"You Can Go Your Own Way": Community Colleges' Responses to Neoliberal Policy[1]

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Community colleges are both vehicles for and models of state policy; but they also act within a socio-cultural and institutional context where organizational norms and values come into conflict with state policy and practices. Over the past two decades, through "traveling neo-liberal reforms" (Seddon, Ozga, & Levin 2013, p. 12), public higher education, including community colleges, adopted liberal market practices (Campbell & Pederson, 2001; Crouch, 2011; Quiggan, 2010) and potentially altered the seminal qualities of education and training through the replacement of these qualities with economic values, in the form of money and profit for private rather than for public purposes (Ball, 2012). There is potential conflict between neoliberalism and those community college institutional characteristics that figure prominently in the development of the institution since the 1960s. It is questionable, then, if, and to what extent, in the face of these pressures, community colleges maintained critical components of their mission (s) and historical principles such as access to educational opportunities for adults, a comprehensive curriculum, a community or local orientation, a commitment to teaching, and a focus upon students as learners (Levin, 2001). Although neoliberal ideology is embedded in state policies, community colleges' responses to these policies differ, suggesting a high level of differentiation in organizational behaviors among community colleges. This investigation addresses community colleges' responsiveness to state policies, in the period of 2000-2014, and offers explanations as to the variance in local responses to these policies in three states—California, Washington, and Hawai'i.

Conceptual and Theoretical Literature

In the U. S., in the late 1980s and 1990s, federal and state policies aimed to move community colleges to global economic competitiveness and in the process to shape the

mission of the community college toward economic goals (Levin, 2001). The term

"neoliberalism" was applied to reform projects in the public sector, and was applied as well

to higher education institutions (Brown, 2013; Levin, 2007; Misiaszek, Jones, & Torres,

2011). Crouch (2011) identified market principles as the standard for social and

institutional judgment, so that the only important goals were profit goals. Flew (2014)

viewed neoliberalism as a project for institutional change that intended to align institutions

with a liberal market. Brown in the U. K. (2013) emphasized marketization of higher

education, where everything was for sale. Ball (2012), in the U. K. as well, stressed profit as

an outcome, particularly as a motive for institutions to cut costs. Institutional judgments,

scholars noted, were based upon profit goals and conformed to business standards of

performance (Crouch, 2011; Quiggan, 2010; Ward, 2012).

Neoliberal policy for higher education helped to expand and normalize the

neoliberal project in order to reform the public domain through the socialization of

students as consumers and through knowledge production for commercialization, pushing

institutions to behave as businesses (Ward, 2012). The marketization of higher education

not only connected institutions to the marketplace of consumers but also promoted the

establishment of a higher education market in which competition (e.g., for students, for

products, and for resources) became normalized (Crouch, 2011). Neoliberal policy applied

to higher education rationalized inequality and thus undermined institutional claims of

equity and diminution of differences among social groups, particularly for access to higher

education and ultimately for purposes of social mobility (Corak, 2012; The Century

Foundation, 2012). The implications may be as Stephen Ball suggested that the neoliberal

goals of the State were reproduced within the "commitments, choices and obligations…of individual actors within public sector institutions" (Ball, 2012, p. 35).

The claim was that neoliberal practices forced public sector higher education to depend less upon government funding and rely more on an entrepreneurial pattern of behaviors that leads to the acquisition of private revenues streams, such as tuition and grant money (Ball, 2012). Governments viewed colleges and universities as economic investments; private foundations and policy bodies looked to higher education to satisfy ideological preferences, such as educational and training attainment to meet workforce needs of the private sector (Olssen & Peters, 2005). The public, dissatisfied with higher taxation, preferred cost containment as the way to address rising higher education tuition. National political leaders, including U. S. presidents (Ayers, 2005), viewed and articulated higher education as an instrument for national productivity and global economic competitiveness (The White House 2015). Ball (2012) termed the key mechanism for judgment or assessment of higher education institutions as "performativity," evaluation based upon economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Set in juxtaposition to neoliberal ideology, community colleges as institutions possessed foundational characteristics and reflected historical principles that sustained their survival, shaped their development, and marked them as unique institutions that occupied their own field (Levin, 2000). Tied to U. S. cultural and social values, the label of "democracy's college" (Diekhoff, 1950) was closely associated with first the junior college and then the community college, given its open access principle and its opportunity for those whose material or personal conditions, or both, did not permit another avenue to postsecondary education. The label "democracy's college" pertained to the central value of

"access" in the community college (Meier, 2013). This connotation was contained as well

within the label of "second chance" institution for the community college. Other terms were

attached to "access" as a label for the community college, reflecting historical concerns,

such as a quality of institutional performance (Roueche & Baker, 1987) and equity (Dowd,

2003).

As well as access, a second central label associated with the community college was

"community," although the term has been stretched and compressed, beginning with the

Truman Commission's first national articulation of the institution as "community college"

(Gilbert & Heller, 2013; President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947). Community

has been used to refer to local populations, to local and regional economic development, to

democratic forms of governance, with community participation in college functioning, and

to global connections both through international education and international development

(Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013; Levin, 2001).

A third salient label used to characterize the community college was

"comprehensive curriculum," which referred to the broad array of curricular offerings from

adult basic education and English as a Second Language to university parallel courses and

technical and occupational training programs (Cohen et al., 2013). Indeed, some scholars

defined the mission of the community college based upon its curricular focus (Cross, 1985;

Cross & Fiedler, 1989). As the community college expanded its curricular offerings to

baccalaureate degree programing in the 2000s, its actions were viewed as mission drift

(Levin, 2004). As the community college reduced its curriculum to core offerings and to

more traditional junior college programing of university transfer and

vocational/occupational programs, following the recession of 2008, its actions were

viewed as mission contraction (Meier, 2013).

All three labels, "access," "community," and "comprehensive curriculum," were

contested both in their meaning and in their application. Yet, both scholars and

practitioners in their varying interpretations and usages continued to view and understand

the community college as both a particular kind of higher education institution, one

certainly differentiated from four year colleges and universities by the characteristics of

their students (Levin, 2014) and by their mission (Meier, 2013).

