

# Encyclopedia of Sociology

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... and only highly ranked institutions succeed in the modern world. Only the Church has a longer continuous existence than Western institutions. Higher education has not only more than survive; it is in many ways a pivot of the developments in the social structure and the economy. It is central for the generation of research and technological innovations. It is also central for the selection, training, and credentialing of men and women for higher-level positions in the occupational structure.

Among the most important sociological questions surrounding higher education are the following: (1) To what extent have advanced societies become based on a "knowledge economy" closely related to university research and training? Related to this question is another: To what extent do we see the rise of a "new class" of "knowledge workers" with advanced training, differing in interest and outlook from both the business elites and earlier aristocracies of labor? (2) To what extent do institutions of higher education reproduce social inequalities by certifying and perpetuating the natural advantages of children from the upper classes, or reshuffle the social hierarchy by rewarding intellect and ability independent of student's social-class background? (3) Do institutions of higher education, with their traditions of collegiality, tenure, and tenure, represent an alternative to the corporate forms of organization? These questions can be addressed only after examining the history of higher education, the existing organizational structures, and the contemporary pressures on higher education.

First, it is necessary to define the dimensions of higher education. Formal educational institutions are conventionally divided between primary (the first six years), secondary (the next four years), and postsecondary education. In the United States, postsecondary schools offer courses of study that are narrowly vocational and very short in duration. These institutions (including secretarial

are transferable to higher-level colleges and universities. Above these lower-tier institutions is a vast array of colleges, universities, and other institutions (for example, seminaries and schools) that constitute the core of the education sector in all contemporary societies. Levels in this institutional hierarchy are structured, most fundamentally, by the type of credentials conferred. In the United States, for example, the path is marked by movement from the associate degree to the bachelor's to the master's to the doctorate.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Important relatives of today's institutions of higher education go back in the West to the Greek academies of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. In the academies, young men from the governing classes studied rhetoric and philosophy (and other subjects) as training for public life (Marrou 1982). In the East, the roots of higher education go back to the training of future government bureaucrats at the feet of masters of Confucian philosophy, poetry, and calligraphy. In both the East and West, a close relationship existed among education, high culture, and preparation for public life.

However, modern institutions of higher education trace a more direct lineage from the medieval universities. In the first European universities (the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in Salerno, Bologna, and Paris), students gathered together to pore over the new knowledge discovered in ancient texts and developed by the Arab scholars of Spain. These gatherings of students and teachers were a product of the revival of scholarly inquiry in what has been called the "twelfth-century Renaissance." The medieval universities were similar to modern higher education in that they were permanent institutions of

typically with an emphasis on logic and philosophy, were common preparation for students in three learned professions. Thus, from the beginning, a certain vocational emphasis is evident at the university. Degrees awarded on the completion of professional studies certified accomplishments that made their recipients worthy to enter into professional life. Nevertheless, the emphasis on inquiry was equally important in the medieval universities; these were places renowned for famous teachers, such as Abelard in Paris and Peter Lombard in Bologna. Civic competition led to a proliferation of universities. By the end of the Middle Ages, eighty had been founded in different parts of Europe (Rashdall [1985] 1936).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fortunes of colleges and universities declined. The causes for decline are numerous, including the attractiveness of commercial over academic careers, the interference (in some places) of religious and political authorities, and the insularity of faculty who jealously guarded their guild privileges but resisted new currents of thought. In this period, colleges and universities became more concerned with the transmission of ancient knowledge rather than the further advance of knowledge. Professional training moved out of the universities: into Inns of Court, medical colleges, and seminaries. New elites interested in technical and scientific progress established entirely new institutions rather than allying with the colleges and universities. Napoleon, for example, founded professional training institutions, the *grandes écoles*, and the early investigators in the natural sciences created separate elite societies to encourage research and discussion.

The revived university is the product of the nineteenth-century European reform movement, in the beginning by intellectually oriented government bureaucrats and eminent philosophers and theologians. The University of Berlin, founded in 1810,

old Ranke in history and Justus von Liebig chemistry, emerged (McClelland 1980). By mid-19th century the German research universities had become a model for reformers throughout Europe. In fact, from as far away as the United States and Canada, the first research university in the United States, Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1876, was explicitly modeled on the German research university.

