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Introduction

Globalization and the University—A Path to Social Justice

Robert Emmet Jones and Jon Shefner

For the past 35 years, every political, economic, and cultural institution around the world has been defined in part by globalization. Universities in the United States, like those elsewhere, have seen a variety of challenges and opportunities emerge because of globalization and the ways states and other actors have chosen to respond to globalization. This book brings together a variety of perspectives about how globalization has influenced universities in the United States, especially in regard to university conceptions of and efforts to pursue social justice.

Social justice is a central concern of this volume for a variety of reasons. First, we address social justice because much of the effect of globalization has resulted in declining resource pools for many universities. Declining resources in turn pose important, usually negative, implications for the varied constituencies of universities. Second, economic inequality has increased across the past decades, and those increases may be traced to the influences of globalization. Third, universities have histories as actors responding to inequality and striving for social justice. That history is by no means unambiguous. Certainly, there are many universities that have acted contrary to the pursuit of social justice by reinforcing social hierarchies. But as teaching institutions, generators and sharers of knowledge, and engines of economic development, university efforts have long intersected with thinking and action on social justice. Thus, universities have simultaneously been pressured by contradictory trends: globalization, increasing inequality, and diminished resources, on the one hand, and the need to address social justice concerns on the other.

The concept of globalization has permeated academic discussion, as well as journalism, politics, and economics. Because of its wide conceptual scope, let alone its geographic scope, discussions of globalization are often messy and imprecise. We think of globalization as the transnational exchange
of investments, commodities, people, politics, technologies, and cultures. Globalization is both a characteristic of the contemporary world and the culmination of large-scale, long-term social change. Although globalization at times seems dominated by new economic and political formations more powerful than the traditional nation-state, it has also mobilized new expressions of local and transnational discontent and resistance.\(^1\)

This definition quickly betrays our position. The editors of this volume do not deny that some of the results of globalization have been positive. The interchange of culture has enriched many, and may have reduced fears or other negative attitudes to others. Some national populations have seen increasing income, and relative decreases in poverty. Some analysts have found the greater flow of communication aiding co-responsibility, with the added benefit that notions of human rights and justice follow the lead of a “global civil society” (Keane, 2003). That communication flow has often facilitated Northern responses to Southern struggles for justice (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

Despite such optimistic analyses, we find ourselves in the camp with many analysts who have found the effects of globalization profoundly damaging (Portes and Hoffman, 2003; Korzeniewicz and Moran, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Stiglitz, 2002; Mishel, Bernstein, and Shierholz, 2009; Shefner and Fernández-Kelly, 2011). This is largely because we limit our analysis, as many of the authors in this book do, to the political and economic effects of neoliberal globalization. Here we find much less ambiguity than in examining the bigger picture of cultural globalization. Focusing on neoliberal globalization allows us to examine the intersection of political economy and the university, as one manifestation of the attack on the state. We follow Harvey in his view that

\[
\text{[n]eoliberalism is ... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.}
\]

(Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

Harvey goes on to explain that the state’s role, according to neoliberals, must be confined to guaranteeing that market institutions are secure, to help establish markets where they do not exist, and to protect private property rights. For neoliberals, the market is the best institution to resolve human needs, not the state. It is this element of neoliberal globalization, the attack on the role of the state, with which we are most concerned. “Downsizing” the power of government and labor unions, “freeing” the market system from them, and demonizing anything that would subvert
neoliberal ideology became the solutions of choice for neoliberal policymakers across the globe. The public university system, its governance structures, faculty, and sources of funding were seen by many to be part of the problem that needed to be significantly changed.

From the vantage point of public universities, the impact of neoliberalism has been clear and unambiguous. As an ideology, neoliberalism prioritizes individual accomplishment and how such accomplishments are valued monetarily above all else. This position contrasts dramatically with the role of public universities as fundamentally collective efforts to build knowledge. As a basis of policy, neoliberalism searches for ways to reduce society’s obligations to all citizens. Universities, again in contrast, are fundamentally about the social use of knowledge and have historically provided one avenue to individual social mobility and collective social, economic, and political progress. University orientations to progress within the United States are perhaps best understood by looking at both the history of land-grant universities and the veterans’ benefits that followed World War II.² We discuss these paths in greater detail below, but our point now is that the individualist ideology of neoliberal globalization, on the one hand, and subsequent imposed budget restraints on governments, on the other, have had significantly damaging results on US universities in recent decades.

This is not to suggest that we find only gloom in the potential of globalization. Others who have examined globalization’s impact on universities focus on the opportunities opened, as well as the potential that greater interdependence poses for universities to build citizenship (Rhoads and Szelényi, 2011). Our commitment to social justice is similar to Rhoads’ and Szelényi’s belief that universities can foster global citizenship. Universities, we believe, can still be places of social mobility, innovation, and creation that is measured by metrics not reducible to the marketplace, and devoted to shrinking inequality. This is the spirit that animates this book—our search for ways that globalization can be transformed into opportunity and that universities can act to build social justice.

The rest of this chapter discusses our position, before introducing the work of our authors. First, we examine some of the traditional, preglobalization roles of the universities. Universities have neither been consistently progressive nor elitist but respond to pressures and opportunities of the times. Next, we look at how globalization has been manifested in universities, marshaling various data to demonstrate how globalization has had concrete impacts. Following that discussion, we examine various university responses to pressures and opportunities, concluding the section by examining some novel ways of addressing some of the inequalities intrinsic to globalization. Finally, we address social justice briefly as an idea that has evolved historically and more extensively in relation to the university, as our authors have discussed.
Changing roles of the university

The major roles that universities and colleges play have transformed over time to respond and adapt to a variety of social, economic, environmental, and technological changes and concerns. According to Bonnen (1998), precursors of the modern American university emerged in medieval Europe in schools, teaching Christian theology and providing vocational training for the clergy. The future priests, monks, and bishops who trained in these schools became a small but powerful group of elites that served the needs of the church and the ruling class, and helped secure the obedience and loyalty of the masses. Church dogma was taught as truth and was reinforced as laws that went largely unquestioned. Indeed, “every idea expressed inside or outside of the…Church was subject to the scrutiny and judgment of the ecclesiastical hierarchy” (Greer, 1968, p. 202).

European contact with the Muslim world and the East during the Middle Ages, the emerging power of the law and medicine in peoples’ lives, and the need to train future generations of doctors and lawyers stimulated the birth of liberal arts programs within theological schools. Liberal arts education eventually became a prerequisite for mastering these professions (Greer, 1968). A small but growing group of professional elites came from the ecclesiastical and aristocratic ranks and served their needs as well as the new social, economic, legal needs of emerging nations.

Both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment spurred the growth of education among lay elites, but serving God and the needs of his anointed representatives remained the unquestioned priority for Western universities and colleges until the late eighteenth century. Indeed, private elite universities and colleges such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Oxford, Cambridge, and Trinity College largely trace their lineage to their origins as theological and divinity schools (Harkavy, 2006; Clawson and Page, 2011). Science and the Scientific Revolution did not begin to openly challenge the traditional roles these schools played until the late nineteenth century (Bonnen, 1998, p. 2). The growing importance of scientific research nurtured the emergence of graduate education in German universities. This two-tiered undergraduate and research-orientated graduate educational model later served as a framework for the modern public research universities in the United States (Bonnen, 1998, p. 2).

Changing values were institutionalized in the series of Morrill Acts and their contributions to land-grant institutions. The first Morrill Act was part of a progressive Republican Party agenda, passed during Lincoln’s administration, which promoted “the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes” (US National Archives, 2012). Lincoln signed this legislation on July 2, 1862 and stipulated that “[t]he land grant university system was being built on behalf of the people, who have invested in these public universities their hope, their support, and their confidence” (University of Minnesota,
2012). The Morrill Act helped to establish early land-grant colleges and universities such as Iowa, Pennsylvania and Michigan State universities, and the universities of Vermont, Maryland, Wisconsin, and California. Along with other progressive era reforms, the Morrill Act led to the development of modern public universities (Clawson and Page, 2011).

The revised Morrill Act of 1890 built on its predecessor by extending grants to all former Confederate states and newly created states and territories. It further stipulated that race would neither be a criterion for admission nor used to designate separate land-grant institutions for people of color. These legislative changes responded not only to unequal economic opportunity among people of color but also to growing economic inequality among urban industrial and middle classes and farmers. Subsequently, agricultural, mechanical, military and veterinary training and research along with educational outreach and community service became important functions fulfilled by both historically black and white land-grant colleges and universities.

By the twentieth century, the Neoplatonist and messianic ideals and roles that fostered theocratic and aristocratic models that had dominated universities and governance structures were being openly challenged by secular, scientific, democratic, and economic values. These values were manifested by the growing social and economic power of the middle classes that were rapidly transforming both the university and Western societies. No longer were definitions of the “good society” articulated only by elite university voices, nor were they the only influence in designing how that society was to be built (Harkavy, 2006, pp. 6–7).

By the middle of the twentieth century, land-grant policies and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies, joined with the efforts of progressive educators, had clearly transformed the social roles of public universities and colleges (Bonnen, 1998, p. 4). First, access to higher education had expanded beyond the few elites. Second, the function of higher education itself converted; no longer were higher education systems structured only on meeting the needs of elites, but were directed towards the common good of rapidly developing societies. Opportunities for higher education and a university degree remained far from being equal, even after they became seen as essential for achieving the “American Dream” by a growing number of Americans after World War II (Clawson and Page, 2011, p. 31). Access did increase over time, so also changes in social policy. The GI Bill helped increase access to educational opportunities to returning veterans after the war, and the civil rights and women’s movements had a similar effect for women and minorities during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, there are almost twice as many Americans graduating each year from public universities than from non-profit private colleges (Chronicle for Higher Education, 2012). Moreover, there were three men for every two women who earned a college degree in the 1960s; today it is just the opposite (Clawson and Page, 2011, p. 31).
However, according to Clawson and Page, higher education still betrays significant inequality in access:

The bottom quarter of the population, and indeed the bottom half, is no more likely to get a college degree today than it was in 1970—but people in the top half of the income distribution are substantially more likely to graduate from college.

(ibid., p. 35)

Still, many believe that there has been a significant progress made in changing the character and composition of public universities as they responded to the many challenges and opportunities they faced in the twentieth century. Near the end of the century, economic and political forces such as the rise of globalization and neoliberalism began to significantly challenge some of these newly fundamental roles played by public universities, as well as how they have tried to promote democracy and the public good. These forces also present us with fundamental challenges about who we are, what we value, what kind of future we want, and the roles we expect the university to play in securing our collective future (see Rhoads, 2011, p. 35).

**Universities in a neoliberal world**

Neoliberalism developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to welfare economics and progressive political values and gained traction in the United States in 1980 when one of its greatest champions, Ronald Reagan, was elected president. During his first inaugural speech, Reagan proclaimed that government was not the solution but instead the obstacle to achieving social and economic prosperity in the United States and the rest of the world. President Reagan and his followers thought that unbridled global economic growth would be achieved via deregulation, massive tax cuts to business, privatization of public goods and services, and the abandonment of progressive economic, social, and environmental policies. “Downsizing” the power of government and labor unions, “freeing” the market system from them, and from any other regulatory or legal constraints, and demonizing government were cornerstones of neoliberal ideology. Rational self-interest replaced any notion of collective responsibility as a basis for social order. If men and women are the best judges of their own particular needs and capacities, it follows that the most rational use of human and material resources will occur automatically if people are allowed to follow their natural bent under the conditions of free competition. Governmental action that interferes with free markets decreases the wealth of nations. Consequently, rising costs of public education, its governance systems, and the freedom of teachers and faculty to design curricula became viewed as problems to be addressed by the neoliberal state. Publicly funded universities and colleges
as well as the socio-historical roles they had played became the major targets for neoliberal scrutiny and reforms. The forces of economic globalization have imposed damaging results on US public universities, including changing foundational values, increasing corporate power, commercializing the production of knowledge, stratifying disciplines and students, diminishing state support while increasing student debt, and diminishing the ranks of tenure-track faculty.

Supporters of neoliberalism and economic globalization have openly challenged the legitimacy of the major social roles public universities have played in promoting democratic practices, social justice and the public good. They propose that public universities be redesigned according to the principles of the free-market system, in order to encourage economic growth. This worldview has come to dominate public and political discourse such that “every major institution is under pressure to run itself in terms of market mechanism, governance structures, and ways of thinking” (Clawson and Page, 2011, p.18). Consequently, cost–benefit analyses, “fiscal accountability,” and “the commercialization of the university” have become major features of a business model of the public university that have been increasingly used to rationalize and decide who will run public universities, who will be able to attend and earn a university degree, what programs will be offered, what faculty will be hired and promoted, and how funding will be secured to pay for public universities in the future (Clawson and Page, 2011; Rhoads, 2011). This “University-as-Business Model” thus represents a radical departure on how Americans view public universities. Indeed, “[a]lmost fifty years ago almost no one talked in terms of a college or an university as being a business, but today this is unequivocally the dominant model” (Clawson and Page, 2011, p. 18). This model is increasingly governing much of the thinking and strategies chosen by many university administrators. Neoliberal values have displaced educational and social values used to steer decision-making and policy-making on issues of university governance, faculty, staff and student recruitment, retention and reward systems, educational and outreach programs and curricula, technology and infrastructure, and a host of other university activities and issues. Many university presidents and chancellors are becoming more like CEOs especially since public universities are being forced to generate their own funds (Clawson and Page, 2011, p. 18).

An early and largely unchallenged manifestation of this change can be found in the Bayh–Doyle Act of 1980 that “enable universities to claim ownership of the intellectual property rights generated from federal funding research [and], helped them to commercialize innovation” (Florida, 1999, p. 64). Universities accomplished this goal by developing partnerships with corporations and businesses that were granted a major stake in its potential adoption and economic success in exchange for research funding, institutional support, and economic and technical expertise over time.
These corporations were able to gain significant power within the public university system, its governance structures, and its future, while universities themselves became increasingly tied to corporate production (Florida, 1999; Clawson and Page, 2011; Rhoads, 2011). The power of corporations over universities is also demonstrated by the increase of support supplied by corporations; their contribution has more than doubled other forms of support over the last 20 years from $2.2 to $5 billion (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, Table 410).

This fundamental shift that is occurring in higher education has significant social impacts and costs that may not be apparent, equitable, or just for many Americans. Students are increasingly viewed as consumers, and like consumers, those who have more money now or in an expected future as alumni are pursued more vigorously and catered to more than those who may need university resources. Moreover, significantly more of the financial aid funds that major research universities award go to students whose families earn more than $100,000 (Clawson and Page, 2011), and many of them are getting more than they need (Clark, 2009). Shifting the cost of education from taxpayers to students, and from a needs- to a merit-based support structure along with massive tuition increases, and the dismantling of affirmative action programs has created further educational barriers, inequalities, and injustices for many low- and middle-income families (Mortenson, 2010; Pell, 2011).

Significant cuts in state support for public four-year universities have meant that the proportion paid and owed by families and students has risen over time (Clawson and Page, 2011). For example, the average debt load for all college graduates in 2010 rose to a record level of $25,250, which represents an 11 percent jump from 2008 ($22,750) (Project on Student Debt, 2010; Time, 2013). The estimated average costs for public universities per student after adjusting for inflation doubled from $8,069 in 1992 to $16,789 in 2012 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, Table 349), whereas public university expenditures as a percent of GDP rose only to 23 percent, from 2.6 percent to 3.2 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, Table 349, p. 28).

The percent of tenured full-time faculty to the total of all full-time instructional faculties at four-year PhD-granting public universities declined from 50.4 percent to 46 percent between 2000 and 2011 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, Table 278). Part-time faculty and graduate assistants are also outpacing growth rates for both tenured and full-time instructors at four-year public universities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, Table 253). If current trends continue, executive–administrative positions, part-time teachers, and graduate students will represent a significantly larger part of the public university pie, while more experienced teachers become part of a shrinking “middle class” within the university hierarchy (see Fain and Masterson, 2009; Clawson and Page, 2011, p. 39). This means
that undergraduate students and their families will pay more for less teaching and instructional quality. This does not bode well for the educational future of the United States, which has already plunged to 12th out of 36 developed nations in degree attainment (OECD, 2010; Pell Institute, 2011). According to a recent report by Pell Institute (2011, p. 9):

The nation’s failure to keep pace with other countries in educational attainment among 24- to 34-year-old adults can largely be traced to our inability to adequately educate individuals from families in the bottom half of the income distribution.