In the 1990s and 2000s, community colleges were viewed and understood by

scholars and practitioners as teaching institutions, including both education and training,

as financially affordable, as locally accessible, and as open doors for those who could

benefit from postsecondary and adult education (Bogart, 1994; Bragg, 2001; Grubb, et al.,

1999). Even those critics of the community college's performance (e.g., Brint & Karabel,

1989) did not reject the characteristics of community colleges and held fast to community

college principles. More recent criticisms had less to do with the institution's failure to

reach ideals than with basic student performance issues (Shulock & Moore, 2007) and

implied a rejection of several foundational principles.

Indeed, these recent criticisms addressed the outcomes for community college

students and suggested that production—program and degree completion and transfer to a

university—was more important than principles of access, the comprehensive curriculum,

and community responsiveness, as well as student development (Pusser & Levin, 2009).

These concerns not only narrowed the understandings of the mission of the community

colleges but also fed into the discourse of neoliberalism promulgated by a neoliberal State (Ball, 2012; Ward, 2012).

Research Questions

Two primary research questions guided this investigation: What were the demands of a neoliberal State on community colleges in the 2000s? In what ways did organizational members of community colleges explain the effects of neoliberal or liberal market policies upon their organization?

Methodology

This specific investigation was extrapolated from a larger study that used field research methods (Burgess, 1984; Mason, 2002) to investigate longitudinal institutional change of North American community colleges over a 25-year period. This present investigation focused upon three states and three community colleges within those states during the period of 2000-2014 to ascertain the intentions and effects of state policies on organizational behaviors with particular attention to the effects of neoliberalism and the Great Recession of 2008. As a field methods investigation, this research entailed researcher interaction with sites and site members, observations, collection of documents, and a team of researchers for data analysis and reporting. We utilized qualitative field methods for data collection and analysis (Burgess, 1984; Erickson, 1986; Maxwell, 2005; Seidman, 2013). The use of more than one source of data (document analysis, observations, and interviews) enabled us to triangulate our data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Several strategies and procedures structured this investigation.

Data Collection

The first phase of the investigation entailed the collection and review of 2000-2014

documents at national, state, and organizational policy levels to identify community college

policy initiatives and priorities. Documents that were included in the document analysis

consisted of a variety of state and organizational policies and reports and carried out

between April 2013 and December 2015. For example, state higher education legislation,

strategic plans, and reports were included. Organizational documents included annual

reports, strategic plans, and collective bargaining agreements, among other documents.

The second phase, carried out in 2013 and 2014, engaged faculty and administrators at

three community college sites in order to gather their perspectives during interviews.

Observations of campuses and researcher interactions were captured in a journal.

Consistent with field methods practices, the researcher related these observations both to

scholarly literature and theory. Participants for interviews were selected in order to

provide a cross-section of perspectives (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, full-time/part-time

status, faculty/administrator rank) and were acquired via email correspondence.

Purposive sampling of faculty was carried out to meet criteria, including members'

knowledge of organizational actions (e.g., committee membership, department chairing).

Interviews of institutional faculty and administrators, including executive level

administrators, lasted between 60 and 90-minutes. Fourteen administrators were

interviewed (three of them twice) and fifteen faculty were interviewed. The interview

guide included topics such as personal and professional background information,

perspectives on state and organizational policies, experiences with campus committees as

well as with students and faculty, labor-management relations, finances, governance, and

the influence of state and institutional policies on their workload and on their students.

Analysis

The principal researcher and four graduate student assistants carried out initial

data analysis of interviews, state policies, and institutional documents. Another research

group of three doctoral students and the principal researcher carried out a second phase of

analysis, using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) for state documents (California,

Hawai'i, and Washington). We coded documents from the 2000-2014 period on

government, non-government, and organizational priorities for the three colleges. We used

content analysis in order to "mak[e] replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other

meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Following

Krippendorff's (2004) approach to content analysis, we unitized data into segments of

analysis, then sampled, coded, reduced the data, inferred phenomenon using our analytical

constructs, and generated answers to our research questions. Content analysis provided us

with a mechanism to examine "linguistically constructed facts" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 75)

about characteristics, relationships, behaviors, and realities evident within the documents.

Guided by past scholarship on neoliberalism, we developed a coding scheme based

on qualitative data analysis techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles et al., 2014) and used

concepts drawn from neoliberalism (Ball, 2012; Crouch, 2011; Quiggan, 2010; Ward, 2012)

to create a ten category coding structure. These categories included: competition (C),

dismantling or eroding of social welfare or social service (DW), liberal or free market (FM),

individual benefit (IB), individual economic worth (IW), performativity (PF), privatization

(P), reduced government responsibility (RG), reduced social expectations (RS), and state

intervention (SI). Competition (C) was coded as any rivalry for the purpose of achieving

benefits between organizational members or the organization as a whole, or between

organizations or institutions. Dismantling social welfare and service (DW) was coded as a

reduction in, or decreased access to, developmental or community programs. Individual

economic worth (IW) grouped data related to the description individuals as producers of

pecuniary advantages to the region. Free market (FM) was coded for indications of

participation by the organization in the economic marketplace, and included bidding, and

was often coded in conjunction with competition. Individual benefit (IB) was considered as

personal gain or differential treatment for one individual. Performativity (PF) was coded

when members (e.g., faculty) were expected to increase or demonstrate efficiency and

productivity. Privatization (P) was coded when members of the organization referred to

strategies for revenue generation that deviated from traditional government

appropriations. Examples of privatization included grant funding, international student

recruitment, and partnerships with private industry. The reduced social expectations (RS)

category refers to society's or a group's lower or missing aspirations for societal benefits,

such as health care, or pensions, or services. As well, RS was coded when organizational

members referenced that the expansive mission of the community college was shrinking,

likely a result of reduction in societal expectations. State intervention (SI) was coded when

an outside government or government affiliated body exerted power over the organization.

We used these ten categories for document analysis and interview data.