Higher education's current emphasis on training in a wide range of applied fields has an equally long history. Here the United States, rather than Germany, was the decisive innovator. The Morrill Acts (passed in 1862 and 1890) provided federal states to establish "land grant" universities to provide both general education and practical training in agricultural and mechanical arts for working-class applicants. Such institutions encouraged the democratization of American higher education and a closer connection between universities and emerging markets for educated labor. The American university's role in society was further enhanced by its willingness to work cooperatively with government, professional associations, and (somewhat later) business and community organizations. The "Wisconsin Idea" ended the close connection between university and government officials during the period of World War I. Universities also cooperated with professional associations to raise national training standards. Connections between university and state were extended, particularly in the sciences, during World War II and thereafter, when government grants for university-based scientific research became a very large source of support. These developments encouraged a new era of higher education. In the 1960s, Clark (1963) coined the term "multiversity" to describe institutions, like his own University of California, as service-based enterprises specializing in training, research, and advice for all major

some time in Europe and Asia, where a tradition of higher education was strictly limited to the elite students who passed rigorous examinations and earned higher degrees had long served as important markers of social status linked to cultural refinement. However, by the last quarter of the twentieth century, the entrepreneurial multiversity had become an important model throughout the developed world (Clark 1998).

Institutions of higher education rarely discard their earlier identities completely; instead, they incorporate new emphases through reorganization and adding new components and new roles. Today, all major historical stages of university development remain very much in evidence. Much of the nomenclature, hierarchy, and rituals of the medieval university remains and is prominently displayed at graduation ceremonies. Although the major fields of study have changed dramatically, the underlying liberal arts emphasis of the medieval academies has remained central in the first two years of undergraduate study (the lower division). The nineteenth-century emphasis on specialization is evident in the second two years of undergraduate study (the upper division) and in graduate and professional programs. The nineteenth-century emphasis on research remains an important occupying occupation of faculty and graduate students. The twentieth-century emphases on ancillary activities, including teaching, service, and advisory activities are often performed in separate components (as in the case of university extension programs, agricultural experiments, university-based hospitals, and college sports teams) or performed by research faculty using their capacity as consultants and lecturers to the community.

## ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION

Contemporary institutions of higher education

ments remain based in departments. For this departments must be considered fundamental to academic organization. In chair systems, characteristic of continental European universities, one or two senior professors hold chairs and direct research programs, while the other professors serve in subsidiary roles under the direction of the chair. In American universities, departments and faculty operate independently, pursuing their own research programs, only occasionally in collaboration.

Larger structures of knowledge-based organization are the colleges and professional schools. The college of humanities will, for example, typically include all departments in the fine arts (such as music and theatre) and the humanities disciplines (such as philosophy and English). Colleges and professional schools are administrative units. The size of colleges and professional schools varies widely on the size of the campus. A very large campus will have separate divisions for the arts, humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences. It may also have half a dozen or more professional schools. A small campus may have only one college of arts and sciences.

Colleges and universities are under no obligation to represent all fields of basic and applied knowledge, and most do not. (The term "university" does not, as many believe, refer to the universe of all fields of knowledge. Originally, it meant "an aggregate of persons.") New disciplines must fight for a place in the university, and old disciplines sometimes fragment or disappear. Sociology and psychology, for example, broke away from philosophy, while the nineteenth-century discipline of political economy was eventually divided into political science and economics. Today the fate of disciplines in particular colleges and universities depends on a number of factors, including, most notably, student demand and the strength of the

modern university is moving away from a liberal arts core in the direction of a "practical arts" core composed of departments closely tied to technological and economic advance or to national security (such as economics, molecular biology, and international affairs) and professional schools providing training for the highest-paying occupations (such as medicine, law, and business). Strength in this practical arts core does not necessarily come at the expense of strength in traditional liberal arts disciplines, however. In the United States, universities, powerful disciplines help to sustain less powerful ones, which, in turn, may receive a disproportionate share of students.

Modern institutions of higher education are far from *collegiua* in their authority structure, but they also do not fit an ideal-type corporate structure of top-down control. Instead, decision-making practices are based, at least in principle, on a system of spheres of power and ongoing consultation. The major "branches" of institutional governance are: (1) administrative authority, (2) knowledge-based authority, and (3) the authority structure of knowledge itself. In this dual structure, both administrative and knowledge-based authority are represented. The authority structure of knowledge is constituted by the departments and, within the departments, by the professorial ranks. Advancement in the social hierarchy is based in principle on the merit of a faculty member's professional accomplishments (typically involving assessments of research, teaching, and service). Differences in merit are associated with both deference and incorporation into the hierarchy moves from the temporary lecturer and instructor to the regular assistant, associate, and full professor. Highly visible full professors may be appointed to endowed chairs that provide both additional symbolic recognition and a separate budget for research and

The top level of the administrative hierarchy is typically composed of a president or chancellor, who is responsible for fund-raising and interacting with important resource providers as well as

retain a decisive say at least in the better decisions, over all decisions involving curricularization and instruction. They also retain the dominant say in hiring and promotion decisions within the academic departments, expecting very rare overrules by administrators. They typically play a significant advisory role in development of new programs and centers and discussions of institutional priorities. Top universities depend for prestige and resources on accomplishments of their faculty; as a general rule the less distinguished the faculty, the more powerful the administration (Blan 1973). Faculty in elite institutions have, consequently, sometimes chosen to organize in collective bargaining to control administrative discretion through structural means (Rhoades 1998).

The unique institution of tenure greatly enhances the influence of faculty. After a six-year probationary period, assistant professors come up for decision on promotion to tenure and accompanying advancement in rank. Tenure, a convention rather than a legal status, guarantees life-employment for those who continue to hold it and act within broad bounds of moral acceptability. Together, dual authority and tenure constitute opposition to any administrative efforts to end existing programs or to downgrade work conditions and privileges of faculty.

The primary funding for colleges and universities by national circumstances. Most institutions of higher education in Europe and in the developing world are state-supported. Modest fees are sometimes charged students enrolling in expensive or high-demand fields. However, the idea of tuition is only now developing. In the United States public colleges and universities are primarily supported by state appropriations, but they also charge tuition and fees. Private colleges and universities, lacking state appropriations, charge sub-

Sociologists frequently use the term "systems" to describe national patterns of higher education. This term should be used advisedly, since national "systems" are not in fact highly coordinated. Societies with strong traditions of central planning have relatively centralized systems. Russian, French, and Swedish systems are among the most centralized today. But in these countries, some private institutions operate independently of the centrally organized system. Societies with weak traditions of central planning and strong traditions of voluntarism have decentralized and highly diverse systems. In the United States higher education is a clear example of a decentralized pattern. Colleges and universities have been organized by religious bodies, secular elites, legislators, and individual entrepreneurs. The result is a system of some 4,000 largely independent institutions. Institutions emulate and compete with one another in a complex ecological setting. The major dimensions are defined by level of education, by institutional identity (for example, national or nondenominational, residential or commuter), and, perhaps most of all, by geographic location. One of the few forms of regulation is the requirement that curricular programs meet accreditation standards.

It is possible to classify national systems in many ways. Clark (1965) proposed dividing them by the primary influence on the coordination of the system. He placed the former Soviet Union near the pole of state-based coordination and the United States near the pole of market-based coordination. He classified Italy as the clearest example of coordination by an "academic oligarchy" where powerful academics were the decisive influence in the development of rules and policies for the system as a whole. Clark argued further that the dominant mode of coordination has important consequences for the ethos and structure of the system. State-based systems place a strong

question of interest, however, other dimensions of comparison may be equally important. All systems, for example, can also be characterized in relation to their (1) size and openness, (2) institutional diversity, and (3) interinstitutional interaction structure. Countries vary significantly on these three dimensions. The United States presents an unusually large, diverse, and stratified system. Two-thirds of secondary school students enter higher education, but they enter a very heterogeneous set of institutions that are highly differentiated by acceptance rates. Germany, by contrast, presents a still relatively small, homogeneous, and unstratified structure. About one-third of high school students enter higher education, and four-year institutions are designed to be similar to one another, and there is no clear differentiation among them. In the United States, life fates are determined within the secondary system; in Germany, they are determined to a large degree by inclusion in or exclusion from higher education. Some systems in the industrialized world remain relatively small but nonetheless include also a highly differentiated elite track. This is true, for example, in France, where the *grandes écoles* represent a clearly defined upper tier reserved for the very best students. It is also true in Japan, where an institution such as the University of Tokyo retains very close linkages to elite positions in the Japanese state and private economy. Differences across these dimensions have important implications for student consciousness. The more educated are, for example, more likely to be seen as a separate status group in societies in which access to higher education is relatively restricted. By contrast, opportunity consciousness tends to replace class consciousness in more open

leaving examinations have been relaxed to allow a larger flow of students into higher education. Nevertheless, both attendance and graduation rates in most of the industrialized world remain only about half that in the United States. Thus, higher education in Europe and East Asia is no longer a barrier to education, but it has not reached the level of participation found in the United States.

Theorists of postindustrial society have suggested that the growth of the knowledge sector in the economy is behind this expansion of higher education. Estimates vary on the rate of growth of the "knowledge sector," depending on the definition used. Industries employing high proportions of professionals are growing faster, by as much as 10 percent, than other industries, but some estimates suggest that they are slowing down over time (Rubin and Hirsch, 1986). Every estimate shows that they do not contribute a dominant share of the gross national product or even a dominant share of the exports of dynamic export industries.

The growth of the knowledge sector is undoubtedly an important factor in the expansion of graduate and professional education. Its importance at the undergraduate level is more debatable. In relation to undergraduate enrollment, at least three other sources of growth must be given proper emphasis. One is the interest of parents in expanding educational opportunities for their children. Another is the interest of students in these opportunities, to differentiate themselves in the labor market. As secondary school completion approaches universality and higher education attendance becomes more feasible, more students have a motive to differentiate themselves by earning higher degrees (Meyer et al. 1979). Finally, perhaps most important, is the increasing role played by educational credentials as a barrier to access to desirable jobs in the economy. Credentials are not simply (or in many cases pri-

## SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF GROWTH

ness of the larger society, because the curriculum, motivation, and academic skills to pass rigorous examinations are highly tied with social class. Social-class advantages disappear in more open systems, but these do generally allow a higher proportion of academically able students from the lower classes to succeed. The sheer size of a system does not, however, guarantee decreasing inequality (Blossfeldt and Wit 1993). Much depends on the circumstances of students in the system and the levels of competition within in the system. Since 1980, the number of college graduates in the United States has continued to grow, but this growth has occurred almost exclusively from among students whose families are in the top quartile of household income. Students from families in the bottom quartile are entering at higher rates, but they have not graduated at higher rates. The reasons are that these students are often less prepared and less motivated to succeed, more likely to feel the burden of work and family responsibilities, and more likely to struggle financially with the high cost of college. They are also more likely to attend two-year institutions emphasizing job-relevant training.

## CONTEMPORARY PRESSURES

Colleges and universities are increasingly costly institutions. In state-organized systems, growth is constrained by fiscal circumstances and state priorities. In market-organized systems, developments are constrained to a considerable degree by the value of college degrees in the labor market and by competition among colleges and universities. To finance growth that allows for development of new fields without sharp cutbacks in older fields, colleges and universities compete vigorously for research funds, private gifts, and preeminence in the market for educational services. They also com-

pete for largely moderate- to lower-income students who desire convenience and flexibility as they juggle school, family, and work. In the former, the liberal arts tradition remains strong at the undergraduate level. In the latter, the emphasis is on practical, "consumer-friendly" job-relevant training. As a result of this bifurcation of markets, the lower tier of liberal arts colleges has begun to disappear in the United States. In some cases, these institutions have transformed themselves into comprehensive colleges with both undergraduate professional programs in areas such as business, engineering, technology, and agriculture (Breneman 1994). The same general trend toward practical, job-relevant training is evident in all but the most selective public four-year colleges and universities.

