itself of state loans that benefit the debtor, certainly banks are aggressively promoting corporate student loans, and the possibility of moving entirely toward a corporate model of student loans, as has been advocated by Bob Rae, lurks on the horizon. One must realize that this trajectory of financialization in relation to student debt is not unique to Ontario, but rather had already been a policy position of the World Bank, the violent effects of which have been documented by Delgado-Ramos and Saxe-Fernandez (2005) within the Mexican context.

The Rae Review recommends that Ontario restructure its postsecondary system (with a specific emphasis on the graduate sector) as described above in order to market it internationally. In his throne speech, McGuinty (March 2010) similarly recommends increasing participation rates to 75% and searching for international markets. This move effects a fundamental reshaping of our higher education system away from the social welfare state model that has been the hallmark of Canadian higher education, much as the social welfare state model has been the hallmark of our health care system. A reading of the critical literature on education policy reveals that neoliberal restructuring of the education systems in the global north is often undertaken in order to capture international markets in the global south³. That is, according to this literature the intention is to de-link higher education from a philosophy of orienting it to the public good of a particular jurisdiction (i.e., a welfare state model), and reframe it as an internationally marketable commodity that does not have the public good as its organizing philosophy, but rather the private interests of the private sector, but most particularly the interests of the knowledge economy which has become increasingly financialized, in the sense described by Marazzi (2010). The neoliberal knowledge economy, according to this reading, is a highly financialized system which has gained dominance since the 1970's, supplanting the manufacturing sector. In crude terms, because power coalitions (multinational state-corporation symbioses) can make more money from the stock market via financial innovations (massification of stock market, deregulation of trading, derivatives, etc.) in comparison to manufacturing cars via technological and organizational innovations, the manufacturing sector has experienced a global decline relative to the financial sector (e.g, Harvey, 2003; 2010).

As Delgado-Ramos and Saxe-Fernandez (2005) state:

"Data gathered by Santos indicate that worldwide spending in education is estimated at around 2000 billion dollars, more than global automotive sales. According to Merrill Lynch analysts cited by Santos, capital growth in education has been exponential, showing one of the highest earning rates of the market: 1000 pounds invested in 1996 generated 3,405 pounds four years later. That is an increased value of 240%, while the London Stock Exchange valorization rate accounted on the same period for 65%. Other 2004 data indicate that, current commercialized education, incomplete as it is, already generates around 365 billion dollars in profits worldwide."

In order to make the complex connections between the decline of manufacturing, the intensification of financialized, neoliberal capitalism, and the politically constructed policy discourse of knowledge

economics, one needs to read the literature examining the global transition to finance capitalism in works of economists such as Michael Hudson (e.g., *The Coming Debt Wars* <http://michael-hudson.com/2010/04/the-coming-european-debt-wars/>), Christian Marazzi (e.g., *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, 2010), David Harvey (e.g., *The Enigma of Capital*, 2010), Nitzan and Bichler (*Dominant Capital and the New Wars*, 2004). Within this context of higher education expansion as put forward by McGuinty, and Rae's recommendation that banking institutions take over the system of student loads, one can imagine Ontario part-time workers taking out loans to enroll in second-tier programs previously inaccessible to them. One can also imagine tapping into the international market of students in the process of a severe intensification of "internationalizing" higher education, not as a public good, but rather as an accumulation strategy. The idea is not so much to have knowledge workers in Ontario universities working entrepreneurially to make universities rich. Rather the idea is to restructure the entire knowledge system away from a public good paid for by the public much as we pay for a public health system, to one that is articulated with the economic policy trends of global finance capitalism. For profit, publicly traded credit/debt factors into this global picture.

One can begin to see how convenient it would be to merge the functions of credit institutions and higher education institutions into one, which has already happened in certain international jurisdictions to some extent: higher education institutions become credit institutions and use money from the interest as a source of income. This move, achieved for example through partnerships with credit card companies, banking institutions, and the like, truly changes the organization of knowledge and learning within higher education institutions. Finally, in terms of an intersectional analysis, one can now see the racialized picture emerging in terms of who is paying off an overwhelming student debt load for a graduate education that is sculpted as a second-tier system. This does not, of course, detract from the intensified effort to tap into the market of economically elite international students who will not require loans to negotiate the now globalized and tiered global system of higher education.