We also performed an analysis of interview data using narrative analysis (Riessman,

2002), also referred to as "narratives-under-analysis" (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). Following

the principles of this approach, we analyzed the narratives of the participants themselves—

without seeking the creation of our own narration as a product of research. With analysis

of narrative, stories are considered "data" and themes may be derived from stories

(Bochner & Riggs, 2014). Thus, narrative analysis is an interpretive approach to analysis

(Bochner & Riggs, 2014). Narrative analysis allowed us to capture the representations of

institutional life and history (Riessman, 1993; 2002) from the point of view of individual

faculty and administrators. Narrative analysis illuminated the ways in which neoliberal

ideology was (or was not) present in each of the three community colleges through the

perspective of participants and provided insight into the ways in which members of the

community colleges explained the effects of neoliberal policies on their organizations.

Findings

We address neoliberal higher education policies in three states and if and the extent

to which community colleges in the three states—California, Washington, and Hawai'i—

responded to and adopted state policies that can be identified as neoliberal policies. These

calls and requirements in state policies of California, Washington, and Hawai'i not only

aligned community colleges with states' economic, political, and social agendas but also

endeavored to push these institutions toward the liberal marketplace, where they would

model businesses and industries. The three U. S. colleges are given pseudonyms: Suburban

Valley Community College in California, City South Community College in Washington, and

Pacific Suburban Community College in Hawai'i. Organizational members are referred to by

their job titles or roles. Actual names of the colleges and the faculty and administrators are

omitted to preserve anonymity as required by our research protocol. We report findings by

state and the college within that state.

California

California's community colleges (and former junior colleges) had an acclaimed

history dating back to the early 1990s of enabling its population access to higher education

(Douglass, 2000; Meier, 2013). In the 2000s, the reliance upon the community college for

the state's residents for higher education was considerable, especially given that the

community college enrolled double the number of students enrolled in public universities.

Indeed, under the *Donahoe Act* (State of California, 1960a) and *A master plan for higher*

education in California: 1960-1975 (State of California, 1960b), California community

colleges (CCCs) were consolidated with the state's other two systems of higher education:

the University of California (the state's research institutions) and the California State

University (the state's comprehensive universities). From its focus upon access to

education and further education, through university transfer, conveyed as a principle in

The Master Plan, in 1960, CCCs expanded their mission to include remedial and

developmental education, English as a Second Language, adult and non-credit education,

community services, and the advancement of "California's economic growth and global

competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous

work force improvement," (California Department of Education, 1997, 66010.4[3]), all

institutionalized by the 1990s. CCCs constituted the largest system of community colleges

in the United States (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2015). In 2012, the

CCC system consisted of 113 community colleges in 72 districts (Student Success Task

Force, 2012). The colleges enrolled 1.4 million students (National Center for Education

Statistics [NCES], 2013).

      The passage of SB 1456, the 2012 Student Success Act, following the recession of

2008 can be considered the culmination of the movement away from the onus of state

support for higher education to the onus upon the individual (Geiger, 2005). This

movement in CCCs was part of a larger national discourse focused increasingly in the latter

1990s and 2000s on completion, efficiency, and economic development. Each state

responded to the pressures associated with this discourse by identifying institutional

problems that prevented completion, efficiency, and economic development. California

responded in the 2000s by articulating the problem as housed, not within the state or

institution, but rather within individual students, and to a lesser degree, individual staff

and faculty, with responsibility for improvement on individual colleges.

Following the fiscal crisis of 2008, the CCCs experienced budget cuts totaling as

much as $1.5 billion between fiscal years 2008-2012 (Bohn, Reyes, & Johnson, 2013). This

crisis prompted an increased emphasis on efficiency and credentialing. As a consequence of

these budget cuts, California policy makers made deliberate efforts to focus on students

deemed most able to complete in an increasingly competitive economic climate. Moreover,

programs designed to support vulnerable populations (e.g., students with disabilities and

first-generation students) saw dramatic cuts to their funding allocations. In many cases, the

cuts experienced in the 2009-2010 fiscal year were as high as 40% over previous years

(Contreras, 2013; Farr, 2010).

Yet, funding cuts, beginning in 2008, and policies throughout the 2000s placed

pressure upon the ideals of California's *A master plan* beyond what it could bear. These cuts

came on the heels of a period, 2000-2008, during which a deliberate movement away from

the diversity and access missions of community colleges to an emphasis upon course,

program, and degree completion and accountability was ascendant. In 2004, for example,

the passage of California's Assembly Bill 1417 (State of California, 2004) established the

Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges program that required the Board of

Governors of the CCCs to recommend a framework for the evaluation of performance in

meeting targets and realizing efficiencies. Building on the movement toward efficiency during the early 2000s, Shulock and Moore (2007) articulated the argument that access-driven policies hindered student completion and attainment. This argument and documentation the year prior to the financial crisis of 2008 may have set the stage for state's response to this crisis. In 2012, the state responded to both policy community pressures and revenue shortfalls with the passage of the 2012 Student Success Act.

Despite the rhetoric in California community colleges during the late 1990s, which focused on institutional needs for resources and to fulfill institutional missions (Levin, 2001), the state chose to increase efficiencies by removing perceived deficits in the individual. In conjunction with state actions that attempted to remove perceived individual deficits, there was support for high achieving individuals. For example, students who completed education plans and made measurable progress toward completion were favored under SB 1456 in relation to those who struggled and failed to identify a program major and make adequate academic progress, arguably the students in need of the most institutional support. The Student Success Task Force developed eight recommendations from legislative bill, SB 1456 (Student Success Task Force, 2012), recommendations in the main that addressed deficiencies in individual students.