In fact, only 10 percent of individuals from families making $35,000 or year or less have earned a college degree by the age of 24 in the United States, according to Thomas G. Mortenson, a senior scholar at the Pell Institute (Gregg 2013). These trends have been exacerbated by the Great Recession, which ushered in unprecedented state and federal funding cuts to higher education, forced universities to do more with less, and strengthened the grip of corporate power and control over publicly funded universities and their research, teaching, service, and athletics programs (Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011; Clawson and Page, 2011). In the end, democracy, social justice, and the needs of local communities and a pluralistic society are not served when the common good is commercially rebranded and the public university system is restructured by a neoliberal ideology promoting narrow-minded “business-as-usual” norms, values, and practices.

We have made the case that the history of universities demonstrates an evolving commitment to democratic ideals and social justice. Recently, that history has been influenced by neoliberal globalization, which has exerted great economic pressure on universities, in addition to articulating the ideological position that career readiness trumps other educational goals. This ideological pressure has insidious effects. Giroux makes clear that students make their choices based on rewards defined “almost exclusively through their exchange value on the market, and students now rush to take courses and receive professional credentials that provide them with the cachet they need to sell themselves to the highest bidder” (Giroux, 2002, p. 431, cited in Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011, p. 38). Rhoads and Szelenyi point out that this further results in “the growing marginality of the social sciences and humanities…and a growing divide between revenue-generating faculty, centered primarily in the natural and applied sciences, and those existing on the margins of academic capitalism” (2011, p. 38). The resolution of social problems through strictly technical solutions, the realm of the sciences, is thus further reinforced, while the humanities and social sciences, which are better equipped to address the politics and morality—the social justice—of technical decisions, are largely left out, except, of course, when their research
confirms the bias of neoliberals, which is often the case among mainstream economists and political scientists.

How might this depressing diagnosis be resisted? How can the university be again conceived of as a place that provides and promotes alternative visions, and a place to prepare students for alternative careers and action? That is, how can the opportunities of globalization be used so that the university is prioritized as an avenue to social justice?

Rhoads and Szelényi note that Said’s project of understanding how power is “othering” the less powerful allows us to rethink the role of the university as it fosters global citizenship (2011). This insight can similarly be used to help understand alternative roles of the university. One way is to avoid the business orientation to clients, and instead engage with a variety of communities with whom universities have contact as constituencies. How might we address not only the needs of students and labor markets, but those of communities, and as John Nolt makes clear in his chapter in this volume, the needs of future generations? How can the university be a place that de-emphasizes market pressures while placing social justice concerns in higher priority? We begin to think about these possibilities by listing some of the questions we might address in thinking about different constituencies.

- What are our obligations to students, and how do we balance those with our obligations to non-students?
- What are our obligations to powerful stakeholders, but what are our obligations to those with less power?
- What are our obligations to local, state, and national economic development? How do we balance those with our obligations to human rights and representation?
- What are our obligations to profit flow? And how can we balance those with information flow, culture flow, human flow, democratic flow?

In short, how can we honor a genuine accountability, but one that is not only aimed at market actors, not just to corporations and to a corporate-influenced state, but to a variety of other stakeholders? How can we make universities sites of social justice action and thought? These questions are not new—they are variants of the questions posed by those who imagined the contribution of the land-grant university, by the policymakers who widened access to education with the GI Bill, and later by disadvantaged minorities. Over time, as we have demonstrated, universities articulated their commitment not merely to elite projects, but to the common good. However, with time we became aware that the common good was in fact not that common. Eruptions of the 1960s and 1970s put some of the democratic goals/rhetoric of universities to the test. Universities responded in a
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