Degrees of Alienation and the Politics of Knowledge and Representation

In the previous section I promised some roughly sketched statistics based on policy trajectories, as well as some organizing concepts. One important concept that can be used in conjunction with intersectional analysis is that of "alienation"—a concept at least as old as Karl Marx. I would like to suggest that the production of "tieredness" within our education system is intricately linked to the production of a knowledge economy within which "knowledge" is an alienated commodity. It is also intricately related to the active production of multiple integrated systems of oppressions within this economy, and is structurally expressed in terms of multiple tiers that become raced, gendered, and classed.

Let me quickly describe alienation and then describe its concrete effects in knowledge-economic terms. Alienation is a complex process that is not one-dimensional, but rather is displayed organically throughout all parts of life, organized through the relations of capitalism. In the case of knowledge economics, alienation, in one sense of the term, can be understood as not having access to the means of knowledge production. This can be interpreted as not having access to the means of cultural representation, knowledge development, or technological creation serving personal and collective interests of one's communities. That is, through relations of neoliberal capitalism, knowledge becomes an alienated commodity. Another expression of alienation is the division of labour between those paid to do research, and those paid only to teach courses.

Think of the emergence of the 10-course cohort-based no-thesis-required master's degree in order to concretize this complex idea. Consider how knowledge, or the curriculum, is stripped away from the active participation of both students and teachers. First, the cohort is generally marketed with a

particular curriculum, and therefore the student-consumers are offered relatively little choice with respect to course selection. Second, the teachers are hired as sessional faculty to teach a particular course that has already been marketed as part of the curriculum. As we have seen, sessional teachers are extremely marginalized within the knowledge economy and often hired to teach courses that they themselves have not proposed. Third, the student is stripped of the opportunity to produce her own original research, required to take courses instead, and generally administered a comprehensive examination at the end of the program.

This scenario is in stark contrast to the most privileged tier within graduate education. Within the privileged tier, students select courses that interest them and that will help them develop their own research which they will eventually submit as a thesis in order to graduate. For simplicity, I will keep the example within a North American context, because, of course, within the European system students are not required to take courses, but go right to work on their theses. Graduate courses within the privileged tier are developed by full-time faculty members, who propose courses based on their own research interests. In other words, students and faculty in the privileged tier have access to the means of cultural representation, knowledge development, and technological creation, and students and many of the faculty in the second tier are denied access to the means of cultural representation, knowledge development, and technological creation.

Access to "public" education ought to lead to an engagement with culture and active participation in cultural representation. Similarly, it ought to lead to an engagement with politics, economics, and social and technological creation. This engagement ought to be intricately connected to one's interests and the collective interests of our communities. However, we can now see that within the emerging knowledge economy, the dynamics of alienation are leading to the active production of differentiation through "tieredness", and within the most racialized, gendered, and classed tiers access to the means of knowledge development is structurally limited. In fact, within those sectors, knowledge itself becomes an alienated commodity.

The analysis of tieredness as an expression of relations of alienation shows how the politics of knowledge and representation work. It reveals how knowledge economic policies work to maximize access to lesser privileged tiers within higher education, and maintain exclusionary barriers to minimize access to more privileged tiers. That is, the production of tieredness can work in direct opposition to one of the most important organizing concepts of critical pedagogy: gaining ownership of the means of knowledge development, cultural representation, and technological innovation. We can see how access to the means of knowledge production has become a productive form of class elitism that is organized in terms of race and gender within a knowledge economy.

The policy winds within Ontario promise more "tieredness" than before. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HECQO), a council created on the recommendation of the Rae Review, published a report entitled "Degrees of Opportunity" co-written by my colleagues Jones and Skolnik (2009). The report supports decelerating the introduction of partnership programs between Ontario colleges and universities, and instead creating an undergraduate sector that is open to most students—including those who are currently denied access. This new provincialized undergraduate sector is to be based on the Athabasca model of higher education, which bills itself as Canada's leader in online and distance education. A central feature of this Athabasca-inspired undergraduate program is that its faculty will be primarily teachers, and will not be hired to do research. Additionally, the system will be accessible to everyone while, at the same time, traditional universities will operate much as they always have. In other words, we have the reinscription of a historical tieredness (i.e., between the university and colleges) and the introduction of new tieredness (i.e., between the existing universities and the new digitally-based open access Athabasca).

In the meantime, HECQO has produced a new report pursuing the idea of greater differentiation within the university sector, authored by Weingarten and Deller (The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector, 2010). Following close on the heels of the "differentiation" excitement, is Moran, Skolnik and Tricks' new book commissioned, again, by HECQO entitled *Academic Transformation: The Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario*. This book seems to be a somewhat expanded version of the earlier report co-authored by Skolnik, but with new co-authors and a hard cover. The most recent blog by Harvey Weingarten, HECQO president and CEO, suggests that the quality of Ontario's universities is diminishing and that the antidote is to introduce greater differentiation into the system. It seems, then, that a centrally planned vision for greater differentiation within the tertiary education system has entered the HECQO imaginary and policy trajectory.