The 2012 Student Success Act spoke to the goals of completion, efficiency, and individualism embedded within a neoliberal agenda. However, while this legislative act was central to the immediate future of behaviors within the CCCs, it was only a means to a larger end. If the amelioration of perceived student, staff, and faculty deficits was the means, then economic and workforce development was the larger end goal. Governor Brown's 2015-2016 CCCs' budget proposals spoke to the reason for investing in

community college education (Brown, 2015; Taylor, 2013). The Governor asserted that

there was a "high return on investment" in community colleges and listed the rationale for

investment in community colleges in order to improve technical education and

apprenticeship programs, as well as to increase funding for career development (Brown,

2015, p. 43). As such, the "traditional professional culture of open intellectual inquiry and

debate [was] replaced with an institutional stress on performativity" (Olssen & Peters,

2005, p. 313). Moreover, the overall discourse within CCCs' policies suggested that the

overarching goal of community colleges, particularly in response to financial constraints,

was economic, and specifically workforce development. Furthermore, legislative behaviors

in California suggested that the largest impediments to this goal were not institutional

deficits, but rather individual deficits. As such, community colleges were expected to adopt

practices related to efficiency, completion, individualism, and economic development.

Suburban Valley Community College, California: Student Outcomes and Student

Stratification

State policy affected Suburban Valley College (SVCC) on several fronts, but two were

most prominent, and these two became intertwined by the second decade of the 2000s. On

the one hand, state policies increasingly moved the college from concerns about access to

concerns over student performance and outcomes. On the other hand, state policies led to

funding shifts in two directions, with incompatible outcomes. First, there were 2008-2012

reductions in state funding to the institution (common to all CCCs) that resulted in the

rationing of instruction and student support services. Second, after 2012 there was an

increase in state funding that resulted in the privileging of some activities and populations

over others. As extensions of state policy, the state's funding behaviors were at their

dramatic climax in the period of 2009-2013, during a period of sharp decline and then

restoration. The stratification of student populations may have reached its zenith through

privileging of student groups based upon the 2012 Student Success Act. Indeed, state policy

coalesced around expenditures—funding allocations for the college from the state—and

values attached to education and training. The Chancellor of the community college district

that oversaw SVCC indicated that the message from the state government was clear.

> [T]he state told us, "Your priorities are now transfer, basic skills, and career
>
> technical education, and do not spend your scarce resources on lifelong learning,
>
> community services, those kinds of things"…[Their] intention was to pay for as little
>
> as they could…clamping down on things including how many times you can repeat a
>
> course. (District Chancellor)

The response to the Student Success Act on campus was varied, but decidedly

negative. Faculty interpreted the priorities message from the state as an indication "that

the community college is no longer a community college" (Department chair). The

department chair identified two key changes: "a workload increase [and]…real core

changes to our mission as an institution." The emphasis upon particular student

populations was noted by a dean as an efficiency measure. "What they're trying to do is to

get people to enroll full-time because full-time students are more successful and it all stems

from being more efficient with your money" (Dean). According to several SVCC faculty, the

Act erred on its conceptualization of community colleges and their students.

> [It was] a shaded picture of community colleges: that we're two-year colleges; that
>
> students come here fully-prepared to participate…just this totally strange vision of
>
> what a community college is and that got written in the Student Success Act. So it

makes it sound like every student who comes here has to have a major…Now

everything is focused on that. It's been simplified. (Program coordinator)

Resistance to the Act as well as to other unpalatable state policies that violated

organizational members' understandings of the purposes of the community college did not

occur. Passivity, then, was another form of compliance, as noted by a department

chairperson. "[A] lot of the fight is out of us. I feel like I'm on a mode where I'm going to

devote as little energy and angst as possible. I'm going to do the minimum of what's asked

of me in terms of the bureaucratic requirements." Both the Student Success Act and

funding were conjoined because the legislation made it clear that funding for the college

was tied to compliance with the strictures of the act. "[W]e go along with it because there's

funding tied to it" (Program coordinator). That is, there was compliance and not acceptance

because of the financial dependency of the college on the state.

The responses to financial reductions from the state led to an institutionalized

process of rationalization of programs, with unintended consequences such as low morale

and defensiveness. The President of SVCC treated fiscal reductions following the Great

Recession of 2008 as a problem that could be addressed by institutional groups through

planning. The President established a college tribunal, referred to as the Institutional

Planning and Budget Process, with the intent that this process would determine priority

areas for deleting, curtailing, or maintaining programs, units, and activities of the college.

One administrator viewed the Institutional Planning and Budget Process as an opportunity

structure for jettisoning inefficient and ineffective programs. "'We've studied your program

reviews for a long time and your enrollment is down, down, down, all the time and we've

been dumping resources… and things haven't changed'" (College Dean). The process led to

"a lot of loss" (College President), but a high level of employee participation. "There was a

lot of loss and at the same time people were constantly trying to reorganize and figure out

'Ok...we have to work together. How are we going to do this?'" The President characterized

this budget process as "broadly democratic, genuinely participatory." The emphasis here

then was on process not outcomes. Yet, others did not agree with the President on process,

and viewed the process as secretive and competitive. One faculty member and one

administrator described the process as inquisition-like in order to justify the elimination of

programs and layoff of employees. For these two, the process led to discontentment and

demoralization. "I've never seen such discontent in my many years" (Science faculty).

Deletion of programs and course offerings and increases in class sizes were the material

consequences of diminished state funding and policy priorities; there was an emotional and

college community toll as well.

Finally, in furthering the marketization of community colleges in California—

responsiveness to economic demands, competition, and business-like accountability—the

state community college system and the accrediting agency, Accrediting Commission for

Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC),

made student outcomes priorities. In the 2000s, SVCC gave less emphasis to the public

communication of the performance of the college and more to the measuring and assessing

student learning outcomes (SLOs). Indeed, in furthering emphasis upon outcomes

(including completion), it was the pressure of the accrediting body, Accrediting

Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) that propelled SVCC in its actions.

> [T]he other big trend over the last few years has been a focus on student learning
>
> outcomes. That has come to dominate a lot of the administrative work that we do

> and a lot of the program reviews we do. Measuring, assessing, and reflecting on the
>
> student learning outcomes…It's really been an emphasis focusing on SLOs, assessing
>
> learning outcomes in individual classes and then across the entire department,
>
> looking at the whole program. (Business faculty)

This focus upon accounting for student outcomes affected faculty practices and had

negative effects on the education of students—faculty time was used for accounting and

not for curriculum and instruction.

> [T]he time that the faculty spend on their jobs I feel like it's a little bit of a balloon.
>
> So if they [administrators] say, "You need spend a lot more time doing SLOs," well
>
> then what happens is they [faculty] spend less time doing other things. So SLOs
>
> have grown to take up a larger percentage of the time we spend thinking about our
>
> programs and classes. (Business faculty)

In that SLOs were tied to accreditation, the pressures to conform were considerable. "[W]e

were basically told, 'If you don't do this we're going to lose our accreditation.' That was the

message that was hammered and hammered and hammered for two solid years"

(Department chair). Faculty viewed these demands as a form of de-professionalization.

"[T]his is the notion that we are not professionals, that's what we are being told, and I find

that ridiculous" (Department chair).

Washington

In Washington, in the early 1990s, community and technical colleges became part of

a system separated from both the public secondary schools and the universities in the state

(Washington State, 1991; 1992). From its inception, the community and technical colleges

[CTCs] system included colleges that provided literacy education, basic skills, occupational

education, technical training, and university transfer (Washington State Board for

Community and Technical Colleges [WSBCTC], 2015). Since 2010, fifteen CTCs offered

applied baccalaureate degrees (WSBCTC, 2015). As of 1999, there were 34 CTCs in the

state's system (WSBCTC, 2015). In the fall of 2012, these colleges served 139,311 full-time

students (NCES, 2013). Since the 1990s, the Washington State Board coordinated the CTC

system for Community and Technical Colleges (WSBCTC)—previously known as the State

Board for Community Colleges (Washington State, 1991). Current policies for CTCs flowed

out of the *2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* (Washington Higher Education

Coordinating Board [WHECB], 2007). In the strategic plan, the role of higher education was

to promote economic growth and social mobility by responding to industry and employers'

demands; degree attainment was promoted in, and connected to, all educational levels;

programs were customized to students' demands; and indicators of quality and efficiency

were used to determine public funds allocation. For CTCs, this meant prioritizing university

transfer and "swirling" (whereby students moved among CTCs), increasing credential and

customized programs, and implementing assessment indicators.

Degree attainment was a central piece of Washington higher education policies.

Policies after the *Master Plan* exhibited an explicit interest in the inclusion of

underrepresented populations such as students of color, women, low-SES individuals, and

adults in higher education to produce a highly skilled workforce. University degrees were

conceived of as individuals' route out of poverty (WHECB, 2007). Thus, transfer programs

and programs in technical and applied fields—those that increased an individual's

probabilities of employment and high income—were given priority at CTCs. CTCs were

described in Washington policies as stepping-stones in degree attainment, thus, they were

expected to respond and facilitate students' "swirling"—students' transferring back and

forth among different CTCs to obtain necessary credits for degree completion and "to

compete for the best jobs in the state's economy" (WHECB, 2009, p.8).

In the policies and reports of the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board

and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, there was a

business-like depiction of CTCs. According to the Washington State Board for Community

and Technical Colleges (2010), the role of CTCs was to satisfy the demands of individuals

who returned to higher education for new job skills. Programs and courses at CTCs were

expected to be customized to respond not only to what students may need (e.g.,

asynchronous access to class content) but also to what they preferred (e.g., interest in a

productive activity). Students were viewed as consumers of a product—education.

Accordingly, the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board's reports (for example,

A skilled and educated workforce 2011 update: An assessment of the number and type of

higher education and training credential required to meet employer demand) included

strategies to attract students to pay for a specific product (e.g., program or major) that

responded to the job market and state economic needs (WHECB, 2012a, 2012b; WHECB,

WSBCTC & WTECB, 2011).

By following an efficiency rationale, CTCs were expected to serve a larger number of

students without increasing costs to the state (WSBCTC, 2010; WHECB, 2011a). The

Washington CTC board urged colleges' leaders to adopt a "culture of evidence" to ensure

colleges' assessment and accountability practices, which would result in transparency,

improvement of quality (Jenkins, Wachen, Kerrigan, & Mayer, 2012), and the reduction of

expenditures in education (WSBCTC, 2010). The Student Achievement Initiative of 2007,

for example, was created to incentivize CTCs (through funding) to improve student

outcomes measured in the form of transfer and completion rates, as well as student

performance in programs that were necessary for transfer or degree completion (Jenkins et

al., 2012). In these policies, "successful" CTCs were those that transferred a large number of

students, allowed swirling, and "avoid[ed] loss of credits" in the process (WHECB, 2011b).

In the period of 2008-2013, CTCs were described more as workforce providers and less as

higher education institutions with a democratizing and access mission.

City South Community College, Washington: Scarce Resources and Enrollments

Skills development and ultimately credentials were the cornerstone of City South

Community College's (CSCC) actions, within a context of both state demands and local

market conditions, including market demand in the form of students and market needs in

the form of a labor force. Yet City South's focus upon meeting local market needs rested

with the development of baccalaureate programs in applied areas, which were equated

state-wide with economic development, but viewed at City South as a mechanism to

increase enrollments on the one hand and produce credentials on the other. "[M]ore kids

from high school [will enroll]…for our baccalaureate degrees…Our thought was raise

aspirations" (CSCC District Chancellor). These degrees extended the vocational and career

technical mission of the college, yet had the potential to push the CSCC away from

community college identity as a two-year institution toward the four-year sector. Yet, by

2014, such a move had not occurred and CSCC was firmly entrenched in its community

college identity. Degrees were four years in the areas of high skilled labor market demands,

technically focused, "appropriate BAS [Bachelor of Applied Science] degrees. University of

Washington, Washington State [University] don't offer those" (Senior administrator). Thus,

the baccalaureate degree both addressed skills development, at a considerably higher level than traditional vocational programs, and led to a more market salient credential than the associate's degree (traditional community college credential).

A second statewide effort to tie community and technical colleges to market behaviors arose in the second decade of the 2000s in the form of new directions in the state's funding of institutions, based upon college performance. Performance was judged statewide through outcomes and funded so that the state withheld $50,000 a year from each of the colleges. The re-gaining of those funds was achieved through a statewide competition amongst the community colleges.

