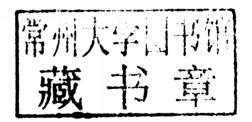


### ACCOUNTABILITY, PRAGMATIC AIMS, AND THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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# ACCOUNTABILITY, PRAGMATIC AIMS, AND THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Accountability, Pragmatic Aims, and the American University frames the debates on teaching and learning accountability in Higher Education. By examining significant historic periods in Higher Education, Martínez-Alemán explores the present apprehension about accountability in today's colleges and universities. Throughout the book's chapters, Martínez-Alemán uses the Pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey to enlighten current understandings of professional freedoms and she also discusses democratic imperatives in light of accountability obligations: the teaching of undergraduates, data and empirical research on college teaching and learning, and the institutional policies for graduate student and faculty teaching development. This book reveals the tensions between the democratic character of the university—qualities that may seem irreconcilable with accountability metrics—and the corporate or managerial economies of modern American universities. Higher Education faculty, administrators, public policy makers, and students enrolled in Higher Education Masters and PhD programs will find that this book informs their practice and will serve to contribute to the debates on accountability for years to come.

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For MJ

### **PREFACE**

We gain understanding of our professional values through many means. In the chapters that follow, I make use of the Pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey to enlighten our current understanding of our conceptions of our professional freedoms in the university and to 21st-century calls for university and faculty accountability. Like John Dewey, I seek to understand the historical and cultural foundations of our American conceptions in order to determine their correspondence to the context of the present-day. In these pages I pursue a Pragmatic inquiry of our ideas and beliefs about authority and autonomy in the university so that we can better understand our contemporary anxieties about accountability. My goal is not to be nostalgic about the university's defining past, the transformative period in which the American faculty and university craft their core identity. Instead, by examining significant experiences of the past I seek to determine whether our present apprehension about accountability is warranted or simply incongruous with our 21st-century conditions. As Dewey might say, perhaps because our conceptions of university authority and faculty autonomy were intended for very different conditions, they must evolve and reconstitute. We'll see.

In the chapters that follow, I examine how accountability directives motivated by increasing corporatization of the research university and its managerial practices stands to deter higher education from enacting and fulfilling its democratic commitments. I make no distinction between the private and public research universities if only because each has a public mission, albeit with degrees of difference. My focus is on the "research university," and though I will frequently refer to it as simply "the university," I imply the Research I universities in the 1994 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. In this text I argue that, although accountability mandates are not inherently

undemocratic, contemporary challenges to professorial autonomy and the rise of standardization in instruction and knowledge production are guided by authoritative forces that risk diluting the democratic purposes of the university by restricting faculty autonomy—or in John Dewey's language, individual freedom. It is also important to note that by restricting faculty autonomy through the imposition of pedagogical standards and learning norms, we also risk narrowing students' intellectual autonomy and, consequently, individuality.

The rise of the corporatized university has brought managerial practices to American higher education and has imposed them on teaching, a professional responsibility traditionally controlled by faculty. The academic profession, historically autonomous and motivated by the privilege of academic freedom, has assumed teaching a professional responsibility largely vocational in character. With the rise of corporate practices in the university, America's faculty has been challenged to provide evidence of student learning and effective teaching—each a presumed absolute proxy for the other. In sum, faculty has been asked to account for its teaching of undergraduates relative to institutional benchmarks and other metrics of standardization that ignore such critical dimensions as the relational variability of teaching and learning and the intellectual and pedagogical freedom of the faculty. The consequence, of course, is the undemocratic development and intensification of a state of conflicting interests—those of administrators and managers set counter to those of the faculty.

Throughout these pages I examine the tensions between the democratic character of the university—qualities that may, at times, seem irreconcilable with accountability metrics—and the corporate or managerial economies of modern American universities. To set the stage for the Pragmatic assessment of accountability in the 21st-century's university, I first examine the university's emergence and transformation (1870-1944) in Chapter 2. I discuss this formative period in light of American liberal-democratic attitude and posture that has helped craft the university's place in society and informed its evolution. Like all institutions, the American university is not socially isolated; in fact, social, political, religious, technological, and economic forces have always inspired, shaped, and affected the university. The years of the late-19th and early 20th centuries were transformative for the American university because of these forces. In this chapter I seek less to present a historical account of the emergence and transformation of the university and more a view of the formation and development of the university's mission that will enable us to understand the university's relationship with accountability today. In Chapter 3, I explore philosophical origins of the imperatives of the academic profession, creative inquiry, and teaching. The history of the academic profession and its essential vocational character is one that dates back to Western antiquity. As intellectual guide and moral role model, ancient faculty was charged with the education of the young and the communication and transmission of culture. In the university's transformative era, university faculty identity was set by Pragmatic views of

scientific inquiry and its value to American society. It is in this period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the modern university faculty's identity and its conceptualization of professional autonomy, free inquiry, and communication take shape. In Chapter 4, I consider the rise of managerialism in the American university, its objectives and manifestations. How the current demands for accountability challenge the vocational nature and character of the faculty provides a view of how accountability mandates wear away the profession's autonomy and creative expressions. Chapter 5 examines the rise of managerialism and the ideology of efficiency and its intrusion into the culture and practices of the university. Finally, I discuss teaching accountability as a legacy of the Transformative Era, and as the application of managerialism on the vocational function of the faculty. Lastly, I conclude this text with some Pragmatic conclusions and forecasting about the faculty, the university in the 21st century. I return to the discussion of the mission of the university in American society, a mission with democratic aims.

