

Conflict, Controversy, and Collective Action in the Collegiate Curriculum

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Abstract

Over the past 150 years, collegiate education in the United States has been transformed from an elite province of men destined for the ministry and studying a classical curriculum of theology, languages, and philosophy to a system diverse in enrollments and areas of study. Across that century and a half, the movement of new groups of people and new areas of study into the university has almost always been met by conflict, controversy, and collective action. This paper considers the ways in which collective action has been an integral part of the emergence of new disciplines, such as collegiate science education, ethnic studies, and women's studies, as well as the ways that such disciplinary initiatives produce or are produced by the changing student body.

Biography

Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at Hamilton College. She earned her Ph.D. at New York University; her dissertation was titled "Getting Away from the Basics: Competing Explanations for Curricular Change." Her current research projects include work on insider activism in organizations; movements for curricular change in higher education; neoinstitutional and diffusion effects on organizational change; and processes of racialization in the United States.

When collegiate education first arose on the shores of the New World, it imported a classical model rooted in the traditions of Cambridge and Oxford and designed to prepare young men for roles in the ministry and the social elite. In this tradition, the rigid curriculum focused on classics, philosophy, theology, and perhaps a smattering of arithmetic and rhetoric, all taught by teachers who generally had no academic training beyond the bachelor's degree and who might be only recent graduates themselves. Men learned discipline through memorization, translation, and recitation. This image of collegiate education does not at all resemble the experiences a college student has in today's institutions of higher learning. Today, men and women of all backgrounds study together in preparation for the full diversity of modern careers—everything from education to economics, from equestrian management to engineering. Curricula mix professional studies with the liberal arts, and if there is anything resembling a core curriculum, it focuses on writing, critical thinking, quantitative skills, and studies in literature, science, and history (Bok 2006; Frank and Gabler 2006; Karabel 2005).

These transformations have occurred over the past century and a half, and they have not come easily. Changes in the content and structure of higher education have almost always been controversial and therefore have often activated political cleavages and conflicts. In many cases, these conflicts over curriculum and knowledge are intimately tied up with conflicts over access to higher education, as different student populations have different knowledge interests, as well as with broader political and social conflicts.

This paper will begin by reviewing several significant curricular changes that have reshaped American higher education over the past century and a half, including the rise of collegiate science education; the elective system; interdisciplinarity (including programs like American studies, women's studies, and ethnic studies); and vocational education. Next, it will consider some explanations for shifts in knowledge production and availability, arguing that the knowledge driving

higher education curricula is often produced through contention and social movement politics. Finally, it will consider various explanations for curricular change within individual higher education institutions, including market-based models, neoinstitutional arguments, the faculty shared governance perspective, and the role of contentious institutional politics. It will argue that each of these models is best for understanding a different set of curricular changes, with contentious institutional politics best for understanding the growth of interdisciplinary identity-based studies while market and neoinstitutional forces are more important in accounting for the growth of vocational education.

The analysis presented here is drawn from a larger study of the emergence of academic programs in women's studies, Asian American studies, and queer/LGBT studies at American colleges and universities. This larger study includes an original dataset of 523 network-linked higher education institutions which is used to test the applicability of market-based and neoinstitutional explanations to the emergence of these three curricular areas, as well as in-depth case studies of six diverse colleges and universities where interview and archival data is used to explore the presence of faculty governance processes and social movements pushing for curricular change.

Science Education

Sheila Slaughter (1997) writes about one of these instances of curricular and demographic change in her discussions of the emergence of science education at the tertiary level. She notes that collegiate science education emerged at the same time as larger numbers of men from the middle and merchant classes first gained access to education beyond high school. These new entrants into the higher education sphere knew that Greek translations would not be a useful skill in their occupational futures and desired curricula that would help them achieve success in business and professional life—in other words, they wanted *relevance*, a term that appears again and again in the

history of curricular change conflicts. In Bowles and Gintis's terms (1976), the emergence of schooling accessible to those outside of the elite required a compromise between the elites and the subordinate groups in which the subordinate groups gained access to an education that would prepare them for their roles in the economic sphere in return for surrendering control of education itself to the elite—the politicians and luminaries who continue to this day to make up the governing bodies of higher education institutions. As Slaughter points out, early science was organized outside of the academy by a coalition of businesspeople, professionals and semi-professionals, and Progressive reformers, and its penetration into higher education was opposed by the clergy, faculty, and social elite that governed colleges and universities. In particular, science granted professional credentials to the middle-class sons (and increasingly daughters as well) who needed them to secure upward mobility (Slaughter 1997). Levin (2005) similarly shows that the emergence of women's colleges was intimately related to the rise of collegiate science education, as female educators emphasized different pedagogical practices and saw science as a place for professional women to make their mark.