The danger of this policy proposal, and others such as Canada's Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD) policies aiming to "transition" historically excluded populations into "the knowledge society", is that these policies reinforce the most problematic features of the so-termed "knowledge economy:" the expansion of a sector of knowledge workers that is racialized and gendered and potentially destined to occupational instability; increasing access to less privileged tiers of higher education while at the same time building in structural limitations with respect to movement to more privileged tiers; proletarianization through debt; creating and formally institutionalizing new classed tiers, such as the division of labour between teaching and research within which those who research are more privileged (full time and tenured) than those who teach (part time and contingent); and finally, following directly from the previous point, retrenching and exacerbating existing inequities in terms of the politics of knowledge and representation. No doubt the HECQO authors listed above would argue that they are all for full-time employment for both teachers and graduating students. The problem is that the solution of "differentiation" as articulated in these ways is invested in, and not running counter to, the financialization logic generating employment precariousness and debt as the evil twins that dialectically constitute the policy rhetoric of neoliberal knowledge economics. Differentiation only works in an equitable way when the "differences" are not racialized and gendered class distinctions. In terms of colleges, to decelerate what has been a progressive movement to alleviate its second tiered status moves into the direction of further severing the possibility of college faculty and students to gain access to the means of knowledge production and cultural representation.

That is, with all of these massive changes to the higher education landscape, it is still very improbable that the silenced majority will be promoted to the privileged rank of full professor, which continues to be dominated almost exclusively by those who are male and white. And this privileged group has by far the most access to the means of knowledge development and cultural representation, resulting in academic knowledge being reflective of the interests of a dominant culture.

And so—the "trouble with diversity" is definitely not, as Benn Michaels suggests, that we've focused on race to the exclusion of class and poverty. The analysis above suggests, rather, that we've pursued policy trajectories that are productive of class effects that are racialized and gendered.

Endnotes:

1. Neoliberal restructuring of higher education in Ontario can be traced to two very important policy catalysts. One was the restructuring of federal transfer payments that occurred during the Chrétien regime in the 1990's, and which occurred during the Harris regime in Ontario. Under the Harris regime, the neoliberalizing effect of the federal restructuring was exacerbated by provincial restructuring through which provincial transfer payments to higher education were cut back. At the same time, the Harris regime introduced "contingent funding" whereby universities and colleges could receive certain provincial funds contingent on the institutions first raising money within the private

sector. The second policy trajectory was the implementation of the "Rae Review" (authored by Bob Rae and entitled *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*, 2005) by the McGuinty regime in 2005. This implementation was a catalyst for a major shift away from a welfare-state model of higher education, and toward a more neoliberal model in line with policy directions advocated by international financial institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, and so on.

2. When the manufacturing sector within southern Ontario followed global trends of decline (Harvey, 2010), this classed and racialized system coordinating postsecondary education opportunities with the needs of industrial capitalism only served to exacerbate the severe economic impact of factory closures, lay offs, and dependency on part-time or casual labour. Those who lost jobs and who wished to pursue further training could not use the human and financial capital they had already invested into community college or workplace training as a stepping stone to higher studies. To the extent, then, that community college students have some opportunity to transfer into a university, along the lines of the original intent of the Quebec CEGEP's, the obvious structural class barrier can be negotiated to a certain degree.

3. The following is a small collection of literature gleaned from the *Journal for Critical Education Policies* that provides analysis on this topic of north-south economic trading relations within a global context of neoliberal capitalism and education. Glenn Rikowski, *Schools and GATS Enigma* (Vol. 1, No. 1, 2003); Roberto Lehrer, *A New Lord of Education: World Bank Policy for Peripheral Capitalism* (Vol. 2, No. 1); Gian Carlo Delgado-Ramos and John Saxe-Fernandez, *The World Bank and the Privatization of Public Education: A Mexican Perspective* (Vol. 3, No. 1); Angela C. de Siqueira, *The Regulation of Education through the WTO/GATS* (Vol. 3, No. 1).

References:

Bannerji, H. (1995). *Thinking through: essays on feminism, Marxism, and anti-racism*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Bannerji, H. (2000). *The dark side of the nation: essays on multiculturalism, nationalism, and gender*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Benn Michaels, W. (2006) *The trouble with diversity: how we learned to love identity and ignore inequality*. New York: Metropolitan Books

Bhattacharrya, G. (2005). *Traffick: The illicit movement of people and things*. London: Pluto Press.