> [T]hey take 50,000 dollars per college and they put it in this pot and then that money gets allocated based on performance. And it's called a Student Achievement Initiative… [T]hey publish the data for all the colleges and…there's…competition among…colleges not to look bad. (College administrator)

Some college members, however, were unaware of this competition; rather, they were sensitized to enrollment funding whereby the college received funding based upon student numbers. "[T]he only performance that I've heard of is that when they decide how much money to give us they look at what we did last year for [enrollment] and if we don't hit our target then we could lose money" (Science faculty and college committee leader). A senior administrator, more familiar with the state's efforts to control expenditures, viewed the performance funding plan as mostly a plan and not yet an implemented action.

> [T]hey're saying, "Oh, we're going to move from an enrollment based model to a completion model," but so far they've just talked about that a lot….[O]n a six hundred million dollar budget, they put three million dollars into it…[T]he real

> incentive [would be if they] put…three hundred million in…before people would
>
> change their behavior. (Senior administrator)

The District Chancellor for CSCC viewed performance funding as a combination of effort from the state government in the form of both the elected officials and the state board. "[O]ur state board is pushing more for performance funding…I think the legislature's pushing also for that." The chancellor tied this funding to student achievement, driven by the Gates Foundation and other states' approaches to funding. Although a small step, performance based funding in Washington satisfied state policy preferences as well as those of private sector influencers to align the colleges with a neoliberal environment.

The actions of CSCC in the 2000s in response to state policy—skills development, accountability for student outcomes, and efficiency in college operations—were largely contextualized by financial scarcity, and the behaviors of college members to either increase these or to cope with scarcity. The period of 2009-2012 overshadowed previous years of activity as a result of unprecedented reductions in state allocations (WHECB, 2012a).

Low student enrollments confounded the financial problem for CSCC as they were funded based upon full-time equivalency student numbers, mandated by the state. As a result of these low enrollments and state policy, CSCC turned to several strategies to increase enrollments, and consequently revenues. One strategy was the development of new programs, particularly baccalaureate programs, and another strategy was the recruitment of international students.

> [T]his is tricky business, the FTE (full-time equivalency) piece. So, in today's world
>
> the campuses are all down in enrollment, so they're looking for extra heads. So this

[new program] is another winner because now you're increasing your FTE count as

well. So it's a winner. [The state will]…give you FTE for it. (Senior administrator)

Behaviors and actions at CSCC reflected a level of high resource dependency.

Hawai'i

Since the 1960s, the administration of community colleges in Hawai'i was

transferred from the State Department of Education to the University of Hawai'i

(University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, 2015). The University of Hawai'i (UH) became

that state's post-secondary education system and in 2014 was composed of three

universities and seven regional community colleges spread across the islands of Hawai'i,

Maui, Oahu, and Kauai. The University of Hawai'i contained both native serving and Asian

American Native American Pacific Islander serving institutions. The majority of Hawai'i's

indigenous college or university going population attended UH community colleges (Model

Indigenous-serving University Task Force [MISUTF] n.d.). In 2012, the seven community

colleges enrolled 29,333 students (NCES, 2013).

In the 2000s, Hawai'i higher education policy was torn in two different directions,

governed by two sets of values that were not always compatible. Higher education policy in

the state of Hawai'i was characterized by neoliberal values, such as an emphasis on

revenue generation, entrepreneurship, workforce development, accountability,

competition, and student learning outcomes (SBCTE, 2014; University of Hawai'i

Innovation Council [UHIC], n.d.). Yet other values—such as community, culture, and social

justice—were embedded within policy documents. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on the

individual, conflicted with the value of community. Hawai'i community colleges found a

way, at least theoretically, to blend these conflicting values by defining the community as

one individual, one single body. In this way, Hawaiian higher education policy represented

a hybridization of neoliberal ideology and Hawaiian cultural values. Yet, there were other

contradictory values. On one hand, in the 1990s, Hawaiian higher education institutions

were required by policy to remain responsive to the economic demands of their state and

to promote efficiency (Levin, 1999). In the 2000s, state policies instructed the University of

Hawai'i's community colleges "to provide the trained workforce needed in the State, the

region, and internationally by offering occupational, technical, and professional courses

and programs which prepare students for immediate employment and career

advancement" (University of Hawai'i [UH], 2006. p. 1). On the other hand, policy documents

emphasized the importance of creating quality of life and improving the quality of

education for students (UH, 2009, 2015). Economic goals were not necessarily compatible

with values attached to quality of experience and quality of life.

The combined but uneasy relationship between neoliberal values and Hawaiian

cultural values were reflected in higher education policy. These policies emphasized

accountability (a neoliberal value); however, policies expanded the value of accountability

to include the value of responsibility, or *kuleana*, (a Hawaiian cultural value). For example,

documents from the 1990s such as the *University of Hawai'i strategic plan* (UH, 1996)

illuminated the importance of accountability in the employment of human capital and the

use of physical resources. In the 2000s, discussions of accountability shifted towards an

emphasis on fiscal responsibility and accountability to the taxpayers, students, families,

and donors for the purpose of maximizing the "value" of each of these stakeholders'

investments in higher education (UH, 2002). These neoliberal values were counterbalanced

with cultural values that accentuated responsibility for tradition, sustainability, and the

preservation of indigenous culture (UH, 2009). A former president of the University of

Hawai'i noted that, "[e]verything we do is, or should be, imbued with Hawaiian values and

respectful of the traditions practiced here for centuries" (MISUTF, n.d., p. 2). In this way,

Hawai'i higher education blended both neoliberal values and their cultural values.

Hawaiian community college documents and policies from the 1990s focused on

quality, enrollment, technology, partnerships, internationalization, access through distance

education, and a student-centered approach (Tsunoda, 1996; UH, 1996, 1999). These

values continued to be emphasized in the policies of the 2000s; however, policies in the

2000s adopted a more neoliberal tone with a focus on grant acquisition, sources of external

funding, patents and licenses, and STEM degree completion (UH, 2008). Despite these

neoliberal tendencies, Hawai'i community college policies emphasized the importance of

completion for Native Hawaiians (UH, 2012) and the value of Hawaiian culture education

programs (MISUTF, n.d.). Again, the policies demonstrated a balance between neoliberal

values and Hawaiian cultural values.

