Neoliberalism, Pierre Bourdieu suggests, is a ‘strong discourse’ that is hard to combat because it is contributing so much to creating the world in which we live (Bourdieu 1998). Certainly, as Cris Shore and Susan Wright (1999) have argued, it is hard for academics to gain traction against it, in part because it presents itself in a language of excellence and accountability that seem to command assent. In this essay, I want to comment on a movement to recognise and reward different kinds of scholarly work in US colleges and universities. This movement is already opening space for critique and action, but I also want to express caution about some contradictory tendencies in these reforms1.

Growing Accountability, Uncertain Rewards

Compared to other countries, higher education in the US stands out for its size and variety, and its complex mix of public and private finance and control. Although this situation makes it particularly hard for those inside to ‘see’ and ‘name’ the sources of systemic change, it is clear that higher education in the US is showing the same signs of neoliberal ‘market penetration’ as elsewhere, and that many familiar features of academic practice in the US are being refashioned in market mode. In particular, over the past thirty years, university staff, like many other professionals, have become more and more accountable while also becoming less and less secure.

In the US, post-doctorate, part-time and full-time, non-tenure track positions have multiplied in number; competition for traditional full-time tenure-track positions has intensified; and faculty evaluation systems have become more formal and complex (Braskamp and Ory 1994; Finkelstein, Seal and Schuster 1998; Diamond 1999; Arreola 2000; Finkelstein 2003). There is a sense that the bar for entry and promotion into academic careers has been rising rapidly, and there is concern that this trend will intensify as demands for social...
and financial accountability increase (Altbach 2000; Wilson 2001).

Never has faculty work been so closely examined, and never have the stakes in the quality of that examination seemed higher, for individual scholars, but also for the students institutions, and communities that faculty members serve. Many argue that the ‘system’ is discouraging good people from entering and/or remaining in the academic profession (see Breneman 2002; O’Meara, Kaufman and Kuntz 2003), that it overemphasises certain kinds of research at the expense of teaching and public service, rewards publication for publication’s sake, and does not take into account the growing complexity and demands of academic work.

Growing market pressures on universities continue to exacerbate these imbalances, expand administrator authority, encourage restructuring of academic courses, endanger institutional and faculty autonomy, and erode disciplinary knowledge practices through rules and regulations about time to degree (Gumport 1997; 2002; Gumport and Sporn 1999; see also Bowen and Sosa 1989). Sheila Slaughter and Lawrence Leslie, authors of Academic Capitalism, argue that

the changes currently taking place [in the nature of academic labour] are as great as the changes (...) which occurred during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Just as the industrial revolution at the end of the nineteenth century created the wealth that provided the base for postsecondary education and attendant professionalization, the globalization of the political economy at the end of the twentieth century is destabilizing patterns of university professional work developed over the past hundred years. (1998: 202)

Faculties today are being asked to do more than ever, with fewer resources and with uncertain rewards. With changes in university finance, they have to spend ever more time seeking external funds and writing more and longer proposals for research funding, but also doing more consulting and more applied research. With changes in the nature of knowledge production, faculties are spending more time working on interdisciplinary teams and taskforces, doing community service projects and public scholarship (see Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny Scott, and Gibbons 2001). And at the same time that scholars are designing more ‘robust’, relevant, and publicly responsible research (see Strathern 2004), teaching, too, is becoming more demanding, as students become more diverse, as new media and communication technologies change what it is possible to do in the classroom, and as educational priorities change.

The pressure is showing. In some settings, faculty work is coming apart, ‘unbundling’, with a growing cadre of non-tenure track and often part-time teaching faculty members in a vulnerable situation, and a ‘constant searching for reduction of teaching assignments to make time for research, writing, and other creative work’ (Bernstein 2003; see also Bernstein 2001). Fields and professions closer to the external market are gaining funding students, and leverage, while many of the liberal arts and sciences are not (Slaughter and Leslie 1998; see also Marcus 2002). And at many institutions, much of the ‘new’ work involved in research, teaching and service is regarded either as peripheral to the faculty’s main responsibilities or just part of doing business and is not adequately recognised or rewarded as a legitimate part of the core.