The emergence of the discipline of sociology can be seen in a similar light. Developing with the industrial revolution and the political changes wrought by Communism, World War I, and European revolutions, sociology originally had trouble developing a consensus on its core subject matter (Rhoades 1981) but nonetheless made inroads into American higher education, beginning with the first sociology course at the University of Kansas in 1890 and the creation of the American Sociological Association in 1905 and leading to its eventual institutionalization as a common field of study in higher education (Blasi 2005a; Calhoun 2007). Historians of sociology have argued that the emergence of the discipline can be seen as a social movement (Blasi 2005b), and sociology was one of the earliest disciplines to consider applied work and community service part of its mission, as well as an early home for female and black academics (MacLean and Williams 2005).

The study of curricular change also includes innovations that are not about the emergence of particular fields of study but rather are about a rethinking of the organization of curricular choices, such as the emergence of the elective system (Bok 2003). This system, which still defines American liberal arts education, gave students the opportunity to select the courses they would take from among many options. First introduced at Harvard under President Charles Elliot, this innovation is largely seen as a result of the increasing size of student and faculty bodies (Chase 1993; Karabel 2005). In more contemporary terms, the elective system can be seen as part of the system of academic capitalism that treats students as consumers selecting courses “cafeteria style” (Gumport 2000; Slaughter and Leslie 2001); a move perhaps predicted by the fact that we have come to call course directories “catalogues.” The emergence of general education curricula in the early 1900s was largely a response to the lack of focus and rigor that the elective system introduced, along with the feeling that some common study was needed to inculcate students with American cultural ideas and values (Bok 2006; Chase 1993), though of course some institutions (among them Amherst College, Hamilton College, and Brown University) remain free of such requirements.

20th Century Interdisciplinarity

In the 20th century, many of the curricular changes which have continued to emerge can be considered under the heading of interdisciplinarity. The disciplinary fields that formed the foundation of tertiary education in prior generations are fields involving people with similar training and common interests (Turner 2000). In contrast, interdisciplinarity involves people with disparate training and interests who are seeking a way to respond to new kinds of knowledge issues or problems (Turner 2000). On a more economic level, disciplines are organizations that control job markets, which interdisciplinarity has much more difficulty attempting to do (Calhoun 2006; Turner 2000). But our understanding of interdisciplinarity can be much more complex when we see it as a

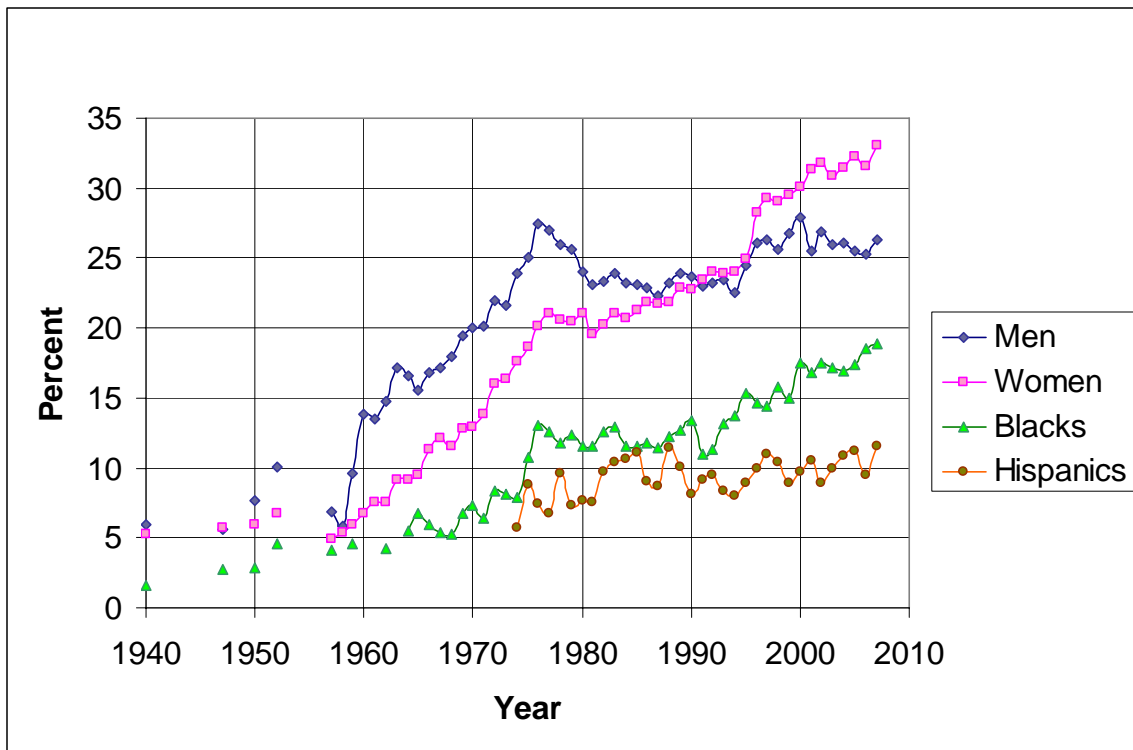
transitional stage in the development of new forms of knowledge. In fact, many scholars of interdisciplinarity point out that the strengths of interdisciplinary forms of inquiry are their ability to “transform the disciplines” (Klein 1996:117) and respond nimbly to current societal processes (Weingart 2000) while at the same time being accused of vagueness and a lack of intellectual rigor (Weingart 2000) and suffering resource deficiencies (Lattuca 2001). The important point here is that interdisciplinary fields often become disciplinary if they survive and grow (Klein 1996), eventually gaining a training apparatus, a set of common interests, and control over hiring markets. While I will return to these questions of institutionalization later in the paper, for now let us explore some examples of the emergence of interdisciplinary studies in the 20th century United States.

American studies, which arose in turbulent World War II era, is perhaps the first example of this process (Pease and Wiegman 2002). The earliest programs were created in 1936 and 1937 at George Washington University, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania; a decade later, there were 60 institutions offering undergraduate majors in American studies and 15 offering graduate degrees (Wise 1979). Some of the same driving forces as those that were related to the emergence of general education drove the emergence of American studies—concern with American culture and values and dissatisfaction with the atomization (and, in this case, Eurocentricity) of the more traditional disciplines (Wise 1979). American studies, then, can be seen as part of the general movement of America to free itself from the cultural orbit of Europe and fashion itself in mid-century as a world power in its own right, much as just a few decades earlier United States higher education instituted its own apparatus for supplying graduate training to college and university faculty (Levin 2005).

Most familiar, of course, are the struggles of the later 1960s and early 1970s over the inclusion of women and people of color in the college curriculum. Both groups saw massive increases in their representation in higher education during this time period as new colleges opened,

older colleges began to provide access to more diverse student bodies, and the entire system of higher education expanded. Figure 1 below shows the growth in higher education attainments for men and women of all races and for Blacks and Hispanics more specifically. Growth in enrollments has been considerable for all groups as higher education credentialism has led to the increasing need for degrees in order to attain an economically secure adulthood (Rawlings and Bourgeois 2004), but has been most notable for women, among whom less than 5% earned college degrees in the 1930s and over a third earned college degrees in the first part of the 21st century. Women now made up the majority of undergraduate degree students nationwide.

Figure 1. Percent of People Aged 25-29 with a Bachelor's Degree*



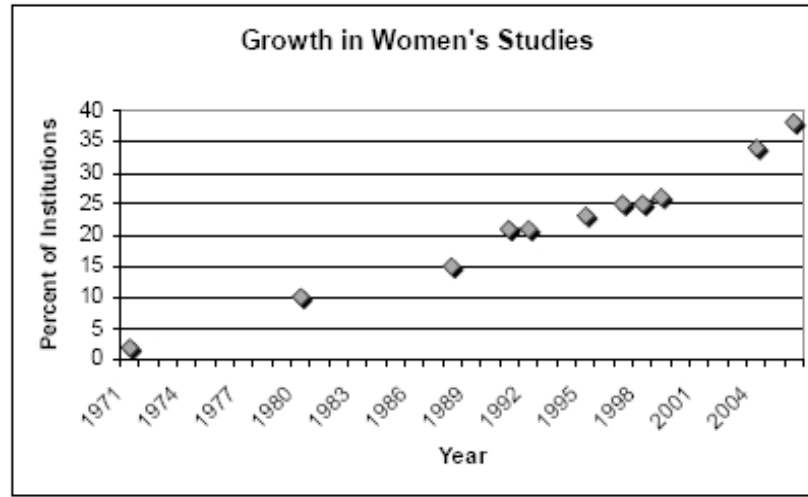
* Data are from The U.S. Census Bureau Table A-2. Percent of People 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or College, by Race, Hispanic Origin and Sex: Selected Years 1940 to 2007, for ages 25-29 (available at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html>). Data on Asian American education attainment has only been collected since 2003 and is therefore excluded from this chart.

Curricula were transformed again in relation to these new inhabitants of colleges and universities. Higher education institutions began adopting curricula that emphasized multiculturalism, including in some cases course requirements (Bryson 2005; Yamane 2001). Bryson tells us about the emergence of multiculturalism in English departments; for her, multicultural studies appear when faculty want them. Yamane, in contrast, describes the emergence of multicultural course requirements in response to student movements challenging racial inequality in higher education. Yamane shows that by the early 1990s, almost half of all colleges and universities required at least one multicultural course as part of their general education curricula. As in the case of science discussed above, multiculturalism has had its share of critics who have argued (among other things) that the questions asked by interdisciplinary and multicultural curricula are not “fundamental human questions” and therefore draw attention away from the key topics and texts of the Canon (Cope and Kalantzis 1997:292) and that multiculturalism threatens social cohesion and leads to separatism (Bernstein 1994; Bryson 2005).

Though multicultural course requirements may reach more students than new disciplines do, the emergence of women’s and ethnic studies may be a more significant and lasting change. Women’s studies as a discipline is conventionally claimed to have emerged in 1969, though approximately sixteen women’s studies courses were being offered in the United States by this point (Klein 1996). The first formal women’s studies degree program was developed at San Diego State University in 1971 (Boxer 1998). These early courses and programs were explicitly feminist in focus, often taught by women with primary identities as activists rather than as academic, and had as their intellectual goals “transforming the disciplines” and “dismantling the boundary separating knowledge from action, discipline from politics” (Klein 1996:117-8). Today, my own data suggest that nearly 40% of colleges that offer bachelor’s degrees offer degrees in women’s studies (now often called “gender studies”), and nearly three quarters offer an opportunity for students to pursue

women’s studies beyond a course or two (Arthur 2007). Figure 2 below shows the growth of women’s studies degree programs over the past three decades. While the growth of women’s studies has happened more quickly than the growth in female college attainment, we can see roughly similar patterns in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Growth in Women’s Studies Degree Programs Over Time*



The story of ethnic studies is similar. Courses on the Black experience in America had appeared sporadically at progressive and Historically Black colleges and universities for years, with early courses on other racial groups emerging in the 1960s. The first ethnic studies programs were created in the 1968-1970 time period at San Francisco State College (Barlow and Shapiro 1971). Through a large percentage of colleges and universities offer some ethnic studies coursework, degrees have not become as widespread as women’s studies degrees have, with about 9% of institutions offering a Black studies degree (Rojas 2006, 2007) and a somewhat smaller percentage offering each of Asian American studies, Native American studies, Chicano/Latino studies, and “umbrella” ethnic studies programs. Though Black studies moved across the country relatively

* Data comes from my own original dataset covering 523 institutions using a random network selection process; elite institutions are somewhat overrepresented in this dataset (Arthur 2007).

quickly, Asian American and Chicano/Latino studies have retained a West Coast focus. The first Asian American studies program outside the west, for instance, did not arise until 1979 at Bowling Green State University (Hu-DeHart 1993). Programs continue to emerge in the present time. For instance, Long Island University will begin offering a Black studies program in spring 2008. Like in the case of women's studies, ethnic studies was focused on providing a "relevant" education and challenging the exclusionary history of higher education (Aldridge and Young 2000; Chang 1999; Sumida 1998).

Processes like this have continued to occur in the post-1970s era. Queer studies, environmental studies, vocational degree opportunities, and distance learning programs all represent changes in the 1980s and 1990s that were related to changes in student populations. For instance, queer studies programs were first developed in the 1980s (Bull 1998; Cruikshank 1992) as college-aged students because to feel safe coming out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; these curricula were originally intimately tied to student services and other institutional responses to sexuality issues (Yeskel 1991). While less than five institutions offer degrees in queer studies today, about fifty offer some sort of curricula in queer studies, and new programs continue to emerge at institutions like Hofstra University, the University of New Hampshire, and DePaul University.

Similarly, vocational studies and distance learning approaches have gained strength in the post-1970s era as increasing numbers of students feel that college is necessary for a career, including adults returning to higher education for retraining (Becher and Trowler 1989; Bok 2006) and as colleges see such programs as a way to recruit paying students (Kraatz and Zajac 1996). The proliferation of new degree areas was particularly significant in the early 1980s (Hashem 2002); there may be another similar period of proliferation today if the weekly "New Programs" post on insidehighered.com is any indicator (the lists of new programs posted on January 10th and January 17th contain about three times as many vocational degree programs as liberal arts programs, with

traditional vocational fields like nursing, engineering, and education joined by newer fields like ski business and emergency medical technician management). While it is too soon to say what the legacy of educational change left behind by the earliest part of the 21st century will be, there are some contenders. Groups interested in fat studies, working-class studies, moral/values education, and intelligent design have all made their voices heard (Binder 2002; Bok 2006; Ellin 2006; Nelkin 1982; Sharlet 1999) alongside the new vocational studies.

Institutionalization

None of this is to say that such new curricula remain the radical province of marginalized members of the educational field. Indeed, just as science education was once representative of the demands of new populations moving into higher education and now represents the core of traditional schooling, areas like women's studies have become institutionalized. Drawing on Terry Clark's definition of institutionalization, we can say that "institutionalization, most broadly conceived, is the process whereby specific cultural elements or cultural objects are adopted by actors in a social system" (Clark 1968:1). As noted above, the majority of four-year colleges and universities in the United States offer some opportunity for concentrated coursework in women's studies. As institutionalization has grown, the field of women's studies has moved away from its original goals, including a shift from a focus on women in particular to a focus on gender in general. In fact, institutionalization has progressed to such a point that new programs and courses that implicitly distance themselves from feminism may now be adopted at institutions of higher education that seek to be competitive for students and prestige without any attention to the roots of the discipline discussed above. But on the other hand, knowledge about women does now have a permanent place (even if it is still a small one) in many traditional disciplines. As Mirra Komarovsky has argued, it has now become unlikely if

not quite impossible for a curriculum to entirely ignore the experiences of women (Komarovsky, 1988).

The Emergence of New Knowledge

So how do we understand these changes? In order for something to develop a role in the higher education curriculum, first it must emerge as a potential innovation, and this fact means we must pay some attention to how new knowledge emerges in the first place. Traditional debates about the emergence of new knowledge have focused on the scientific process and the degree to which progress is continuous or takes on the form of punctuated equilibrium, as well as the role of ideology in driving scientific discovery (Kuhn 1962; Merton 1968). But despite the divergence between the different sides of such debates, these perspectives all have in common the idea that new knowledge emerges in some way from the process of research, theorizing, and discovery. Though such perspectives may have much to offer in terms of the development of scientific subfields, they leave little room for knowledge to be constructed for specific ends.

Some analysts, then, argue that administrators develop new areas of study to provide an education that will serve the needs of newly represented student bodies (a compromise, in Bowles and Gintis's terms) or that higher education faculty find these new areas of study compelling for intellectual reasons and then develop curricula to support their research interests. In this view, institutions (at least some of them and at least some of the time) care about student needs and therefore develop curricula to accommodate these needs (Brewer et al. 2002). Administrators are positioned as powerful decision-makers responding to crisis, outside pressure, or their own insights to change their institutions for the better (Keller 1983), or alternatively, analysts cite the tradition of shared governance and faculty control over the curriculum to argue that new areas of study emerge when faculty want them to (Bryson 2005; Hardy 1992). There are undoubtedly examples of this sort

of process resulting in the emergence of new knowledge; the contemporary development of disaster management as an academic and professional field would probably make a good example.

Others argue that the explanation must be more political in nature, as a sort of collective action develops to change the way that knowledge is socially organized. Frickel and Gross's work on Scientific/Intellectual Movements (SIMs) is an example of this type of perspective. They argue that new knowledge often emerges in social movement-like processes (but not movements, exactly) led by high-status academics within intellectual and academic communities who engage in contentious political and collective action to create new knowledge and alter the disciplinary power structure (Frickel 2004; Frickel and Gross 2005), a process that Frickel demonstrates with the example of genetic toxicology and which may also characterize many subdisciplinary innovations, such as critical theory in literature and ethnomethodology in sociology. Despite incorporating attention to the dynamics of political contention, Frickel and Gross continue to argue that it is faculty and faculty power that control the emergence of new forms of knowledge, and thus new curricular innovations.

New Knowledge Movements

Elsewhere, I have proposed an alternative conception of how knowledge emerges—that new areas of knowledge (and the interdisciplinary or disciplinary fields that ensue) can in some cases emerge as and through social movements (Arthur 2006). These New Knowledge Movement (NKMs) have the creation of knowledge as a primary goal, but also tend to have additional goals such as increasing the visibility of a constituency; gaining access to intellectual, occupational, or educational resources; and gaining political, economic, or social power. In this model, intellectuals do not necessarily create the movement, but rather are created by it. The NKMs framework is particularly useful in cases where new knowledge is related to deeply-held personal identities or beliefs among a group marginalized

from the higher education field, such as in the cases of women's studies, ethnic studies, and intelligent design.

The NKMs framework argues that new knowledge, in some cases, emerges through social movement contention engaged in by outsiders with a strong sense of collective identity. These movements are decentralized in nature and depend on the availability of resources and micromobilization sites as well as the deployment of frames that are able to attract new adherents to the movement. Movement participants face various risks due to their participation, most particularly the loss of jobs and career possibilities. These movements end either through movement death or through the institutionalization of the movement as a discipline or discipline-like field. The NKM framework can not explain the emergence of all new disciplines, but it can be an effective strategy for understanding the emergence of some.

Competing Explanations for Curricular Change

The preceding arguments have focused on curricular change on a national or international scale. But in the United States, where curricular decisions are highly localized in individual institutions or sometimes in state governing boards, a true understanding of curricular change must consider what occurs on this more local level. When curricular innovations appear in the higher education marketplace, institutions make individual decisions about whether or not to adopt said innovations. So what factors affect the likelihood that an individual institution will adopt a particular curricular reform? Scholars of curricular change have proposed four general perspectives on curricular change within higher education institutions: those that argue that institutions adopt innovations in response to demographic or market forces; those that focus on the effects of neoinstitutional pressures; those that suggest that faculty create curricular change through their own interests and power; and those that emphasize the role of contention and social movements in creating change.

Demographics and the Market

Market-based models of curricular change suggest that higher education institutions innovate when there is sufficient demand within the pool of potential students or when instituting innovations would allow the institution to draw on untapped pools of students (Tierny 1989). Similarly, some analysts have argued that curricular innovations are adopted by institutions in response to changes in the demographic characteristics of the student body, suggesting, for instance, that Black studies is adopted when colleges or universities experience or desire growth in the Black student body (Teraguchi 2002; Wood 1979). Researchers who adopt market models draw support from studies that have found that colleges and universities often do act in market-like ways; in particular, factors such as cost, geography, prestige, and “fit” are likely to influence the decisions that prospective students make about where to spend their tuition dollars (Avery et al. 2004; Hoxby 2000). However, the market for higher education is not a true market. Colleges and universities specialize in producing public goods (Avery et al. 2004; Hoxby 2000), experience significant external regulation and control (Kirp 2003; Winston 1999), and are selected by consumers who do not have accurate measures of outcomes (Kirp 2003; Winston 1999).

These limitations to the market model mean that it may not be the best way to understand curricular change. Indeed, research has shown that student demographics and financial factors are not good predictors of curricular change decisions about fields like women’s studies and ethnic studies (Arthur 2007; Rojas 2006). However, market-based models may be useful in explaining the emergence of vocational degree programs (Becher and Trowler 1989; Slaughter and Leslie 2001) that attract students who already know what they want to study, such as nursing, and where institutions believe that they will be able to capitalize on labor market potential (Hashem 2002).

Diffusion and Neoinstitutionalism

A second approach to understanding curricular innovation in higher education institutions suggests that institutions adopt innovations in response to what other institutions do. Both diffusion-based and neoinstitutional arguments are rooted in this perspective. Diffusion arguments suggest that change spreads across network connections between institutions that are proximate to one another or are quite similar (Soule 1997; Strang and Meyer 1993). Innovations that diffuse tend to be those which are perceived as successful (Soule 1997), and adoption occurs in an S-curve pattern in which adoption is initially slow and occurs among institutions in the process of seeking prestige (Borrego 2006; Brewer et al. 2002), progresses rapidly in the middle, and trails off at the end as few potential adopters remain (Soule 2004). There is evidence that changes in curricular approaches within disciplines may follow this pattern, as found by a major American Sociological Association study of engineering education (Burriss 2006; Moody and Leahey 2006).

Neoinstitutional arguments have much in common with the diffusion perspective, but make a more specific set of predictions. These arguments suggest that organizations which are subject to a similar set of external and environmental constraints adopt similar sets of changes in a way that leads to growing homogeneity across the institutional field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This process of institutional isomorphism can occur through coercion by external agents of regulatory control, normative pressures based in professional practice, or mimetic processes where organizations copy what other successful organizations are doing in response to uncertainty (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Each of these three processes is relevant to different types of curricular change. For instance, coercive isomorphism would lead to curricular changes in cases where accrediting agencies or governmental regulators require particular innovations, for instance the recent initiatives related to Constitutional education and the observance of Constitution Day and the push for increased

outcomes assessment. Normative isomorphism might drive decisions about general education curricula, where institutions aim to develop programs in line with norms about what students should have learned prior to graduation. Finally, mimetic isomorphism would be most important in predicting the adoption of new majors or programs.

It is clear that institutions of higher education in the United States exhibit a considerable degree of institutional isomorphism (Meyer et al. 2005), in terms of curriculum as well as other aspects of the organizations. However, there are a number of significant critiques of the potential for neoinstitutional approaches to predict curricular change. Researchers have found that organizational changes adopted in response to isomorphic forces may not last (Hashem 2002), that colleges and universities may fail to imitate those colleges and universities that the models predict they would (Kraatz and Zajac 1996), and that organizations have the capacity to resist isomorphic pressures (Oliver 1988). Neoinstitutional explanations seem most useful for those curricular changes which are already institutionalized within the higher education field (Arthur 2007; Brint and Karabel 1991).

The Faculty

In personal conversation, many academics argue that curricular change emerges because of faculty pressure and the intellectual priorities of faculty. In particular, this argument rests on the tradition of shared governance structures in higher education that allocate significant control over the curriculum to faculty (Bernstein 1994; Cohen and March 1974). It is clearly the case that faculty in many institutions do retain significant control over curricular decision-making. However, the tradition of shared governance generally requires that a majority of voting faculty members support an innovation in order for it to reach the adoption stage; in many cases, a smaller number of senior faculty on a curriculum committee have most of the control over curricular decisions. Therefore, in order for a curricular change to be adopted through the shared governance process, it generally

needs support from a large number and wide spectrum of faculty members. Both scholars and commentators on higher education have noted that faculty do not always play a significant role in curricular change (Hashem 2002; Kerr 1995; Wood 1979); in addition, many proposed curricular innovations are quite controversial and therefore not easily pushed through the shared governance process (Arthur 2007). Therefore, faculty power and the shared governance process are most able to explain curricular changes that are rooted in the faculty's sense of their institutional mission and that are not politically controversial, such as changes in graduation requirements or the adoption of writing or other skills programs.

Contentious Politics

A final approach to understanding curricular change suggests that changes are adopted in response to contentious politics within higher education institutions, especially social movements. This approach begins from the insight that some curricular changes are politically controversial, and are particularly relevant in the case of curricular changes that are related to social movements, which are among the fastest growing innovations in higher education (Brint and Turk-Bicakci 2006; Louie and Omatsu 2001; Schmitz et al. 2004; Wei 1993; Wood 1979). Contentious politics approaches tend to focus on the role of student movements in shaping curricular change (Degroot 1998; Foster and Long 1970; Glazer 1970; Levitt 1984; Lipset 1967), due in part to the prevalence of student movements (Lipset 1967, 1976), students' access to resources (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977, 2002; Zald and McCarthy 1979), and students' particular interests in curricular issues (Hefferlin 1969).

However, movements within colleges and universities include participation from groups besides students, such as non-academic staff, community members, and especially faculty. Scholars have noted the role of faculty participation in movements on and off campus in establishing

curricular changes (Astin and Parelman 1973; Gross 2005; Naples 2002; Santoro and McGuire 1997). Faculty roles can vary considerably, from providing support for student movements (Bayer 1972) to initiating intellectual movements of their own (Arthur 2007). The key point is that in the contentious politics perspective, faculty who are involved in curricular change are engaged in movements and similar political actions to convince or compel their colleagues or administrators to agree to curricular change rather than being able to initiate innovations through the shared governance process.

Despite the evidence that contentious politics play an important role in curricular change, particularly in terms of changes related to social movements (Arthur 2007; Brint and Turk-Bicakci 2006; Rojas 2007; Yamane 2001), such as the adoption of women's studies and ethnic studies programs and multicultural course requirements, there has been little theorizing about what enables such movements to have an impact on the curriculum—much as the question of social movements within organizations more generally has remained under researched (Arthur 2008). In my own work (Arthur 2007), I have proposed a model for understanding the impacts of movements seeking curricular change, which I call the institutional mediation model. This model proposes that social movements consisting of insider activists are able to have their greatest impacts when their strategies, particularly the assertiveness of their tactics and the degree to which they develop resonant framing strategies, fit the institutional contexts in which they seek change. The elements of institutional context that are particularly important here are the degree to which the mission of the college or university is favorable to the type of change the movement proposes and the openness and flexibility of administrators in response to challengers.

This institutional mediation model is an effective way to understand at least some change attempts. In a study of 14 instances of attempts to create women's studies, Asian American studies, or queer/LGBT studies programs (Arthur 2007), I found that all but two engaged in some degree of

political contention within the institution in an attempt to create the desired curricular change; of the remaining twelve, ten conform closely to the institutional context model, while two additional cases demonstrate some elements of the model. The two remaining cases are instances where faculty attempted to initiate curricular change through the shared governance process. While there is evidence, as noted above, for market-based and neoinstitutional pathways to curricular change (particularly in cases like general education reform and vocational curricula), none of the cases I studied exhibited such processes.

Conclusion

Earlier in the paper, I suggested that demographic shifts in the population that is part of higher education have played a determining role in the path of curricular change. The NKM framework shows how these changes are related to the development of new intellectual fields, as groups previously excluded from access to higher education and knowledge work create social movements to advance knowledge related to their collective identities and interests. Demographic shifts remain important in predicting curricular changes within individual colleges and universities. However, demographics do not always work in the ways we might predict. It is clear that in some instances, colleges and universities adopt curricular changes directly in response to demographic shifts. But in other cases, the demographic changes precede curricular changes, first producing social movements within higher education institutions that drive the curricular change process.

The analysis presented here shows that we can not continue to rely on single explanations of curricular change in higher education—or, I would argue, anywhere else. Rather, curricular change processes occur via diverse pathways. At times, administrators initiate new programs in response to the needs of the market or because others are doing so, as is probably the case for the incursion of professional and vocational degree programs into the traditional liberal arts curriculum. In other

cases, faculty initiate new areas of study because of their own personal interests, as characterized the emergence of the elective curriculum. But for many of the fastest-growing innovations in contemporary higher education, such as women's studies and ethnic studies, as well as for the broader field of science education, we must turn our attention to contention within colleges and universities. The curriculum as it stands represents a sort of compromise between the interests of entrenched elites and the demands of new entrants into the higher education sphere. These new entrants and the faculty members who support them engage in social movement activism to reshape the curriculum according to their own interests. Such activism often produces a backlash, as can be seen in the case of the Canon wars (Cope and Kalantzis 1997; Readings 1996), and the impacts of such activism often fall far short of its goals (Astin and Parelman 1973; Feldman 1982; Martin 2001; Wiegman 1999/2000), but nonetheless curricular activism has resulted in a dramatic reshaping of the collegiate curriculum.

In the early 1800s, a student at most American colleges and universities would have taken a prescribed classical curriculum. Today, that student can choose from hundreds of majors and elective courses. These changes continue to occur. Interdisciplinary fields like ethnic studies, women's studies, and environmental studies continue to expand their reach and new areas of scientific and vocational studies continue to develop. These changes continue to be affected by contentious politics within higher education institutions. Students at institutions like Harvard University and the University of Illinois Chicago are currently in the midst of campaigns for Asian American studies. A campaign to end the use of live animals in medical education is left with a handful of holdouts. And advocates of intelligent design are currently embroiled in fights about undergraduate and graduate studies in creation science.

So what is the future of research on conflicts and controversies over curricula in higher education? We have seen that there are many ways to understand the emergence of new forms of

knowledge, as well as many ways to understand the adoption of curricular innovations in particular colleges and universities. There is evidence to support all of these different perspectives, but none work in every circumstance. Therefore, the next task for curricular change researchers is to determine which models work best for which types of curricular change or for which types of higher education institutions, and why it is that these differences occur. Such models are not only of intellectual interest. They would be useful prediction tools that might allow us to guess what curricular changes will turn up next, and where. More significantly, they might serve as a guide to those who wish to implement curricular changes in their own colleges or universities as they consider what strategies will enable them to best meet their goals. My own project on curricular change continues along these lines. While I refine the institutional mediation model, I am also working on developing an expanded network dataset that will allow me to trace the diffusion (or lack thereof) of curricular innovations across the higher education field and across time. The results of this analysis will help us to better understand when and how diffusion and neoinstitutional processes are driving forces behind curricular change, just as my work on individual college and university change attempts will help us better understand when and how contention within colleges and universities is able to implement curricular changes.

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