Hawaiian postsecondary policies valued degree programs in Hawaiian culture, yet a

focus on workforce development was also prominent. Policies on workforce development

were one area where neoliberal values replaced cultural values and an emphasis on local

Hawaiians. Discussions of workforce development appeared throughout the postsecondary

policies of the 1990s and 2000s. Whereas, the documents of the 1990s highlighted the

necessity for community colleges to meet the needs of the local, state economy (Tsunoda,

1996; UH, 1996, 1999) and focus on partnerships and job training for tourism, agriculture,

and technology (major industries for Hawai'i); the policies on workforce development in

the 2000s outlined a vision of the University of Hawai'i's community colleges on a more

global scale. A report from the University of Hawai'i Innovation Council recommended that

UH advance "economic growth and future competitiveness" in a "global marketplace"

(UHIC, n.d., p. 4). In the case of workforce development, neoliberal values of globalization

and marketization replaced the cultural values of Hawai'i.

Although neoliberal ideology infiltrated Hawai'i's postsecondary education policies;

the social culture of the Hawaiian people acted as a shield to ward off the full replacement

of local cultural values with neoliberal values in policies. The University of Hawai'i and its

community colleges did not embrace neoliberalism fully or intact. Although there were

values embedded in policies that stood in direct conflict, even threatening the replacement

of local cultural values with neoliberal values, the state's higher education policies, overall,

blended these discordant values and in some cases reconciled their differences.

Pacific Suburban Community College, Hawai'i: Culture and Performativity

Although the cultural values of community and Native Hawaiian traditions and ways

of knowing were prevalent at Pacific Suburban Community College (PSCC), and indeed the

bedrock of organizational members' rationales for their work engagement and professional

identities, economic conditions and imperatives as well as performativity guided and

shaped college behaviors. Both administrators and faculty described this combination of

Hawaiian native culture and native populations, along with performativity goals. In this,

PSCC combined culturally popular and politically appropriate values and neoliberal forms

of competition, including measurable outcomes.

> The Board of Regents changed the mission to say that serving native Hawaiians is an
>
> inherent part of the mission of the University of Hawai'i…[We make] native
>
> Hawaiians a focus of the outcomes measure…[T]here are five measures that have

dollars attached to them: Graduates, number of graduates, number of STEM

graduates, number of native Hawaiian graduates, number of Pell recipients...

(Senior Administrator, University of Hawai'i)

The number one goal [of the UH system's strategic plan] was more native Hawaiian

students going to college, more native Hawaiian students being retained, more

native Hawaiian students graduating...[W]e have a native Hawaiian garden; we have

a native Hawaiian lab. There may be some of that connection happening...for them

to feel that there is a place for them here...[O]ur buildings are named after native

Hawaiian plants...[O]ur services...are named Hawaiian on purpose... to say to them,

"You're important to us. Our host culture is important to us." (Business faculty

member)

Indeed, there was a practice at PSCC of socializing faculty into both Hawaiian culture and

pedagogy for Hawaiian native students.

I've helped with...professional development things for faculty regarding Hawaiian

values [and] pedagogy that work with local students...in training and helping faculty

who didn't know the Hawaiian culture figure out how to deal with it...[T]here are

strategies you can use in the classroom so that you're not singling people out, so that

it's not a debate, so it's not competitive; it's more collaborative...(History faculty)

But socialization to cultural norms was insufficient for PSCC's organizational survival and

role in the Hawaiian community college system. PSCC was compelled to acquire revenues

through competitive funding grants and endeavored to maintain its legitimacy through the

process of accreditation. Performativity at PSCC was in the form of outcome measures,

required by the accrediting agency, The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior

Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC), and reinforced by

University of Hawai'i policy. Performativity pertained to the outcomes of the college's

programs relative to the system's goals including number of graduates and also student

achievement in program areas. Outcomes were tied loosely to funding.

> Strategic planning is done at the UH system level…They laid out the strategic
>
> outcomes… We're trying to get every student we can to be successful…[W]e have
>
> measureable outcomes [demonstrated through]…program review…[I]t's
>
> everything…remedial, developmental, math, reading, writing, culinary, dental, EMT,
>
> sports science, IT, liberal arts, marketing, medical assistant…[I]n this
>
> comprehensive program review…they also look at the contribution of the program
>
> to the college's strategic outcomes. (College Administrator)

Even those areas, such as the Liberal Arts, customarily detached from outcome measures

that were applied to workforce programs, were party to judgment. Thus, performance

expectations and measures were uniform.

> I think the Liberal Arts faculty do have to come around to realizing that…the gen. ed.
>
> learning outcomes (critical thinking, communications…integrated learning)…is so
>
> that students can be…good family members, good citizens, and productive
>
> employees…or managers...There has to be a movement of Liberal Arts towards
>
> understanding that your curriculum's important but it's also training people.
>
> (College Administrator)

Thus, tensions at PSCC could be found between market based performance expectations

and social and cultural development goals of the institution.

The focus upon native Hawaiians at PSCC also relieved tensions, particularly those over financial reductions from the state government. The focus upon Native Hawaiians aligned with the University of Hawai'i's strategic plan: "The number one goal…of the UH system's strategic plan was more native Hawaiian students going to college, more native Hawaiian students being retained, more native Hawaiian students graduating" (Counselor). As well, federal government funding was tied to the Hawaiian student population: "[W]e're a native Hawaiian serving institution and we get money from Title III…[W]e got 12 million dollars from NSF since 2006…I think we've got close to seventeen hundred native Hawaiian students. So that's really changed" (Mid-level administrator).

> [T]he revenues brought in can benefit all groups…The native Hawaiian students, other underrepresented students…Samoans, and so forth. And we've received a number of Title III grants, a number of National Science Foundation grants, I think within the last three to five years, something like twelve million dollars in National Science Foundation…[B]ack…in the 1990s…there was very little money for community colleges (Chancellor).

Furthermore, the efforts to increase enrollments, particularly of underserved populations relied upon actions that targeted native Hawaiians.