Defining Scholarship Strategically

One important attempt to take some control of this situation has been the effort to broaden the range of work that counts for purposes of hiring, retention, tenure and promotion, a move that gained steam and
direction with the publication of the 1990 report *Scholarship Reconsidered*, by Ernest Boyer. This report argued that colleges and universities could provide better education, research and public service if they expanded the definition of ‘scholarship’ to cover a wider range of faculty activity and allowed faculties to periodically choose and change areas of emphasis. Basic research and discovery were important, Boyer argued, but so too were application, interdisciplinary efforts and a scholarly, reflective approach to the teaching and learning of one’s field (Boyer 1990: 15-25).

This argument hit a responsive chord in the 1990s and continues to feed a lively and often heated debate about faculty work in national meetings of major higher education organisations, in scholarly and professional societies and on campuses of every kind (Diamond and Adam 1995; 2000; see also Huber 2002; Huber and Morreale 2002). In fact, a recent survey by the American Association for Higher Education suggests that as many as two-thirds of the US’s four-year colleges and universities have recast some combination of their mission and planning documents, evaluation criteria, incentive programs and workload policies ‘to encourage and reward a greater range of scholarly work’ (O’Meara and Rice, in press). Yet the question remains as to whether faculties, departments and institutions will actually take the risks that recognising new work entails and, if they do, what the unintended consequences might be.

One problem is the uneven pattern of change. Consider the case of a young chemist from the University of Colorado at Denver, whose institution had recently redefined its mission and invited its faculty to integrate their work in teaching, research and service toward improving the quality of local urban life. With broad interests in chemistry education for elementary and secondary school teachers, this assistant professor found the new mission appealing and soon became the university’s new poster child. When it was time for tenure and she received the official notebook for presenting her case, she tore out the dividers labeled ‘teaching’, ‘research’ and ‘service’ and reorganised her material to emphasise the integrated nature of her work. In a remarkable conference session in 1998, a panel from across that institution made clear that while her case embodied official university ideals, it also challenged the existing tenure criteria, which were still written in terms of excellence in research, teaching and service. This case became highly contentious, generating much discussion about the nature of scholarship at the institution. In the end, the chemist won by a very slim margin, but only after the committee put the dividers back in.

Clearly, it is far too soon to say how this is going to play out. For one thing, political realities in departments and on campus still make it very difficult for faculty members to take full advantage of these opportunities, and there are many stories about young and not-so-young scholars who have followed their interests in, say, the scholarship of teaching in their field, or applied or public scholarship, and found their careers derailed. Even if it does become possible to make these cases successfully, the unintended consequences could be considerable, such as requiring a broader range of work from everyone—exacerbating workloads rather than creating options, as its advocates hope; or raising requirements for documentation without making adequate resources of time and money available; or contributing to the unbundling of faculty work into separate teaching and research tracks.

Perhaps the most perplexing thing about the move to broaden the range of scholarly work is the danger that the very activities these new systems are designed
to encourage might be remade in the image of more familiar kinds of research in order to be visible to (and countable by) a system that, in its desire to quantify everything, short circuits discussion and debate about quality and acts as a veritable ‘anti-politics’ machine (see Ferguson 1990; Scott 2001). As indicated by the growing literature on academic auditing, anthropologists can bring powerful conceptual tools to bear on the processes by which ‘political technologies’ like these become technologies of the self, encouraging individuals to constitute their work and ‘themselves in terms of the norms through which they are governed’ (Shore and Wright 1999: 558, 560; 2000; Strathern 2000a; 2000b).

Case Studies

Indeed, anthropology’s ethnographic methods can also help move debate forward, because it is in deliberations about particular cases that abstractions like ‘scholarship’ gain specific meaning, rather than in institutional rules and regulations per se (see Scott 1995; Lamont and Thevenot 2000). For example, my own recent case studies of the careers of four research university faculty members who have made important contributions to the scholarship of teaching sheds some light on how scholars are thinking about work that doesn’t fit well within standard academic accountability systems (Huber 2001; 2002; 2004). Case studies like these can also become a kind of activism, as the scholars involved (and their colleagues) agree to make the issues their work raises available for wider discussion and debate.