This book is but one outcome of time spent dedicated to understanding the work of American Pragmatic philosopher John Dewey and his relevance to the work of higher-education scholars and practitioners. Though scholars and researchers of primary and secondary education have interpreted (and misinterpreted) Dewey's educational treatises for many years, the same can not be said of higher-education researchers and scholars. This may be due in part to the fact that Dewey's focus on education was largely on primary and secondary schooling and very rarely did he specifically turn his attention to postsecondary education. And yet, Dewey lived his lengthy and prolific professional life within the university and was a key figure in the shaping of the modern university and the academic profession. John Dewey was a key member of a defining generation of secular American faculty inspired and animated by the post-Darwin acceleration of science. More importantly, Dewey's Pragmatic philosophy is a primary force that shaped the university and the academic profession in its transformative era. With this book, I hope to broaden and deepen the conversation among scholars and researchers of higher education to include a philosophical examination of postsecondary experiences in the tradition of Dewey. It was Dewey's view that the true role of philosophy was to appraise social values and their related practices. It is with this view in mind that this book was conceived.

What Pragmatism and especially Dewey's Pragmatism can bring to our understanding of American higher education has been central to my conceptual scholarship and empirical research on how American higher education is experienced. This work began during my doctoral education many years ago when I was first introduced to Dewey's scholarship by the late Professor Philip Eddy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. My colleagues at Grinnell College and Boston College have enriched my view of the purposes of higher education, the nature of teaching and learning, and the character of the academic profession in America. I am thankful to each of them. In many ways, this book

was made possible by Estela Mara Bensimon at the University of Southern California who has long championed my philosophical pursuits and, in doing so, has made this work that much more gratifying.

The reader should know that I come to this topic because I have faith in liberal democracy, unashamedly support Pragmatic liberal democracy, and have come to understand the American university as a vehicle for liberal-democratic growth. It stands to reason, then, that I would seek to bring John Dewey's philosophy to a consideration of the American university. Though primary and secondary educators have adopted Dewey's thinking on curriculum and instruction in countless ways since the early 20th century, scholars of higher education rarely attend to Dewey's bearing on the development and evolution of the American university but really should. What's more, Pragmatism, especially John Dewey's iteration, resonates with my experience and cultural sympathies. Immigration, Cuban exile, cultural assimilation and resistance constitute me. Pragmatism's comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity, its reconciliation of dualisms and binaries, make sense to me. Dewey's Pragmatic emphasis on sociality, the aesthetic, and the importance of the affective in human interaction and his categorical emphasis on the value of relationships in the quest for living better lives ring truthful to me. His optimism, and confidence, and trust in human creativity suit me very well. Gregory Fernando Pappas (1998) would suggest that this makes perfect sense given that Pragmatism has a "Latino character," that Pragmatism is "a philosophy that affirms and reflects values that are predominant and are cherished" by Latinos (p. 94). Perhaps that's what draws me to it. Ultimately, this book is about reclaiming the spirit of Pragmatism and Pragmatic inquiry for American higher education.

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## 1

### INTRODUCTION

The modern university is in every respect, save its legal management, a public institution with public responsibilities ...

(John Dewey, President, American Association of University Professors, New York Times, October 11, 1915)

Early in this century American higher education has experienced increased demands for accountability from citizens and government fueled in part by political distrust. Accountability mandates have been issued due to consumer concerns about the increasing price tag of higher education and by a broader, national inclination to demand from educational institutions an empirical accounting of their functions. In primary and secondary education, this trend is exemplified by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), a federal provision that requires states to create a system of K-12 teaching and learning assessments. In American higher education, an institutionally diverse and reasonably autonomous system, these calls for accountability have come from state governments, foundations, and the general public. Accountability initiatives focused on undergraduate teaching and learning include the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Boyer Commission's "Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities," the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's "2010 Measuring Up: State by State Report," the Pew Charitable Trust's "National Survey of Student Engagement," and "value-added" regional accreditation criteria and assessment measures enacted by state governments. Despite its lack of direct oversight and authority over higher education, the federal government and recent presidential administrations have also made attempts to put forward accountability directives. For example, George W. Bush's administration assembled its Spellings Commission convened to directly address accountability in higher education. The Commission was charged with developing a national plan to improve higher education, a strategy that would include standards for teaching and accountability systems for instructional quality. The commission issued its report noting that there is "a remarkable lack and absence of accountability mechanisms to ensure that colleges succeed in educating students" (Spellings Commission: A Test of Leadership Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, 2006, p. vii), inferring that American colleges and universities do not monitor their own functions and professional commitments. A passing view of accountability mandates in the states would suggest otherwise, however.

"The Complete College Tennessee Act, 2010," "Minnesota Measures," and Louisiana's LA GRAD Act, 2010 are but three of many, many state-accountability initiatives that impose accountability standards on public universities, some focusing on learning outcomes and accreditation. At the Federal level, the National Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) was reformed in December 2009 and, a year prior, the National Committee on Accountability in Higher Education published their report, "Accountability for Better Results: A National Imperative for Higher Education." Private philanthropies have also gotten into the accountability game. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the Lumina Foundation for Education support "Complete College America."

As a social organization charged with democratic purposes and obligations, higher education has served to ensure the continuation and evolution of democratic society in the United States. At present, however, accountability mandates appear to threaten the democratic disposition of higher learning, a dangerous proposition in any era but especially so now given current demographic, technological, and professional challenges. The case that I will make in the following pages rests on the Pragmatic conviction that social institutions in a liberal-democratic society such as ours are rightly charged with defending and enabling a range of democratic imperatives. Thus, central to their mission whether they are schools, government agencies or universities is the imperative to contribute to the liberal-democratic development and advancement of individuals and the greater society in which they live.

As institutions serving liberal-democratic aims, American research universities are implicitly charged with the responsibility to provide opportunities for individual development that will further democratic growth. The university does this by guarding against intellectual standardization and illiberal compliance. Essentially and distinctively democratic in nature (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997), the American research university has served the common good by operating as an engine for the advancement of knowledge, reasonably unencumbered knowledge that has fueled social growth and economic development. The university

has also been charged with the individuation of knowledge, that is, the reproduction of knowledge by teaching students. Knowledge and its applications economic, social, and individual development—are the "products" the university consigns American society. Arguably, then, the so-called "business" of the American university is knowledge production and reproduction.

Performing autonomously has allowed the American research university to provide democratic society with valuable research for social and economic gains; it has created informed citizens and knowledgeable workers, and delivered expertise and leadership across a broad national landscape. To effectively produce knowledge through research and reproduce knowledge through teaching serves these democratic aims. To do so, however, the American university has had to occupy a privileged social location whereby its autonomy from autocratic rule has assured these primary democratic functions. But as Altbach (2001) notes, knowledge production is a creative enterprise whose consumption is distinctive and, furthermore, it is this distinctiveness that can be inhibited by weakening institutional and professorial autonomy. Institutional autonomy, though never categorical and always relative, is meant to preserve the university's production of useful research and knowledge that contribute to democratic life. Protections such as academic freedom safeguard the faculty's sovereign claims to determine pedagogical values, set research agenda and curricula, for example. Institutional and professorial autonomy in these and other activities has ensured that the university's contributions to society are democratically functional and not expressions of tyrannical consent or the will of an aristocratic few.

Arguably, then, accountability policies and practices in the American university are quarrels over liberal democracy—its ethics and metaphysics. Any critique of accountability policy and practices must assess the extent to which policy and practice advances or limits intellectual freedom in its varied expressions (teaching, learning, research), and enables the institution to perform these liberal-democratic functions. These functions include the advancement of culture and knowledge, the individuation of students, and sustaining faculty's imagination. Can the American research university meet the demands of accountability policies as well as deliver its liberal-democratic responsibilities? For example, are the "managerial imperatives" of compliance and standardization that drive accountability mandates so undemocratic or illiberal that the university will fail to meet its obligations? Are the democratic imperatives of the university lost to these "managerial imperatives" (Lazerson, 2010)?

To examine accountability in the American university today, I look to the university's "Transformation Era" in the years between 1870 and 1944 (Cohen & Kisker, 2010), a defining period for the university today. It is in the post-Civil War period that the American university responds to and is shaped by the evolution of liberalism in the context of democratic society. It is during these decades that the university's liberal-democratic intentions are rooted, purposes and aims that were tested then as well as today. It is in this dynamic period in

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American history that the modern American university originates and in which significant social, political, and economic influences inspire and have bearing on its composition and on the professionalization of the American faculty.

