

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

**INDHU RAJAGOPAL.** *Hidden Academics. Contract Faculty in Canadian Universities.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2002, 258 p.

It may take a while, but most academics eventually come to a conclusion that rarely flatters the university. Put bluntly, appearances are deceiving, and universities are not what they seem. To one side, universities routinely endorse a commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service. To the other side, a darker picture is at odds with mission statements and public relation spins. Universities tend to be remarkably exploitative, despite their ivory-tower gloss, with a decided reluctance to put into practice what they preach. The end result? A pattern of entitlement that replicates in a microcosm the inequalities of class structure within society at large.

This lucid and insightful book focuses on the plight of contract faculty as the hidden academics in Canadian universities. Using survey results and secondary sources, the author paints an unflattering picture of universities as sites of inequality. According to Indhu Rajogopal, part-timers comprise approximately one third of all faculty members in Canadian universities. They contribute significantly to overall academic output, despite consuming only a marginal share of the universities economic resources. Yet as a whole they remain largely alienated, underappreciated, and marginalized by administration and tenure faculty. They rendered invisible by this "casualization" process. Advancement is also precluded by seemingly insurmountable barriers including: university policies and economics, discriminatory treatment in the workplace, ideological structures of academic practices, and myths about their temporariness that conceal differing career motivations.

Universities have become increasingly dependent on contract faculty. The relentless drive to manage enrolments, balance budgets, and trim teaching costs has created a bifurcated labour force split hierarchically into tenure versus contract (part-time) faculty. Each sector receives very different treatment because both are associated with substantially divergent work processes, status, compensation, opportunities, and expectations. Part-timers have evolved into a permanent and inexpensive source of labour. Last hired, first fired, they produce a surplus value that helps universities overcome government-underfunded fiscal shortages. This devaluation of teaching puts part-timers in a Catch-22 bind: they are hired to do the very thing that the university devalues. Furthermore, too much teaching

displaces time from research. A vicious circle prevails: part-timers need the resources associated with full time employment to escape this white-collar ghetto, but the very nature of doing part-time makes it impossible cultivate research that enhance employability.

The relationship of contract part-timers with tenured faculty is described along love/hate lines. Many part-timers love what they do but loathe the marginalization or neglect. Full-time faculty appreciate the value added by part-timers in freeing up research time, yet may resent sharing space with a 'necessary evil.' Administrators may be enthused about sessionals especially as cost-cutting, just-in-time surplus labour. Yet part-timers are a constant and embarrassing reminder that such employment is no longer about "pin money." To be sure, not all departments or faculty and administrators convey such a negative ambiguity. In some cases, temps are accorded respect and deference as professionals. But this book's case studies suggest this to be the exception that proves the rule. Finally, the government endorses sweat labour as disposable widgets in advancing the notion of university as corporate business with education as a commodity for profit.

There is much to commend in this book. The writing style is straightforward, arguments are clearly presented, and the organization flows in a logical progression. The author does a good job in demonstrating that umbrella term 'part-timers' can conceal as much as reveal. Part-time work can be divided into contemporaries (who hold full-time jobs outside academia), classics (who are biding time until tenureship), and the contented who like the arrangement for personal reasons. The dynamics differ accordingly. There are also flaws in the book. The book relies heavily on a data base collected in the early 1990s. The reader is reassured that the data are as relevant today as then (p.15), but who really knows. The chapters include so much statistical material in proving trends and rates that the eyes often glaze over. The author's efforts to feminize the casualisation of part-timing is not very convincing.

Still, flaws aside, the book provides a riveting glimpse into the politics and pains of 'indentured labour.' For that reason alone, the book should be mandatory reading for every tenured faculty, department head, university administrator, and government official, given the absurdity and scandalous proportions that privilege the many at the expense of the few in what is tantamount to academic apartheid. And take it from a 'guy' who has spent far too much time in the trenches: the difference between full-time and part-time goes beyond job security or living wages or even respect. It is fundamentally about empowerment, or, in the memorable words of some unknown: "Tenure is never having to say you're sorry."

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