Each of these scholars has a long history of innovative teaching in their own classrooms, but more importantly of participation in large funded projects for pedagogical and curriculum reform. Each also has studied student learning, presented results in conferences and journals, participated in collegial networks etc. And each has done these things aware that they were not considered the safe way to tenure and promotion. But while each has believed strongly enough in the importance of pursuing this risky and unusual work, they have taken rather different views of the value of presenting it in the evaluation system’s standard metric or in what one of them calls ‘the language of exception’.

University of Michigan chemist Brian Coppola and his closest advisors are strong advocates of the strategic value of the standard metric and have quite intentionally cast Coppola’s unconventional work in conventional terms. The department chair at the time of Coppola’s tenure case told me that his success had depended upon building ‘a publishable record’, while his dean at the time emphasised the importance of his having ‘national visibility beyond classroom performance’. One of Coppola’s external referees at the University of Wisconsin explains:

I like to tell my colleagues in the research community that the metrics are all the same. You’re looking for papers published in peer-reviewed, high-profile journals; you’re looking for funding brought in from competitive sources like the National Science Foundation; you’re looking for speaking invitations; you’re looking for adoption or adaptation of the work in other people’s programs (Ellis, in Huber 2004 : 106).

However as Sheri Sheppard, a mechanical engineer at Stanford, found out, ‘the standard metric’ can make work in emergent areas of scholarship look substandard instead. The journals, conferences and external reviewers for her work on engineering education were not well known to the colleagues on her committee. The funding did not come with the same prestige; the methods seemed soft; the graduate students did not move on to the best
positions. Most troubling of all was the fact that even her most successful teaching innovations tended to become public property without her name attached—making it hard to trace, much less lay claim to, the impact of her work.

New media projects are also resistant to the standard metric, as Randy Bass (an English professor at Georgetown University) found out during his own white-knuckle tenure case. As he noted in a talk entitled, significantly, ‘Discipline and Publish’ (1999), faculty members who work with new technologies and their supporters are often in the strange position of arguing that the key to assessing this work is that it is both like and unlike other kinds of work. For example, Bass’s internationally acclaimed American Studies Crossroads Project—a set of web-based resources on using new media to teach American Studies—was in some ways like a book. ‘Unfortunately,’ he points out, ‘as a publication the Crossroads Project (like many others in digital form) commits all kinds of sins; it is...”self-published”; it is highly collaborative; it is never “finished” but ongoing; and it is very difficult to locate its boundaries and extent.’ There was also the problem of peer review. As one of Bass’s departmental colleagues explained:

You know how a university press goes about choosing a book; you know how a journal does it. It’s very hard to know what the equivalent evaluation process is for stuff that is coming out. (Glavins in Huber 2004 : 201)

Clearly, there is a lot at stake in finding ways for the faculty evaluation system to ‘see’ the genres native to particular kinds of work, if that work is going to maintain its integrity and even count at all.6

Activism

Career stories like these underline how important it is for faculty members who are taking up new kinds of scholarship to be strong advocates for what it is they are doing and explain in every way possible why it is both intellectually and professionally serious. But the primary responsibility should not be borne by the most vulnerable. So, a further lesson concerns the responsibility of senior faculty members and academic administrators who believe in the work’s value to support it as mentors, interlocutors and external reviewers and recommenders. There is also ample need for lobbying and for organising forums that might help create cultures in their disciplines, departments and on campus for such work to be valued and understood.

But a final word of caution: this kind of activism cannot stop at the campus gate. Many colleges and universities are in a position of having to demonstrate their value to the larger community and we all have much at stake in how this is done. This is true for institutions’ research and public service missions, and it is especially important for teaching and learning. In many US states right now, officials are looking for ways to hold colleges accountable for student performance and there is talk about instituting tests of college students not dissimilar from those set for primary and secondary school students. If we are not all engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning ourselves, we should be supporting those of our colleagues who are reflecting on student learning in our discipline and how to improve it through lenses—and for purposes—that we understand and, one hopes, know and love.