> [I]n 2006, [we] made native Hawaiians our targeted population, and as a result we doubled the number of native Hawaiians enrolled in the community colleges within four years and more than doubled the transfer and graduation rates for native Hawaiians.(Senior Administrator)

Native Hawaiian education and training thus increased enrollments and satisfied the state's policy for workforce development. Furthermore, the actions of the institution

responded to federal and state policies on diversity as well as state policy on workforce

development, while satisfying PSCC's cultural values.

> [T]here's a benefit to having Native Hawaiian students at [PSCC]…[T]hose funds are
>
> used both specifically for Native Hawaiian learners and…to create a more Hawaiian
>
> place of learning. So it benefits Hawaiian students…but also befits the institution in
>
> terms of enriching what it is we're doing. (Dean)

In significant contradiction to the neoliberal view of individuals as economic entities and

market principles as standards of judgment (Ball, 2012; Crouch, 2011), PSCC exhibited

rationalizations by faculty of the centrality of the education of native Hawaiians. For

faculty, there was a cultural and social debt, or historical remediation, for the treatment of

native Hawaiians in their state, and the attention to the Hawaiian population through

higher education was an effort to pay this debt. "I think a lot of us feel we have a debt to pay

and we are going to make our best effort to pay that debt and to honor the folks who come

from that culture" (Counselor). Notwithstanding the power of neoliberalism, the behaviors

toward native Hawaiians at PSCC indicated another and parallel system of values.

Three U. S. Colleges and the Effects of State Policies

The development and actions of community colleges in the U. S. from the 1980s to

the 2000s were largely aimed at the maintenance of mission and the expansion of mission

under conditions of dependency on resources (Levin & Kater, 2013). In the 1990s, the

processes of globalization both contributed to the pace of organizational change and

brought traveling policies—those from international and national sources—to the

doorsteps of local community colleges. By the 2000s, some of these policies were

dismissed, some were implemented through integration into existing practices, and some

replaced existing practices. For example, the loud call for multiculturalism and

internationalization for community colleges in the U. S. in the 1990s was amalgamated with

the term "diversity," and what was intended as cultural understandings and connections

became instead a response to the achievement gap between student populations. More

broadly, the international movement among policy makers, government leaders, and

legislators for public cost containment and economic competitiveness of nations furthered

neoliberalism as an approach to the management and governance of higher education. By

the 2000s, neoliberal practices were normalized as the way for institutional practice

(Ward, 2012). Business values of efficiency took root in an environment of government

fiscal restraint for the public sector (Levin, 2001). In policies, economic values took

precedence over social values, with the assumption that progress, self-worth, security,

legitimacy, and the like were ultimately dependent upon economic measures; private

interests replaced the public good as justifications for actions, as the individual was

deemed central to societal and national wellbeing; and market competitiveness gained a

central place as both the mechanism for institutional functioning and as an inherent value

for the worth of a product (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Roberts & Peters, 2008). In short, public

higher education became a commodity and its operations moved closer and closer to

identity as a commercial enterprise (Misiaszek et al., 2011).

Conclusions and Implications

Although for several decades following the Truman Commission of 1947, higher

education policies at the federal and state levels saw community colleges as tools that

enabled non-privileged populations to access post-secondary education for economic and

social mobility, these views were reconfigured in the early 21st century. The emphasis was

upon community colleges' outcomes: students' completing a program, obtaining a

certificate or diploma—necessary actions as a source of workforce development and the

primary goal of these institutions. Completion agendas (or graduation initiatives) preferred

some populations (e.g., full-time high school graduates) to others (part-time developmental

students) and ignored one or more outcomes (e.g., general education) in the pursuit of an

endgame or program completion or graduation (Humphreys, 2012). 2000s policies

reflected the state exercising its power over community colleges through funding and

accountability strategies. Both state and organizational policy and organizational behaviors

emphasized program completion (including credentialing) and student learning outcomes

with a simultaneous emphasis on workforce and economic development for these colleges

in order to remain competitive globally.

During 2000-2013 period, institutional behaviors and actions took on a decidedly

more neoliberal tendency than in the previous decades, with greater direction by the State

as financial concerns, particularly after 2008 (i. e., the Great Recession), student outcome

measures, and efforts for greater accountability and legitimacy were evident. As a result,

community colleges in the U. S. reflected State policy for a globally competitive workforce

so that the U. S. and states' economies could prosper. Furthermore, states' policies and

practices, particularly evident during periods of financial constraint on public

expenditures, resulted in both the rationing of higher education and behaviors connected

to the generation of revenues (e.g., external grant-seeking and recruitment of international

students).

Despite state policies focused on efficiency and performativity, individual colleges

responded in unique ways as they sought to respond to policy demands while endeavoring

to maintain their missions and pursue their own local goals. While colleges responded to the overarching demands of performativity (Ball, 2012), each college did so in a way that was unique. By building upon an historical, geographical, and socio-cultural context, in addition to institutional and organizational norms and values, each college navigated a landscape in which these norms and values often came into conflict with state policy and practices.

Neoliberalism's effects can differ not only for each institutional type but also for each organization, as local cultures and histories are significant influences, as noted in the analysis of our three colleges. Neoliberalism's tenets, in the main, run counter to community college principles (e.g., a socially democratic impulse), and thus community colleges serve as a salient institutional type to determine the effects of neoliberalism on public institutions. In that neoliberalism's effects are not well documented for other higher education institutions, further investigation other higher education institutional types should offer a coherent view of the overall effects of neoliberalism on higher education.

Although neoliberalism is pervasive to the extent of nausea for some scholars (Stern, 2012), it is not necessarily monolithic or homogeneous in its effects, as this investigation has demonstrated. Organizational history and culture for individual community colleges, as well as organizational members influence and shape the reception, acceptance or rejection, and form of institutionalization of policy if accepted. Practitioners do not accept the policies of a neoliberal State unadulterated; rather, they fit a State's policy into the patterns of behavior and values of their organizations. They "go their own way" in responding to neoliberal policy and endeavor to maintain institutional principles.

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