The size of operations and the increased competition among institutions have strengthened the influence of top administrators. Managers have started to think strategically about areas of comparative advantage, a striking departure from the model of the past, which emphasized replication of all major fields of study. As a result of strategic thinking, most departments can no longer depend on automatic replacements for retiring faculty, even at the senior level. Administrators have also added resources to student service and development offices to strengthen their relationships with key resource providers. For the first time in the postwar period, close partnerships have been developed at some institutions with private foundations which can provide new sources of research funding (Cohen et al. 1998). The ability to attract students and sizable research grants has improved the position of some departments and disciplines while weakening the relative position of others. Within institutions, power and influence have continued to shift in the direction of the major professional school faculties and faculties in



agers, who are conscious, above all, of the s for their organization's services. Never- as long as subject-area experts remain to research and instruction, dual authority necessary for academic organization—and ic and corporate forms of organization will completely converge.

ese organizational developments help to weaknesses of "new-class" theories. "Knowl- orkers" (including professors) do not rep- a stratum with social and political inter- tinct from those of business elites and fessional workers. Instead, the interests of owledge workers are decisively influenced r particular occupational, organizational, rket circumstances (Brint 1994). This is e within universities. Those faculty located essional programs are usually closely allied o administrators, as are "star" faculty, while n traditional liberal arts are more likely to an independent, and somewhat critical,

segments of the faculty do, however, share guild-like interests in maintaining control ruitment, employment, and working con- The development of new electronic tech- s of learning (such as distance learning, niversities," and Web-based courses) may ore significant long-run threat to these interests than any of the recent managerial to rationalize campus operations. Studies r have not shown consistently significant ces in learning between students taking off-site in technologically mediated set- d those taking conventional, on-site courses. nds to raise questions about the most pow- erty rationale for the current campus- rganization of academic work. In the fu- mpuses will undoubtedly continue to exist e students, because of the importance of

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## HISPANIC AMERICANS

their common linguistic heritage, Hispanics are a heterogeneous and rapidly growing population that includes no less than three distinct national identities and components of legal and undocumented immigrants and groups whose ancestors predate the formation of the United States as we know it today. The term *Hispanic* is derived from *Hispania*, the Latin name for Iberia. In 1973 the U.S. Department of Education and Welfare adopted the term "Hispanic" at the recommendation of the Task Force on Racial/Ethnic Categories to designate students who trace their origins to a Spanish-speaking country. Following suit, the U.S. Census Bureau adopted this label as a statistical shorthand for Hispanic national-origin groups (del Pinal and Singer 1997; Haverluk 1997). Originating in the northern United States, the term "Latino" has been adopted as an alternative by groups that view the label "Hispanic" as a conservative pan-ethnic label imposed by the government that ignores their political and economic struggles for equality and representation. These distinctions notwithstanding, both terms serve as umbrellas for a highly diverse segment of the U.S. population.

Hispanics are one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population. High levels of immigration combined with high fertility rates yield a growth rate for Hispanics that is seven times that of the non-Hispanic population (U.S. Department of Commerce 1993). In 1990 the U.S. Census Bureau enumerated 22.4 million Hispanics, representing 9 percent of the aggregate population, but

cause annual estimates since that time have consistently been exceeded (U.S. Department of Commerce 1996). Hispanics are projected to outnumber blacks as the largest minority by 2003—sooner, depending on the volume of legal and undocumented immigration from Central and South America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Already in 1998, Hispanic children outnumbered black children.

Although immigration has figured prominently in the growth of the Hispanic population since 1941, its influence on demographic growth, diversification and renewal, and population replenishment has been especially pronounced during the 1980s and 1990s. Immigration was responsible for approximately one-third of the phenomenal growth of the Hispanic population in the 1980s and 1990s. At the end of the 1990s, two-thirds of the population were immigrants or children of immigrants (del Pinal and Singer 1997), and high rates of fertility and immigration suggested higher growth of the Hispanic population well into the twenty-first century. By the year 2020, the U.S. Hispanic population is projected to reach 52.6 million, representing approximately 16 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 1996).

Nearly two-thirds of all U.S. Hispanics (67 percent) are of Mexican origin, while 11 percent trace their origins to Puerto Rico, 4 percent to Cuba, and 14 percent to other Central and South American nations. An additional 7 percent of Hispanics are of unspecified national origin, which includes mixed Spanish-speaking nationalities, Spaniards, and "Hispanos," the descendants of the original Spanish settlers in what can be found today in Colorado and New Mexico. This national-origin profile of the Hispanic population has evolved since 1970 because of the differential growth of selected groups. In particular, since 1970 the Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean American population shares have increased