Indeed, I recently received an email from another colleague, a historian and scholar of teaching and learning at Tem-
ple, who reminds us that unless there is a change in the political climate:

there is a real possibility that when the Higher Education Act comes up for renewal, testing as a form of faculty and institutional accountability will be proposed. Imagine a world in which federal grants and loans to students are contingent upon their institutions' performance on some kind of standardized test. The lesson to be learned here—the point to be underscored—is that if faculty don't take charge of their own affairs, someone else will. (Cutler 2003; see also Cutler 2004; Burd 2003)

Not that this is the only reason for getting intellectually serious about pedagogy, or applied or public scholarship, of course, but it is important to remember that the fortunes of university staff are shaped not only in our own disciplines, departments and institutions, but also, increasingly, in the larger political world.

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Notes

1. This article presents some new material, but also includes passages drawn from several of the author's recent publications (Huber 2001; 2002; 2004).

2. These results are broadly consistent with the 1994 Survey on Faculty Roles and Rewards by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in which some 80 percent of the provosts at four-year colleges and universities said that their institutions had either recently reexamined their systems of faculty roles and rewards or planned to do so soon. Of those institutions that had already completed or initiated this process, 86 percent reported that redefining faculty roles had been a focus of their review and 78 percent said that the definition of scholarship was being broadened to include the full range of activities in which faculty members are engaged (see Glassick, Huber and Maeroff 1997: 12-14).

3. Another example is from Portland State University, well known for its efforts to encourage ‘the scholarship of engagement’ in its surrounding community. Two leaders in this kind of work from Portland State have written about their heightened anxiety at being among the first to be up for promotion under the institution’s new rules (Gelmon and Agre-Kippenham 2002).

4. Another possibility is that smaller ('teaching') campuses might use the new formulation to dilute the hard-won recognition of research as a legitimate faculty activity—for instance, by accepting as ‘scholarship’ newer, less expensive and possibly less rigorous kinds of work.

5. Some scholars are sceptical about the value of making a wider array of scholarly work visible in an era of diminishing faculty autonomy and control. Yet the whole enterprise of scholarship depends on a sufficient degree of publicness to permit ‘sustained discussion’ among colleagues who can provide a ‘close assessment of arguments and … claims’ (Marcus 1998: 242; see also Merton [1973]’s classic discussion of norms in science and debate about it in Hess 1997. This is as true for work in newer areas of scholarship as it is for basic research or discovery—as long as faculties control the times, places and genres in which such work is made visible. Indeed, a growing cadre of academics are making the argument today that the scholarship of teaching and learning can help to counter (rather than promote) simplistic views of pedagogy, reclaim technology in teaching or assessment of student learning from those who would use it unwisely, encourage an ‘ethic of inquiry’ (Shulman 1993; Hutchings and Shulman 1999; Hutchings 2000) in the classroom, facilitate intellectual exchange about teaching and learning and improve practice through knowledge building both within particular fields and in the ‘trading zones’ of inter- or cross-disciplinary exchange (Galison 1997; Huber and Morreale 2002).

6. Web-based resources for teaching and learning are not the only forms of scholarship that challenge both the social and technical adequacy of the academy’s standard ‘metrics’ for measuring the quality of scholarly work. Applied and public scholarship also suffer. Michael Berube puts it this way: ‘if I am going to be a responsible professional and professor, I make my work available to the clients of my university and of my discipline; to some extent—as a teacher, as a citizen, as a professional—I take the shape of my container’ (1996: 17). And that container is not always the peer-reviewed article or book. It is only in the last decade or so that our own
field has begun to publish scholarly reviews of genres such as museum exhibits and catalogues, or ethnographic film. Much more than that slips through the documentary cracks. For example, despite the creation of public history courses in History departments, and the adoption of new criteria for the evaluation of this new work, there have been problems: 'confronted with strange-looking materials like environmental impact statements, museum displays, or historic structure reports, academics often respond suspiciously' (Clements 1988: 6; see also Driscoll and Lynton 1999; Shopes and Doyle 2003). See also Brenneis’s discussion of forms for recommendations and evaluating research proposals and their contributions to ‘specific and consequential outcomes for individuals and scholarship’ (in press).

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