Bichler, S., & Nitzan, J. (2004). Dominant capital and the new wars. *Journal of World Systems Research*, Vol. 10 (2), 254-327.

Clark, I., Moran, G., & Skolnik, M. (2009). *Academic transformation: The forces reshaping higher education in Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Couvrette, R. (2007). *Brief to the College Compensation and Appointments Council by the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the College of Applied Arts and Technology*. <http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/council%20brief.pdf>.

Delgado-Ramos, G. C., & Saxe-Fernandez, J. (2005). World bank and the privatization of public education: A Mexican perspective. *The Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*. <http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=44>, last accessed November, 2011.

Dietsche, P. (2010). LECTURED delivered to the graduate course Recurring Issues in Higher Education, OISE, Toronto.

Dua, E., & Roberston, A. (1999). *Scratching the surface: Canadian anti-racist feminist thought*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Findley, J. (2011). Whatever happened to tenure? McLeans.Ca, On Campus, <http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/2011/01/17/whatever-happened-to-tenure/>, last accessed, November 10, 2011)

Hashemi, G. (2009). Notes on a strike. Fuse Magazine, 32(2). http://gitaha.net/pdf/GitaHashemi_strikenotes.pdf, (accessed November 10, 2011)

Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Harvey, D. (2010). *The enigma of capital and the crises of capitalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2009). *Racism in the Canadian university: Demanding social justice, inclusion, and equity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jones, G., & Skolnik, M. (2009). Degrees of opportunity: Broadening student access by increasing institutional differentiation in Ontario's postsecondary system. HEQCO <http://www.heqco.ca/en-CA/Research/Research%20Publications/Documents/Forms/DispForm.aspx?ID=26>, last accessed November, 2011.

Marazzi, C. (2010). *The violence of financial capitalism*. Translated by Kristina Lebedeva, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Muzzin, L. (2008). How fares equity in an era of academic capitalism? The role of contingent faculty, in *The exchange university: The corporatization of academic culture* A. Chan and D. Fisher (Eds.), Vancouver: UBC Press, pp. 105-124.

Muzzin, L. (2009). Equity, ethics, academic freedom and the employment of contingent academics. *Academic Matters*, pp. 19-22.

Pankin, R. & Weiss, C. (2011). Part-time faculty in higher education: A selected annotated bibliography. Providence College: DigitalCommons@Providence, Sociology Department Faculty Publications. http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=sociology_fac&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ca%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dontario%2Bcommunity%2Bcollege%2Bcontingent%2Bfaculty%2Bpercentage%26hl%3Den%26rlz%3D%26gs_sm%3Dc%26gs_upl%3D138812302101496715141010101393183410.3.0.11410%26spell%3D1%26sa%3DX%26oq%3Dontario%2Bcommunity%2Bcollege%2Bcontingent%2Bfaculty%2Bpercentage%26aq%3Df%26aqi%3D%26aq1%3D#search=%22ontario%20community%20college%20contingent%20faculty%20percentage%22, accessed November, 2011.

Rae, B. (2005). *Postsecondary review: Higher expectations for higher education*. Report commissioned by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/postsec.pdf>, last accessed November, 2011.

Rajagopal, I. (2002). *Hidden academics: Contract faculty in Canadian universities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Razack, S. (2002). *Race, space, and the law: Mapping a white settler society*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Razack, S. (2008). *Casting out: The eviction of Muslims from western law and politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smallman, V. (no date provided). *Contingent academic work in the Canadian context*. <http://www.chicagococal.org/downloads/Unions-Canada.pdf> accessed November, 2011.

Suzack, C., Huhndorf, S.M., Perreault, J., & Barman, J. (2010). *Indigenous women and feminism*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Wane, N., Deliovsky, K., & Lawson, E. (2004). *Back to the drawing board: African Canadian feminisms*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Weingarten, H., & Deller, F. (2010). *The benefits of greater differentiation of Ontario's university sector*. Final Report, HECQO.

Jamie-Lynn Magnusson, is Associate Professor of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, who writes and teaches in the area of equity and adult education. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the Canadian Society for Studies in Higher Education, 2009. Dr. Magnusson can be reached at jamielynn.magnusson@utoronto.ca [\[mailto:jamielynn.magnusson@utoronto.ca\]](mailto:jamielynn.magnusson@utoronto.ca)

◀ [Contents \[index.html\]](#)

The views expressed by the authors are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The College Quarterly or of Seneca College.

Copyright © 2011 - The College Quarterly, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology