

Learning from the Experience of Others: The Evolution of Faculty Tenure and Promotion Rules in Comprehensive Institutions

Introduction

American higher education experienced periods of both dramatic expansion and slow growth after World War II. Undergraduate enrollments increased rapidly after the war. The launching of Sputnik stimulated a wave of production of PhDs. The rapid expansion from the war until the end of the 1970s marked the period as “the great transformation” (Kerr, 1991). However, starting in the late 1970s, a slowing growth rate for undergraduate enrollment and a substantial excess supply of PhDs ushered in a period of stagnation. Subsequently, the number of doctorates awarded in many arts and science fields declined (Bowen & Sosa, 1989). Looking back at the 1980s and the early 1990s, Clark Kerr (1994) characterized the period as one of “troubled times for American higher education.” Kerr recounts that a variety of institutions experienced difficulty coping with the shift in growth rates. The chang-

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ing conditions produced intensely competitive, status-seeking behavior, particularly among research universities, particularly among comprehensive colleges and universities and less selective liberal arts colleges (Kerr, 1994).

The large expansions and the subsequent slow rate of enrollment growth and PhD production generated major changes in the nature of academic employment and the structure of rewards for faculty at all types of institutions. In the tight faculty labor market of the 1980s, competition among institutions over faculty became fierce. These changes were followed by increased emphasis on higher standards within the academic profession (Damrosch, 1995; Rhode, 2006; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006; Sykes, 1988). Belief in “the value of excellence in scholarship” (Smelser & Content, 1980) became the dominant basis for academic rewards. This change generated considerable implications for expectations in academic recruitment and promotion in subsequent periods.

The rising emphasis on scholarship coupled with the increasingly competitive culture reinforced beliefs within institutions that they should be attentive to their status relative to other institutions. This desire for recognition and scramble for status took a variety of forms. A number of studies concluded that more universities and colleges were using research-oriented criteria in the hiring and rewarding of faculty, including institutions that espoused a teaching mission (Boyer, 1990; Fairweather, 2005; Rhode, 2006; Winston, 1994). Research productivity, rather than teaching load, continued to be the dominant basis of faculty reward among all types of institutions (Fairweather, 2005).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the nature of academic employment was also transformed. At all types of institutions, academic promotion opportunities for non-tenured, full-time faculty declined substantially (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). There was a marked increase in part-time (Finkelstein et al., 1998; Tuckman & Pickerill, 1988) and short-term employment positions (Chronister et al., 1992; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). For tenured faculty positions, the length of the waiting period for promotion from assistant to associate and then associate to full professorial levels increased (Perrucci, O’Flaherty, & Marshall, 1983).

These dramatic changes in higher education raise important questions that we seek to address in this paper. Have increased competition for qualified faculty personnel and rising pressures for professional standards led colleges and universities to change how work is organized and rewards are structured? How have rules governing faculty promotion and tenure evolved over time, especially among institutions whose goal is to focus on teaching? In what ways, have rules been affected by the external environment?

Research Questions

A leading theoretical perspective of organizational theory emphasizes that organizational rules are conspicuously created in response to the proliferation of “rationalized myths” in society and that, in turn, these rules have generated a variety of modern institutional systems (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott & Meyer, 1994). By “rationalized myths,” these theorists mean larger societal forces seeking collective ends. In response to these rationalized myths, organizations create institutional rules and routines. In seeking to increase legitimacy and to ensure survival, organizations also adopt institutionalized rules from other organizations that are perceived to be successful and powerful.

Drawing from these theoretical arguments, we focus on the evolution of faculty personnel rules at comprehensive colleges and universities. The subject of evolution of organizational rules addresses key issues related to organizational responses to changes in highly institutionalized environments. While these changes may lead to increased legitimacy, they may be accompanied by goal displacement and changes in formal structures. Why comprehensive institutions? Comprehensive institutions occupy a unique middle position in higher education’s status hierarchy. In the absence of strong central control in U.S. higher education, the behavior of the middle-sector institutions is more subject to rationalization requirements from their environment.

We focus on changes at comprehensive institutions during the period of the 1970s through to the end of the 1990s. Higher education researchers recognize this period as significantly affected by selective shortages of and intense competition for faculty in the arts and sciences (Bowen & Sosa, 1989; Sovern, 1989). Furthermore, during this period, various actors including the state and other public organizations expressed their concern with performance accountability and standards in higher education. These factors provide considerable scope for analysis.

In this light, we pose a set of research questions:

1. How has the rule system governing promotion and tenure at comprehensive colleges and universities evolved over time?
2. How do rule founding and rule following among comprehensive institutions become sources of organizational legitimacy? Organizations are dependent on external environments for resources. Among these resources, legitimacy is one of most vital of resources (Scott, 1991; Zucker, 1989). Colleges and universities can ensure their legitimacy by incorporating externally constructed institutional elements into their structures (DiMaggio &

Powell, 1983). Among these institutional elements is the demand for professionalization.

3. How do comprehensive institutions successfully increase their capacity to adapt to environmental pressures? Organizational rules are “carriers of knowledge” (March et al., 2000) and rules serve vital parts of organizational learning. Lessons gained from rule founding and rule adoption help organizations to learn from their own experiences as well as those of other organizations. As such, the adoption of rules is necessary for intelligent adaptation of organizations to environmental demands.

The paper is organized into four parts. We first examine the evolution of comprehensive colleges and universities in the context of changes in American higher education in the 1970s through to the end of the 1990s. Second, we review research in organizational rules that is more relevant to this study. Our analysis of a variety of perspectives on organizational rules will clarify our theoretical argument. Third, we report findings from fieldwork at four comprehensive institutions over two temporal periods that demonstrate the process of institutionalization of organizational rules. Finally, we discuss implications for comprehensive institutions’ future role in American higher education.

Background: Evolution of Comprehensive Colleges and Universities

Although much of the expansion and change that took place in American society after World War II substantially influenced the fates of comprehensive colleges and universities, these institutions are among the least studied by social science researchers. In 2001, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching¹ identified some six hundred colleges and universities as comprehensive colleges and universities. These institutions provide courses in various professional subjects and the liberal arts but offer no degree higher than the master’s. Their institutional origins are diverse. Some, such as Trenton State College and Fitchburg State College, began as normal schools and teachers’ colleges (see Pangburn, 1932 for origins and history of teachers’ colleges). Others, such as New Jersey Institute of Technology and California Polytechnic State College, began as technical schools. Institutions such as the University of Hartford and the Winston-Salem State University began as municipal schools sponsored by the YMCA and other civic organizations. Other institutions, like the College of Saint Rose and Providence College, were established as private liberal arts colleges but later expanded their vocational and professional courses to include the liberal arts (Finnegan, 1990; Harclerod & Ostar, 1987).

In the 1960s, these institutions expanded their enrollments considerably. As part of that expansion, they were faced with significantly more diverse student clienteles. An unusually large share of comprehensive institutions' students was first-generation enrollees. The Carnegie Council on Higher Education referred to these as "colleges for forgotten Americans" (Kerr, 1969), implying that many of these newcomers to higher education were also inadequately prepared for college-level work. As their enrollments expanded and changed, comprehensive institutions gradually shifted from their once-narrow focus on teacher training, technical education, or the liberal arts (Gamson, Finnegan, & Youn, 1991). The institutions established programs in many applied fields and in the arts and sciences. In the process, they became much more complex forms of organizations facing considerable challenges. As their educational functions multiplied, they came to be seen as institutions with "muddled characters."² Noting their unclear institutional identities and beliefs, the literature in higher education characterizes these institutions as "unsure hybrids often seeking to change their spots" (Clark, 1987), as "caught in the middle" (Henderson & Kane, 1991), as the "in-between category" (Kerr, 1994), and even as "the ugly ducklings of higher education" (Wong, 1990).

In his 1987 study of faculty, Burton R. Clark reported that faculty of comprehensive institutions often express ambiguity about their institutional culture. Despite the considerable amount of teaching time required, faculty members, particularly those hired in recent decades, are less certain about balancing institutional expectations and professional demands. Newer faculty members and their older colleagues find it more difficult to come to terms with their common belief about the profession and their roles in the institution (Clark, 1987, p. 186), suggesting a generational divide in culture. Unclear institutional identities and beliefs, along with pressure to serve a diverse range of students, all inevitably push organizational goals in multiple and potentially contradictory directions.

Background: Research in Organizational Rules

For almost a century, students of organizations have demonstrated a particular interest in organizational rules and rule following. By rules, we mean the routines and procedures around which human behaviors and rewards in an organization are defined. Rules explain cumulative experience as well as actions of formal organizations (Allison, 1971; Cohen and Sproul, 1996; March et al., 2000). Historically, four competing theoretical perspectives on rules have prevailed in research on organizations.

These perspectives are: (a) classical theory of rules and formal structure of organizations; (b) population-ecology theory; (c) control theory; and (d) neo-institutional theory.³ This paper will critically review these theories and attempt to shed some light on emerging theoretical prospects pertaining to our study of comprehensive institutions.

The importance of organizational rules in shaping the behaviors of formal organizations is a familiar theme in works by Weber (1946), Merton (1952), and Crozier (1964). These classical theorists view rules as constitutive and, therefore, part of formal structures that define stable patterns of relationships and activities of members in organizations. The work by Cyert and March (1963) is an important departure from the classical perspective. It is the beginning of recognition that organizations are bounded in rationality and are subject to shifting political conditions. To Cyert and March, while formal rules serve the function of reducing uncertainty, rule-founding and rule-change might help generate the capacity for long-run adaptive processes. Their conclusions led to a renewed interest in theoretical developments in rules and rule-based action and produced a rich array of literature in the 1980s and the 1990s, including that of Nelson and Winter (1982), Brennan and Buchanan (1985), Powell (1986), Zucker (1988), Feldman (1989), Zhou (1993), and March et al. (2000).

At the opposite end of the spectrum to the classical argument, population-ecology theorists, led by Hannan and Freeman (1984; 1989), make a number of assertions about the link between organizational rule-founding and ecological niche, age, and the possibility of organizational change. Although organizational rules are not a direct focus of population-ecology theorists, to these researchers, variation and natural selection of rules lead to “adaptation of organizational structures principally at the population level” (Hannan & Freeman, 1984, p. 149). Once an organization occupies a niche, it will eventually move toward the state of structural inertia by formulating rules because of “their high reliability of performance and high level of accountability.” However, those rules can also contribute to the development of structural inertia. While rules may maintain a sense of stability within an organization, structural inertia can inhibit organizational adaptability in times of great ecological change.

Thirdly, control theorists argue that it is the distribution of power in organizations that explains the basis of organizational rules and rule-following. Leading advocates of this perspective (Karpik, 1978; Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer, 1992) maintain that organizations must allocate scarce resources. To such organizations, the optimal mechanism for such allocation is unclear; hence, power enters into all critical decision making. Patterns of rule change are explained by the use of power.

Advocates of control theory also recognize the symbolic significance of organizational rules and routines, though rules might mask political reality (Edelman, 1964). From the perspective of organizational actors, control over symbols as organizational rules and routines means a basis of control over resources.

Finally, the neo-institutional perspective provides a rich and more complex view of organizations. While neo-institutional theorists provide divergent interpretations of formal organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dobbin et al., 1988; Fennell, 1980; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995; Zucker, 1987; Zucker, 1988), the idea of “embeddedness” of organizations in social, political, economic, and cultural institutions (Granovetter, 1985) is neo-institutional theory’s central theme. In this sense, institutions are not organizations, but rather sets of values, norms, and habits that influence thought and behavior. One familiar argument is that organizational adoption of particular rules is directly related to institutional processes in the larger social context (March et al., 2000, Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott & Meyer, 1994). Formal organizations are forced to conform structurally because of the cultural or normative expectations of competitors, suppliers, the state, and societal environments. Weaker organizational forms are more vulnerable to cultural and normative expectations and pressures and seek to imitate organizational forms perceived to be more appropriate and successful so as to establish legitimacy. As a result, for example, the personnel rules and procedures for rewarding employees in successful and powerful organizations are adopted by less successful and perhaps weaker organizations. According to the neo-institutional perspective, the spread of these rules and routines among a group or fields of organizations over time produces a pocket of homogeneous institutions in employment practices. For organizations, the isomorphic adoption of these legitimated elements increases the chances of survival and assures “confidence and good faith” in performance.

The four perspectives reviewed here differ in their explanations of how formal organizations adopt rules. All imply a causal model whereby the founding and the spread of rules might be understood historically and theoretically. All, except the population-ecology perspective, presuppose actors in organizations who perceive their environments and the internal organization and then act on choices. While the classical theory lays an important foundation for linking rules to formal structure, it assumes that organizational rules function to ensure stability and accountability. It emphasizes the importance of rules but fails to explain adequately organizational dependence on environment and larger social contexts. Organizational rules are directly linked to insti-

tutional processes of the organization. The population-ecology approach may only be useful in explaining institutional processes at the population level. Furthermore, this theory presumes a much-constrained role for decision-makers in organizations. The control perspective and the neo-institutional theory offer alternative explanations of the institutionalization of rules. Where the control perspective focuses on the distribution of influence as a source of rule-following, neo-institutional theory presumes that the need to obtain legitimacy from an organization's environment is a key explanation.

*Background: Faculty Tenure and Promotion Routines
as Rule-based Actions*

Tenure and promotion routines in academic organizations are "rule-based actions." Rule-based actions differ from "choice-based actions" (March et al., 2000, p. 6–7) along the following lines. First, the format of rule-based actions is a sequence of decisions that involve multiple decision actors operating in complexly structured temporal cycles. From the perspective of the institution it is difficult to predict each decision outcome. Organizational actors involved in these decision processes from beginning to end face considerable ambiguity with respect to probable outcomes. Such ambiguity often assumes that decision actors rely on the logic of "appropriateness" rather than the logic of "rational calculation." Such action is situational, where "choice involves matching a situation with an appropriate behavior that fits to the situation" (March & Olsen, 1989, p. 22) and the search (for solutions) process often involves inquiring into the characteristics of a particular situation rather than maximizing the value of certain outcomes.

Second, from college's and universities' perspective, promotion and tenure routines (tenure in particular) represent acts of major commitment that are costly and unsettling (McPherson & Winston, 1988, p. 175–76). Nevertheless, these routines are central features of life in academia and the possibility for considering alternatives to these routines is severely limited. With the threat of shortages of qualified faculty in some fields, there appear to be limited ways of maintaining faculty quality without granting tenure. One obvious alternative to the tenure system is term contracts coupled with compensatory increases in salary. For most institutions, the institutional structure of wage setting is organized in such a way that any trade-off between tenure and higher salary is extremely difficult, if not impossible. For most public institutions, the possibility of such trade-offs is even more limited as constraints are posed by state employment policies and union agreements.

A faculty member ordinarily receives tenure and promotion some time during his or her mid- or late-thirties. Therefore, a tenure decision is essentially a thirty-year contract at least. At present prices, the face value of the contract can run up to a substantial sum of salary alone. From the perspective of individuals, these rules present a form of immanent benefit. From the perspective of institutions, these rules provide a reasonable assurance of a key resource but also may limit future flexibility. In recent decades, as comprehensive colleges and universities, particularly public institutions, have faced increasingly difficult budget restrictions, resources expended on academic salaries have increasingly have been seen as constraining strategic flexibility.

Third, although organizational rules are templates for organizational actions, they convey a symbolic message to other organizations in the environment. Promotion and tenure rules become representational or they “stand in for other things” or “signify other things” (Douglas, 1986; Scott, 1994, p. 60). They stand in for aspects of organizations’ members, processes, and shared values (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Organizations are judged by their rules; invoking of certain rules validates organizations’ legitimacy to their environments. Thus, rules ultimately serve the purpose of conveying symbolic messages to the environment.

Finally, from the perspective of individual actors in colleges and universities, tenure and promotion (tenure especially) are momentous points in their professional career, providing not only employment security but also a guarantee of status in the academic profession. Those at comprehensive institutions, recognizing the competitive job market and the increased likelihood of curtailment of mobility, often face tenure decisions with a sense of urgency about succeeding. If they fail to receive tenure at comprehensive institutions, there are only limited places to which they can move among four-year institutions (Youn & Gamson, 1992). Beyond the boundary of four-year institutions, unsuccessful candidates may have to shift down the prestige hierarchy to the two-year college sector. It is natural that a “fear of falling”⁴ in career trajectory may intensify anxiety among prospective candidates for tenure in comprehensive institutions in particular.

Data and Method of Analysis

We use a two-level approach to our analysis. First, we focus on change at the field level by examining how and to what extent faculty’s work rewards have affected the profession. To do so, we use the data obtained from national surveys of American faculty conducted by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education in 1969 and the

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1975, 1984, 1991–93, and 1997. All these surveys included questions concerning orientation, work, and rewards.

Although sample sizes vary from one survey to another, the Carnegie surveys are broadly representative of the range of faculty and institution types. We also examined data from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 1992–93, 1998–99, and 2003–04. The questions related to standards for promotion included in the NCES surveys are not identical to those included in the Carnegie surveys. The only identical question asked in the NSOPF surveys is related to how teaching was used for promotion. We have summarized these data in our analysis.

The second level of analysis focuses on the dynamics of rule change in comprehensive institutions and specifically on how and why promotion and tenure practices changed from the 1980s onwards. We used data from fieldwork conducted at four comprehensive colleges and universities in New England over two periods: 1989–1994 and 1999–2002. We selected one private municipal university, one public urban university, one private sectarian college, and one public state college. The theoretical basis for selecting these four institutions originated from those four subcategories of comprehensive institutions presented by Harclerod and Ostar (1987) and similar categories suggested by Dunham (1969). These four sub-categories are partly based on different historical and institutional origins and are broadly representative subcategories of the comprehensive sector in American higher education (Gamson, Finnegan, & Youn, 1991).

We used two sources of data: documents related to faculty personnel policy and interviews with faculty members. The documents included faculty handbooks, tenure and promotion guides, personnel policy documents, and faculty by-laws that were used by these four institutions from the 1970s through the 1990s. We used these to trace and enumerate inceptions and alterations of rules over time. The institutions provided us with 64 tenure and 120 promotion review cases. Due to privacy restrictions, we could not examine external reviewers' comments, deans' recommendations to presidents, and the distribution of ballots cast by the committee members for each faculty review.

We conducted interviews at five academic departments in each institution: two liberal arts departments (English and mathematics), two professional departments (business/management and education), and an additional department with high projected faculty turnover. Our initial fieldwork (1989 to 1994) was followed up with interviews of the same

key informants between 1999 and 2002 (some retired and others not available in the second period). In the first phase, we interviewed 19 senior administrators (including the presidents), 28 department chairs, 8 tenure and promotion committee chairs (4 retired and 4 new chairs in the first period), and 42 tenured, untenured and non-tenure track faculty members. Our interviews with 61 (12 senior administrators, 22 department chairs, 7 committee chairs, 4 retired in the second period, and 20, faculty members, 9 declined) continued in the period of 1999–2002. See Table 1 for the summary of these interviews conducted in two periods. We also interviewed prospective faculty applicants (two) and those who were recently promoted and tenured, as well as those who were denied such rewards (two). We were unable to interview those who chose not to be reviewed by tenure and promotion process and left the institutions.

The interviews were designed to gather information about how comprehensive institutions evaluate and reward their faculty. We were especially interested in how tenure and promotion rules have changed over these periods. We used a standard protocol for all interviews and the average lasted approximately 50 minutes. Texts of our interviews were transcribed by our team of four researchers and coded according to a standard coding formats designed by the *Ethnograph: A Program for the Computer Assisted Analysis of Text Based Data*, 1988, 1992.

Results: Changing Norms in the Comprehensive Sector

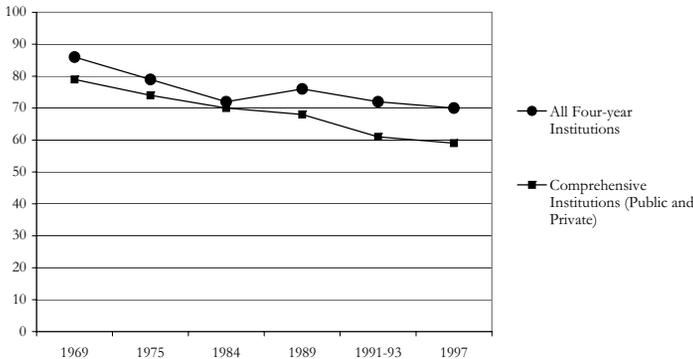
In his study of the American academic profession, Burton R. Clark characterized the institutional expectations of the faculty in comprehensive institutions as “outstanding teaching in the local classroom” and having “strong obligations to students.” (Clark, 1987, p. 126) A review of various reports from the Carnegie Council and the Foundation pub-

TABLE 1
A Summary of Interviews Conducted at Four Institutions

Category of interviewees	Period	
	1989–1994	1999–2004
Administrator	19	12
Dept chair	28	22
P&T chair	8	7
Faculty	42	20
Total interviews	97	61

lished between 1969 and 1997 (see reference section for these reports) reveals a steady and unequivocal commitment to teaching among faculty at comprehensive institutions (See Figure 1). The data also depict faculty belief that success in teaching should be an important source of professional rewards at their institutions. A substantial proportion of the faculty in comprehensive institutions agreed with the statement that teaching effectiveness should be the primary criterion for promotion in 1969, 1975, 1984, 1991–93, and 1997. In clear contrast, more than two-thirds of faculty in research universities disagree that research and publication should be the primary criterion for rewards (see various reports by the Carnegie Council). While the belief in the importance of teaching remains higher among faculty at comprehensive institutions than among faculty at all other four-year institutions, has steadily eroded in recent decades. The percentage of faculty at comprehensive institutions who agreed that teaching effectiveness should be the primary criterion for promotion declines from 86% in 1969 to 59% in 1997.

While faculty at comprehensive institutions still believe that teaching effectiveness is recognized at their institutions, they also believe publications are increasingly essential for faculty work rewards. The Carnegie surveys ask faculty if it is difficult to achieve tenure if one does not publish. As might be expected, faculty in all other four-year institutions are



Source: Carnegie Council on Higher Education, 1969, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1975, 1984, 1989, 1991-93, and 1997

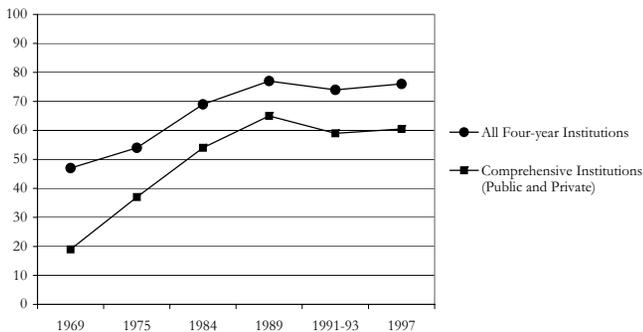
	1969	1975	1984	1989	1991-93	1997
All Four-year Institutions	86	79	72	76	72	70
Comprehensive Institutions (Public and Private)	79	74	70	68	61	59

FIG. 1. "Teaching Effectiveness Should be the Primary Criterion for Promotion" (Percent Agreed).

more likely than faculty in comprehensive institutions to agree that it is difficult to achieve tenure without publications (see Figure 2). At the same time, while the proportion of faculty in all other four-year institutions agreeing on the necessity of publications to achieve tenure increased over time, the proportion of comprehensive faculty agreeing on this point moved upward at a greater rate.

More recent data from the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) of 1992–93 and 1998–99 support the perceived difficulty of achieving tenure without publications among the faculty in comprehensive institutions, but the proportion agreeing with this point only increased modestly by 1998–99. As shown in Figure 3, the importance of teaching as a source of professional reward declined in recent years. In the most recent surveys by the National Center of Educational Statistics, the proportion of faculty agreeing that teaching should be the primary criteria for reward leveled off from 1992–93 to 1998–99.

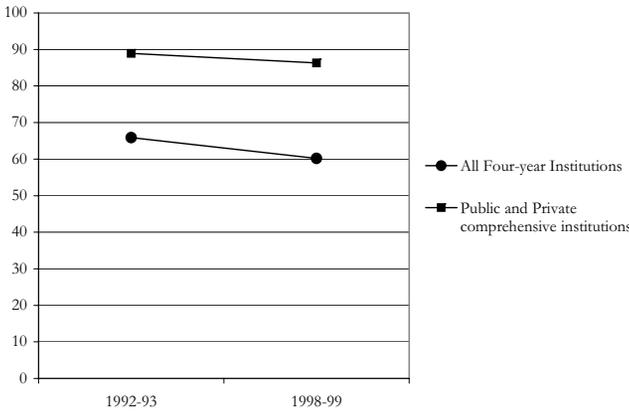
Since faculty members are more likely to agree that tenure cannot be achieved without publications, we might expect to see increased publications. According to the Carnegie data, the percentage of faculty in comprehensive institutions who have published more than 10 journal articles in their careers doubled in the period between 1975 through 1997. The mean number of articles published by faculty in comprehensive institutions increased from three publications in 1984 to seven publica-



Source: Carnegie Council on Higher Education, 1969, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1975, 1984, 1989, 1991-93, and 1997.

	1969	1975	1984	1989	1991-93	1997
All Four-year Institutions	47	54	69	77	74	76
Comprehensive Institutions (Public and Private)	19	37	54	65	59	60.5

FIG. 2. "It is Difficult for a Person to Receive Tenure and Promotion if He/She Does not Publish" (Percent Agreed)



Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, 1992-93, and 1998-99.

	1992-93	1998-99
All Four-year Institutions	65.9	60.2
Public and Private Comprehensive Institutions	88.9	86.3

FIG. 3. “Teaching Should be the Primary Criteria for Promotion” (Percent Agreed).

tions in 1997. Among the faculty in all other four-year institutions, the percentage publishing more than 10 articles also rose substantially from 1984. Although the Carnegie surveys do not examine the quality of these publications (or the extent of peer review), it seems that the pressures for scholarly productivity and research activity increased among faculty in comprehensive institutions in this period.

These findings are consistent with those of a study of three public institutions in California (Queval, 1990). Queval also reported that faculty who began their academic careers after 1980 in California’s comprehensive institutions had more publications than those faculty members who began their careers in the 1960s. Dey, Milem, and Berger (1997) used data from 1972, 1989, and 1992 to show that the number of faculty publications rose in research universities and comprehensive institutions alike but it was the latter that showed the greater rate of change over the twenty year time period.

Research productivity seems to be well rewarded. Fairweather’s study (2005), for example, notes that spending more hours in teaching is negatively related to the increase in faculty salaries among research, doctoral granting, and comprehensive institutions. An earlier study by Fairweather (1994), finds that the negative relationship between teaching

hours and pay was greater at comprehensive institutions than at other four-year institutions. The study concludes that teaching generally remains a negative factor in faculty pay at teaching-oriented institutions particularly in comprehensive institutions. However, the study points out that the relationship between scholarly publishing and pay seems to be weakening over time.

How are publications viewed among comprehensive faculty? Over fifty percent of the comprehensive faculty (higher than those from all other four-year institutions) report that publications used for promotion and tenure at their institution were “just counted, not qualitatively measured” (see *The Condition of the Professoriate: Attitudes and Trends*, 1989 and *The Academic Profession: An International Perspective*, 1993). Comprehensive faculty members’ ambivalence with respect to how institutions judge publications suggests that faculty and comprehensive institutions hold different views on the validation of professional standards and subsequent allocation of rewards. This raises an important question about whether faculty members come to accept their institutions’ meaning of achievement; an acceptance that may be incongruous with the profession’s meaning of achievement. Are the rules ritually certified and practiced within institutions, independently of the deeply shared values of the profession? How are such rules institutionalized within comprehensive colleges and universities? That is the subject of our next section.

Results: Change in the Rule Dynamics at Comprehensive Institutions

How are promotion and tenure rules founded and changed in comprehensive institutions? Much of our answer to this question is derived from institutional and historical analysis of four comprehensive institutions during a period of intense competition and the rising scholarship standards in higher education in general. In the two fieldwork periods (1989–1992 and 1999–2002), we identified patterns of faculty personnel rule founding and changes. These patterns can be seen in the figures 4-a and 4-b and are elaborated in our analysis of interviews of faculty and administrators. Clearly a flurry of rule-related activities occurred during the study period, especially in the 1980s. However, our analysis shows that the patterns associated with rule founding and with rule change are distinct. Each process has its own logic and conditions and each brought forward different actions.

Rule Founding

Up until the late 1970s at each of the four institutions in our study, only a handful of rules and procedures were used to review faculty

performance. These rules were viewed as sufficient for coordination and control of these organizations. Among private comprehensive institutions, the typical rule-making and rule-implementing actors in the early period were presidents, academic deans (or academic vice presidents), and they wielded preeminent authority over personnel decisions including recruitment, tenure, and promotion. Academic departments did not function as organizational units. The faculty role in self-governance of personnel matters was limited. One older faculty member from a urban private comprehensive institution (who also served as the chair of the promotion and tenure committee on more than one occasion), describes how a few rules governing faculty performance were founded and practiced in the 1960s:

In retrospect, there were only a few rules and procedures that evaluate the faculty tenure and promotion activities. The standards that we applied were simple, “good citizenship,” and excellent teaching. Nothing was [formally] codified in the faculty rulebook or handbook but we generally understood that they existed and practiced them [that policies were available in the dean’s office] . . . they were rather paternalistic rules. They were tightly controlled by the dean of the faculty. The dean directly reported to the president on the matters related to faculty performance evaluation.

Gradually, from the late-1970s onwards, in both public and private institutions, more elaborate procedures and new personnel policies unique to each institution were introduced. This expansion of rules can be seen in Figure 4-a. Critical to this process at public institutions was that they

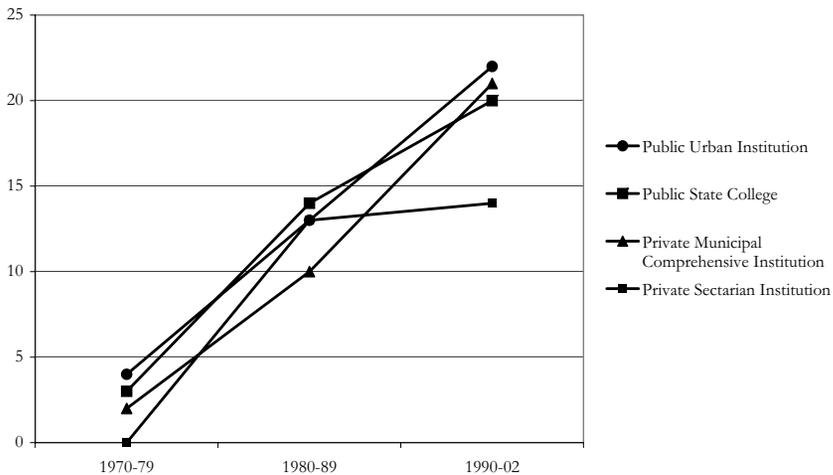


FIG. 4a. Number of Promotion and Tenure Rules and Routines Introduced among Four Comprehensive Institutions, 1970–79, 1980–89, and 1990–2002.

were able to establish their own local governing boards. Private institutions, including sectarian institutions, already had their own trustees and charters. Again during this period, advocates of rule-founding during this time were senior administrative leaders such as presidents and academic deans. However, actors that advocated the creation of faculty personnel rules that were specific to the institution differed from those who advocated adoption of rules used by other colleges or universities.

In contrast to the creation of rules unique to these four institutions, the adoption of rules used by other institutions usually involved a more complex mix of administrators and faculty members. Most commonly, these administrators and faculty members had recently moved (some having been recruited) from nearby research universities or selective liberal arts colleges. Many of the new administrative leaders at all four institutions had established their careers as either faculty or administrators at research universities including Boston University, Brandeis, Emory, and the University of Southern California. At their new comprehensive institutions, these leaders were actively involved in formalizing personnel rules that govern appointment, tenure, and promotion. They were often viewed as “the new guard” and were contrasted with “the old guard” who began their careers at comprehensive institutions. Many of the new guard were also committed to moving their institutions up the status hierarchy. Later in this paper, we will discuss the role of those who were instrumental in modeling new personnel rules after those of more prestigious institutions.

From the beginning of the 1980s, the authority for faculty personnel decision-making was gradually delegated by presidents and senior academic administrators to the faculty. Consequently, as paternalism began to wane, multiple rule-making actors introduced a proliferation of personnel rules. On the whole, the data gathered from our fieldwork at four comprehensive institutions confirm that substantial rule proliferation and rule change occurred from the 1980s onwards.

Patterns of Rule Change

The sources of the new faculty promotion and tenure rules varied in significant ways. One third of the new rules were adoptions; that is, they were not developed internally but instead adopted from the rules of other institutions. Figure 4-b shows the rate of adoption of these rules from other institutions from the periods of 1970–79, 1980–89 to 1999–02. These data are based on examination of faculty governance documents at the four institutions. We traced the frequency of change in rules from these documents and confirmed their adoption through interviews with informants. The adoption rate is measured by the number of rules copied from other universities and colleges divided by the total number of

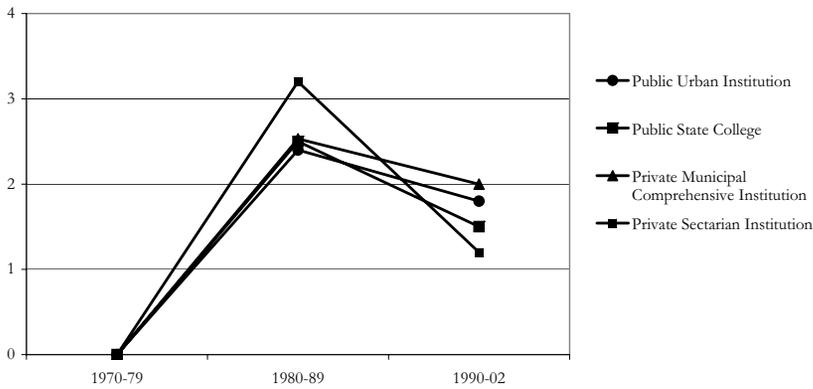


FIG. 4b. Log of Rate of Adoption of Promotion and Tenure Rules and Routines among Four Comprehensive Institutions, 1970–79, 1980–89, 1990–2002.

changes in rules (expressed in natural logarithmic terms). Figure 4-b, shows that, at all four institutions, the rate of adoption of these particular rules dramatically increased in the period between 1969 through 1989 and declined gradually in 1990–2002. The data for Institution 4 (the private sectarian institution) show greater variability and a higher to lower adoption rate from the period of 1979–89 to 1990–2002.

A few examples are notable. Between 1980 and 2002, all four institutions adopted rules that were commonly practiced in research universities and selective liberal arts colleges. One of these adopted rules was the requirement of having external reviewers for tenure and promotion proceedings. More explicit procedures of selecting these reviewers and defining qualifications of these reviewers were also introduced in the governance documents of two institutions. All four institutions added an explicit requirement that publications submitted to the promotion and tenure committee were to be reviewed by the peers and published in recognized journals. Finally, all institutions adopted the rule that the promotion and tenure committee members were to be elected by an appropriate body of the faculty requiring tenure status.

We found that all four comprehensive institutions had shifted their emphasis for assessing their candidates for tenure and promotion from teaching to research and publications and this shift was particularly notable from 1980 onwards. In interviews, faculty linked the shift to the adoption of rules used at other institutions that were considered more

prestigious than their own. An experienced promotion and tenure committee chair characterized the change in the faculty personnel standards in the 1980s as such:

Clearly, there has been a dramatic shift away from teaching, which used to count for about 70–80 percent in promotion and tenure decisions. We became much more concerned with publications in the last ten years. It was a tumultuous change. Probably the trends will persist.

At the follow-up interviews in the 1999–2002 period, this promotion and tenure committee chair stated that the enumeration of publications “has become an eventful ritual for the committee,” while “quality of teaching and teaching loads are discussed as a less important subject matter.” Several other committee chairs echoed this perspective. A chair from another institution made a similar remark about the rising credential requirements particularly for publications—but suggested that the shift in standards has greatly altered the faculty culture of the institution:

A decade ago [before 1990], one could easily get tenure and promotion on the basis of either being an excellent teacher or giving excellent service. But not any more. . . .

Now the dedications to teaching and service are secondary. . . . That is remarkable and leaves a profound shift in the academic life here.

It used to be that team-teaching and inter-departmental efforts in courses were encouraged and valued. We now worry more about new courses in hot topics in disciplines.

With regard to the specific changes in academic culture, one chair elaborated that the criteria for promotion in the later period of the study were: “sustained scholarship, service and teaching over a period of time . . . What they [current promotion and tenure committee members] now are looking for is both substantial and sustained scholarship. The argument is compelling.” In all four institutions, chairs of the promotion and tenure committees stated that these new standards and procedures were adopted at various times between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s. The outcomes of applications for tenure and promotion reviewed at these four institutions in the periods 1989 to 1992 and 1999 to 2002 are summarized in tables 2-a and 2-b.

As shown, almost all applicants for tenure did achieve tenure, although, compared to the early period, the success rate declined somewhat in the later period. In contrast, only fewer than half of the candidates for promotion were granted promotion. This pattern persisted from 1989–92 through to 1999–2002. Although we were not able to obtain data on tenure-track faculty that decided to not participate in tenure review, there is evidence that each year at least some decided to leave the

TABLE 2-A

A Summary of Tenure Cases Evaluated at Four Comprehensive Institutions, 1989–1992 and 1999–2002.

Institutional type	1989–92		1999–2002	
	Number applied	Number tenured	Number applied	Number tenured
Private municipal	15	12	14	12
Public urban	6 (2)*	6 (2)*	6 (1)*	5 (1)*
Private sectarian college	3	3	6	4
Public state college	6	6	8	5

NOTE: ()* Indicates those who moved from regional research universities or selective liberal arts colleges as associate professors (without tenure status) and subsequently granted tenure at comprehensive institutions at the associate level. All other cases shown in Table 2-a are reviewed at the assistant level and tenured with the associate professor rank.

SOURCE: Compiled from four comprehensive institutions in the New England region.

TABLE 2-B

A Summary of Promotion Cases Evaluated at Four Comprehensive Institutions in 1989–1992 and 1999–2002.

Institutional type	1989–1992		1999–2002	
	Number applied	Number tenured	Number applied	Number tenured
Private municipal	26 (3)**	12 (3)**	22 (4)**	10 (4)**
Public urban university	13 (2)**	8 (2)**	16 (4)**	4 (4)**
Private sectarian college	10 (2)**	6 (2)**	11	6
Public state college	12 (2)**	7 (2)**	10	3

NOTE: ()** Includes those who moved from regional research universities or selective liberal arts colleges as associate professors and subsequently promoted to full professors at comprehensive institutions. During the time period, no individual faculty member in these institutions was promoted from assistant to full professor rank.

SOURCES: Compiled from four comprehensive institutions in the New England region.

institution before the review process would have started. The reasons for their departures are not always clear. The figures shown in the tenure category, therefore, may represent only those applicants who were confident about the review outcome and those who were willing to follow the process. Table 2-a and Table 2-b also suggest that over time there are two subtle but different requirements at work: one for tenure and another for promotion practices.

As pressures for professionalization increased, institutions responded by recruiting faculty from more elite institutions into general faculty and academic administration positions. This often included ambitious presidents (who often had moved from near-by research universities), aspiring senior administrators (who were often recruited from research universities by new presidents), and recently tenured faculty members (who held doctorates from leading research universities). Often these actors had recently moved from one of the very rival institutions from which these comprehensive institutions sought to imitate. Presidents and other senior administrators spearheaded change, acting as “strivers” (Brint, Riddle, & Hanneman, 2006) that were strongly interested in moving their institution up the status hierarchy. It is notable faculty also played a leading role in leading change.

A chair of the promotion and tenure committee from a large private urban university described how its standards changed mainly because a new president’s initiatives: the new president came from a regional research university (where he was vice president) and helped adopt personnel policies from that university.

Fifteen years ago, one could get tenure on the basis of being either an excellent teacher or being excellent in service for the college. . . . The president changed that. He was instrumental in adopting new personnel policies from Boston University. New criteria from tenure and promotion as they are in Boston University are “sustained scholarship” with teaching and service, in that order. Even in some cases, “classes of journals” and articles are given different weights. It is unlikely that we will go back to the old criteria.

Until the President came here we lived with very informal rules for promotion and tenure. Now much of the language used in our faculty personnel manual reflects the language of that research university’s [where the president came from] faculty handbook.

Several years after, the same actor concluded that adopted rules and routines were widely accepted and practiced in personnel reviews.

The rules adopted from that research university are now in place. Personnel committee chairs are now abundantly clear about what criteria should be used and how should these be evaluated . . . that does not mean we became another Boston University . . .

Rules and standards practiced by regional research universities became the target of imitation. The chair of a mathematics program described how increased pressures to imitate rival research universities in the region became unavoidable:

It was necessary to begin to play by the same rules as Boston University and Northeastern University. We cannot promote and raise salaries for [those] who would not be qualified at Boston and Northeastern.

The same chair stated such an irony of the contagion process:

As we hire better people and [promote] them, I can now see us losing some good people to Boston University, Northeastern or Tufts University which would never have happened [to us] five or ten years ago.

Near-by research universities are not the only source of rules. At a private urban comprehensive institution, a senior member of the promotion and tenure committee who once taught mathematics at a selective liberal arts college talked about how the standards for tenure and promotion used by that college had spread among comprehensive colleges and universities in the region.

It is a [powerful] “tradition” in Connecticut. . . . Bridgeport, Central Connecticut State College, Fairfield all followed Trinity’s practices “sustained scholarship is an important phrase.”

This chair was also quick to allude to his own important role in adopting rules from Trinity College while he was on his (comprehensive) institution’s promotion and tenure committee.

Adoption of more elaborately organized promotion and tenure rituals followed the adoption of rules from other successful institutions. In the early period, these institutions had a simpler and more informal ritual of personnel review where by administrative officials (academic deans or academic vice presidents) had more influence over the processes and outcomes than faculty peers. By the mid-1980s, as these institutions had gradually moved away from the bureaucratic unitary model of governance, their routines became far more decentralized, more interactive, and more complex. Faculty peers took on increasingly influential roles in the new decision processes. By the early 1990s, the inclusion of external expert peer reviewers (a common practice at research universities and selective liberal arts colleges) became a part of review rituals.

As one promotion and tenure chair, who had started the expert review as part of the promotion and tenure procedures a few years prior to being interviewed, remarked:

We [promotion and tenure Committee members] are convinced that external expert evaluations [are] very important [to us], though most comments from prominent experts will not be useful for the committee’s final deliberation.

These routines nevertheless occupy an important part of the [organizational] life of the university. We intend to stick with these routines, as they serve an important role for our institutional position in relation to others outside.

In many ways, these processes send out an important message about our institution.

Finally, there were other mechanisms for diffusion. Professional associations, accrediting agencies, and even the state became vehicles for promoting the adoption of normative rules relating to organizational standards. Requirements placed by professional associations, such as regional accrediting nursing groups and the national business school accrediting association, led aspiring comprehensive institutions to adopt practices and standards from other successful institutions, often research universities. In seeking the professional business school accreditation, for example, one of the business school deans described the prospect for increased scholarship and research requirements had possible consequences for the school:

It seems clear that the association {the accrediting professional organization} require those who are teaching graduate MBA and MPA courses to be active in research and national professional organizations. The requirements will invite more active researchers with advanced degrees and training. That is good thing for us . . . but may create almost two-track faculty population . . . teaching track and research track. My faculty colleagues are ready for this transformation . . . looming in the near future.

The promulgation of state master plans' higher academic credential requirements became a means for encouraging state colleges and universities to adopt new rules.

Decoupling tenure from promotion practices. As credential requirements rose and competition heightened, the rules for evaluating promotion were increasingly viewed as distinct from those used for tenure. At the four institutions that participated in our study, we noted that two disparate practices were at work, though these seemed to proceed in a parallel form (see Table 2-a and Table 2-b). Although a substantial fraction of the applicants for tenure were awarded tenure, the outcomes of applications for promotion were not so uniform. In fact, the data shown in Table 2-b suggest almost a half of the applicants for promotion were denied promotion over the periods of 1989–1992 and 1999–2004.

Several promotion and tenure chairs told us of expectations and rules for tenure that differed from those for promotion. One chair characterized tenure evaluations as:

. . . largely based on the litany of “cut and dried” requirements . . . usually, four refereed articles in “second level journals” plus a half-dozen paper presentations. These four or more articles should represent a “critical mass” of work in “the concentrated substantive area.” . . . If someone published in “first-rank journals,” he or she will be indeed [greatly] respected.

Comparing tenure requirements with promotion evaluations, he continued:

We seek *something more* than four (4) refereed articles in “second level journals” [for promotion]. There are, indeed, “other things” anticipated. For [promotion], they are important but somewhat intractable. These other things are also valued by others outside of the committee. They [these other things] are often subject to a few *interpretations*.

Another chair from a public comprehensive university characterized the promotion evaluation system as having ritual significance to the institutions. That it validates the importance of the institution:

Apparently [we] are known as a place where it is easy to get tenure. [But] promotion is “hotly fought over,” because it relates to the core belief of the whole university. [Therefore], it is subject to more deliberate influences [from many senior members in the university].

To one of the senior faculty members who served on a promotion and tenure committee at a sectarian comprehensive institution for many years, the promotion process was the recognition of “a good village elder who would be loyal and willing to be involved in village affairs.”

From these statements, it seems that the expectations for the two forms of faculty evaluation were quite different. Tenure evaluations relied more on “cut and dried” rules, whereas promotions were subject to elaborate “interpretations” and complex negotiations between the faculty committee and other social actors in the organization over the issue of how the basic values are understood, namely the deans, the provosts, and possibly the presidents. The two processes were distinct in identifying actors who were central in decision-making. Although the tenure process seemed to be dominated largely by faculty peers—at least up to the level of the dean’s review—, promotion-related activities were open to more fluid participation throughout the process by deans, provosts, and presidents. The outcomes of recent tenure processes were cynically characterized by the faculty as being the product of the new, young members of the faculty and “the rising culture of research over teaching.” The outcomes of promotion, on the other hand, faced complaints such as “rewarding loyal servants to the college” or “exercising rules of cronyism.”

To summarize, for comprehensive institutions, tenure rules became subject to isomorphic change. Changes were conditioned by sanctioning of the adoption of tenure practices from other more successful institutions, such as regional research universities and selective liberal arts colleges. Conversely, promotion evaluations, although consistent with the emphasis on the professionalization of scholarship and research, were more oriented toward emphasizing cultural identities arising from processes of socially-defined relationships and roles. The expressions

used to describe standards for promotion tended to support locally-recognized values and paternalism such as “dedication to teaching,” “continuing service to the institution,” “compatible collegueship,” and “model team-player.”

Symbolic emphasis on specialization. Although specialty requirements were explicitly stated in recruitment standards, an emphasis on specialization became more implicit in promotion and tenure processes. In part, the emphasis on specialty was a way of clarifying “the institutional definition of scholarship.” For comprehensive institutions, “the definition of scholarship” often means “research in the specialty area” that enhances “regional or national visibility.” More aspiring leaders in comprehensive institutions stressed specialty areas as way of advancing their competitive position.

The chair for one promotion and tenure committee emphasized both “scholarly products” and “public products.” Scholarly products include articles, books, and creative performances, whereas public products are grants received, pedagogical papers presented, and specialized workshops given in the substantive areas. The chair reiterated:

For a person to receive a promotion to the full professor level, one needs something “fairly special” [in terms of] the substantive area of emphasis . . . and both scholarly and public products.

It is not about the quantity, but it is about how specialized in the field . . .

For some, who are not specialized, will retire as associate professors. [The university sometimes grants tenure and promotion to associate at the last minute, just before retirement.]

Academic departments that aspire to be nationally-known tended to seek narrower niches by stressing specialty areas and expertise. It seems that an emphasis on a narrow niche follows in tandem with an emphasis on stronger credential requirements. Examples of such specializations and associated credential requirements at the four institutions include:

An engineering department’s emphasis on the program in work environment, organized around industrial hygiene problems with a focus on research in alternative forms of chemical uses

A nursing department’s emphasis on nursing in trauma patient care with extensive therapeutic and clinical training of faculty

A management program’s emphasis on highly specialized risk management research industrial insurance requiring advanced degrees among the faculty in the program

In promotion and tenure reviews at these nationally-aspiring programs, candidates who were viewed as lacking the specialty area were

subject to negative evaluations. For example, a woman seeking tenure and promotion in marketing in the management school was denied her promotion partly because her background was in the field of home economics and her published articles were viewed as demonstrating limited specialty emphasis. A male faculty member faced the prospect of not receiving tenure because of his limited specialty emphasis in biology. He was in the science curriculum and interested in rainforest problems but he was neither a biologist nor a curriculum specialist. That he had published only general and descriptive papers about the problems of rainforests did not place him in an advantageous position.

In the English department of a private urban university, a woman faculty member who published anthologies of English novels was thought of as a good generalist in the literature but denied tenure. Given the increasingly specialized nature of the humanities disciplines and the contentious world of English literature, it was not too surprising to learn that her work was not recognized. Her specialty area was viewed as an area with limited "need factors," as the president finally labeled this case. We found no evidence that these specialties were linked to student needs or to ways of channeling programs in response to student demand, which leads us to believe that promotion of specialty areas may be a symbolic response to increased competition and rising pressures for credential requirements.

Discussion

The objective of this paper is to develop organizational explanations of how rules and routines for rewarding faculty at multipurpose institutions became institutionalized in an intensely competitive and rationalizing environment. Two general but related themes emerge from our analysis. The first theme is that rule-founding and rule-change in organizations constitute essential parts of organizational learning. This theme stems from the long-established theory that formal organizations depend on their external environments for resources to survive. Among many aspects of environments, neo-institutional theory identifies legitimacy as one of the most vital resources of organizations. The second related point is that as learning becomes essential to an organization, rule-founding and routine-generating behavior leads to structural inconsistencies in strongly institutionalized organizations. Several implications may be drawn from these two general themes.

Learning from the Experience of Others

From our study, we conclude that these institutions' need for increased legitimacy during a period of rising pressure for higher stan-

dards led them to adopt prevailing norms from other organizations. The incorporation of normative rules and associated rituals from more prestigious and powerful organizations—research universities and selective liberal arts colleges—into the formal structure of comprehensive institutions suggests learning from the experience of others. Learning from others helped ensure legitimacy and confidence in these universities and colleges.

In his study of religious institutions, Robert Wuthnow (1987:120) concluded that the meaningfulness of imitating the organizational rituals of others is likely to be greater in situations where more uncertainty exists in the larger symbolic environment. Arguably, the organizational environment of colleges and universities may differ from that of religious institutions. Nevertheless, the idea of external reviewers evaluating faculty tenure and promotion evokes deeper meaning by acknowledging that normatively ambiguous institutions have adopted rigorous review processes in which expert peers might validate the quality of scholarship and professionalism of candidates.

As we showed in excerpts of our interviews, it is an array of actors, including expert faculty members and senior administrators who had built their careers from research universities and selective liberal arts colleges who then become mechanisms for the diffusion of rules and routines at their new institutions. It was also shown that the organizational adoption processes often included the hiring of senior faculty who were experienced in promotion and tenure routines at other more prestigious institutions. However, our analysis suggests that there is a price of learning from the successful experience of others. The process of adoption of rules and routines from others leaves the possibility for some serious adverse effects in furthering organizational learning and increasing competency. Here are two examples of such effects.

Organizational learning can lead to “competency traps” or “lock-in” situations (Levitt & March, 1988; March, 1994). Organizational learning produces an increasing propensity to repeat a set of adopted rules and routines over time, since these are familiar and seem to ensure stability. Levitt and March (1988), for example, point out in their article that under certain conditions these rules and routines may gradually become a source of inertia and they may inhibit further adaptability for organizations. Taking the arguments advanced by March and his associates together, it is plausible that some comprehensive institutions, by being absorbed with imitation of norms of research universities and liberal arts colleges, may reduce organizational flexibility. Excessive specialization and ambitious standards for scholarship and research may invite the risks associated with “competency traps” for some compre-

hensive institutions and therefore may generate a form of inertia that limits their ability to experiment and innovate in potentially desirable ways. Hence, for comprehensive institutions, any radical reorientation in strategy in order to accommodate change in the academic labor market may be seriously curtailed.

The second potential adverse effect is that imitating institutions may eventually reach the limit of usefulness of these rules and routines but, because of the outcomes associated with these rules, may find it difficult to shift to a new set of rules. An example of this—the case of promotion and tenure in one mathematics department—was discussed in the previous section. The imitating institution found that the adopted rules were no longer the legitimate effective means to govern personnel practices. However, given the nature of faculty appointments, and particularly the longevity of such appointments, change may be difficult for these institutions. Similarly imitating institutions, being more vulnerable to the need to reflect the norms of more prestigious institutions, may find it difficult to change rule structures when those changes are contrary to prevailing norms.

Comprehensive institutions were created with the idea of providing educational opportunities to those with specific needs. As we show, forces other than educational needs drive the shape of these institutions, including their core function: teaching, learning and service. Research commitment is known to drive institutional costs that are not always offset by additional research funding. Likely long-term consequences of the steady shift toward rewarding research productivity may well displace the basic missions of these institutions. Our study shows that the spread of governmental interventions through state and federal legislations and enactment of rules by accreditation agencies strongly influenced rules in these comprehensive institutions. As Zhou's study (1993) of Stanford University supports this finding by concluding that the pattern of rule founding and rule change over time is not attributable to structural factors such as size and complexity of the institution. This sort of influence can be seen elsewhere in higher education (Kerr, 1991) and other sectors (Dobbin et al., 1998). Since states and agencies are a key source of the contradictory demands placed upon institutions like comprehensive colleges and universities, it should be incumbent upon such sources to consider their impact upon institutions.

Institutionalization of Organizational Rules and Structural Inconsistencies

Much of the literature in the tradition of the neo-institutional theory of organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1978;

Zucker, 1987) concludes that practices of employment and work rewards (or other forms of institutionalized rules) are taken for granted as appropriate and necessary features of formal organizations. If organizational success depends on isomorphism within institutionalized rules, the technical activities that demand efficiency can conflict with those cultural and ceremonial aspects of organizational rules that demand identity and commitment to certain values. The cultural and ceremonial aspects of organizational rules are transmitted by different parts of the environment. In response to these conflicts, organizations can create structural inconsistencies (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 340–341). The choice between the logic of efficiency and the desire to increase commitment to the collective culture and norms of the profession has resulted in variability of work rewards through the decoupling of the routines of tenure from those of promotion (Youn, 1992). Our findings concur with Queval's (1990) findings in regard to Californian state colleges wherein the routines of evaluating tenure continue to focus on merit-oriented norms that are demanded by the increasingly rationalized environment, while those of promotion are buttressed by rules that are more particularistic and unique to each institution. The criteria for promotions include a measure of commitment and loyalty to the organization as well as "institution-specific" knowledge and skills. It seems that such decoupling becomes an argument for validating organizational identity and increasing the likelihood of organizational survival in competitive environments.

Through the tenure and promotion evaluation system, faculty receive high rewards, including the prospect of lifelong income. After a protracted period of probation, they are encouraged to take individual responsibility and conscientiously teach and conduct research. In return, faculty members are subject to less continued monitoring than non-tenured employees. In the end, the institutional mechanism of decoupling tenure from promotion helps increase the value of the "immanent benefits" (Hechter, 1987, p. 195) for being employed at the institution. These benefits increasingly obligate members to the organization while exacting high exit costs on members. It becomes apparent that two different categories of rules are at work. The logic of tenure rules may be not easily reconcilable with the logic of promotion rules.

The practices of tenure and promotion are complexly interwoven organizational routines. Much of the question about legitimacy that leads to stability and change in organizations is embedded in these practices. We argue that, for comprehensive colleges and universities, the routines of rewarding organizational personnel through tenure and promotion are something more than compensation for achieving technical efficiency for the organization. These organizational routines represent characteris-

tics of an organizational form that are shaped in direct response to environmental conditions. As Zucker (1987) argues, under certain conditions, adoption of rules is spurred by the need for symbolic compliance to external environments. Changes in rules and routines therefore are a key source of explanation of organizational change in comprehensive institutions. From comprehensive institutions' perspective, these changes signal to the environment that the standards for rewarding faculty conform to appropriate professional norms and credential requirements (Collins, 1979). Hence, to leaders at comprehensive institutions, these rituals continue to help assure the legitimacy of institutions that had previously been in question.

In many respects, comprehensive institutions are quite successful in adapting to their complex environment by learning from successful institutions while maintaining their own cultures and identities. Comprehensive colleges and universities are faced with more aggressive selective liberal arts colleges and research universities, their relatively abundant resources, and their advantageous position for recruiting and promoting stronger faculty. In this competitive environment, comprehensive institutions' founding and proliferation of organizational rules may allow them to make claims about the ways they are or ought to be; organizational rules may ultimately serve the purpose of harnessing an important organizational identity.

Notes

¹In its *Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (1987, 1994, and 2005), the Carnegie Foundation defines comprehensive colleges and universities as those offering a full-range of baccalaureate programs and graduate programs through to the master's degree. It also states that institutions that award 40 or more master's degrees annually in three or more disciplines are categorized as Type I. All other institutions are categorized as Type II. In the recent report (2005), the Foundation re-named these institutions as Master's Colleges and Universities I and II.

²See the introductory essay by Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1991) that explicates differences between the old and new institutional theories in organizational analysis.

³The late David Riesman suggested that we use this term. We are grateful for his suggestion.

⁴The term, "fear of falling" was used by Barbara Ehrenreich (1989) to describe the insecurities of the middle class Americans felt in the face of the blight of possible downward social mobility. The idea seems appropriate for describing anxiety about their career prospects faced with the untenured faculty at comprehensive institutions who are faced with possible downward mobility.

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