In this book, I invoke Dewey to better understand the challenges brought to the university by 21st-century accountability policies and practices and their effects on the university's liberal-democratic imperatives. Born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont, and educated in the early days of Johns Hopkins, American pragmatist John Dewey is both a product of that era and one of the most influential intellectuals of the period. Dewey's academic and political bearings developed at the height of American industrialism, the religious and theological shifts of the Social Gospel movement, and the emergence of the modern university. Dewey was a public intellectual engaged in the work of conceptualizing liberal democracy in a growing nation and communicated his positions in publications such as the New York Times, the Ladies Home Journal, and the embryonic intellectual journals he helped create. At the University of Chicago in the late 19th century he asserted the inextricable union of education and democracy, and cultivated Pragmatic progressive politics. At Columbia University in the early 20th century, Dewey attended to the politics of world war, the professionalization of psychology (Dewey was President of the American Psychological Association in 1899), and the professionalization and organization of the American faculty (Dewey was a founder and first President of the American Association of University Professors, 1915–1916). In the 1930s Dewey concerned himself with the incapacitating effects of corporate capitalism, anti-communist politics, and the need for America to "reconstruct" its liberal core. Dewey's historical significance in this era is well documented1 but it is his exposition on democratic ethics and liberal values, his Pragmatic assessment of the value of scientific inquiry for liberal democracy, and the role of universities in American society that is most pertinent to this analysis. The imperatives of autonomy, self-realization and effective communication and their relevance to the university are central in Dewey's articulation of the imperatives of liberal democracy. Elsewhere I have argued that much in our educational practice today is analogous with this transformative period in American history and that Dewey's assessment holds valuable lessons for today (Martínez Alemán, 2001, 2006). Louis Menand observed in The Metaphysical Club (2001) that Dewey's reconceptualization of the relationship between liberty and conformity was a modernist's perception, and that "(u)nlike almost every other serious thinker of his time he was at home in modernity" (p. 237).

### The Relevance of Pragmatic Inquiry

John Dewey's work on the nature and purposes of democracies, their ethics, and their institutions guides this examination of accountability and the university's democratic purposes. Three liberal-democratic imperatives—autonomy, freedom

of inquiry, and freedom of communication—form the conceptual foundation of this examination of the American university and accountability. Dewey's articulation of the conflict between authority and freedom in liberal-democratic arrangements and in their representative institutions will frame this analysis of accountability in light of the emergence and evolution of the American university, the rise of managerialism in the university, and the responsibilities of the academic profession. As Alan Ryan (1995) observes, reviving Dewey now makes sense given that, although our 21st-century anxieties are not exactly those that existed throughout Dewey's long life, they are "surprisingly like our own" (p. 36). It was Dewey's ambition to inform the public's understanding of its social anxieties and the means by which to reconcile them. In Dewey's time, these anxieties included reconciling the deficiencies in the education of poor and immigrant classes with his belief in democratic social justice; the role of government as a lever of democratic good and post-industrial laissez-faire capitalism; and the application of scientific methods for social progress. In this century, our concerns about the uses of the university strike remarkable parallels with Dewey's early-20th-century worries.

As a philosophical tradition, American Pragmatism is centered on the value of theory to serve as a tool to solve human problems. Pragmatists seek to understand reality not as a consequence of fixed, absolutes or values, but rather through the systematic examination of experience. Truth lies in discovery for pragmatists. For William James (1907/1981), this meant assessing the "cash-value" of human practices or that appraising the truth required examining how things worked or didn't work in reality or in practice. What is "true" is that which works to our satisfaction. Truth is about correspondence of means and aims, but its correspondence is always historical. For example, a Pragmatist can inquire about the value of university-course evaluations to determine satisfactory teaching: Do the facts derived from means (the course evaluation and its data) correspond to the desired end (judging the teaching competence of faculty)? Whether and or how much students learned? Do "good" teaching evaluations correspond to "good" teaching? Advanced learning? Does the evaluation consider the effects of individuals in time and place? As historic identities marked by experience? Did the fact of students' previous experiences with the subject matter get taken into account? How? Was the instructor's prior relationship with students accounted for? How?

Pragmatists want to understand human experience and behavior at the groundlevel, so to speak. Concerned more with understanding human experience through critical, immediate examination of relationships and conduct than with measuring these with the yardstick of authoritative dictates or abstract theories, pragmatists engage in deliberative, intentional inquiry. Pragmatic inquiry seeks to determine the value of practices for human advancement by continually examining ideas and values and by reaching a collective agreement on their immediate (historic) usefulness. This is especially important in participatory

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democracies in which citizens must play a role in decision-making and, as such, must be aware of what constitutes "truth." How trustworthy ideas, values, and practices are for individuals and communities must be continuously checked if societies and their institutions are to evolve and develop. Society and institutions are not fixed in time; they evolve and their historic needs change. Our decisions about what constitutes "good" teaching today necessarily involves a consideration of what is now known as a result of breakthroughs in cognitive science and the relationship of technology to learning, for example. What we know today about human learning is unquestionably more and perhaps different than what we knew just 20 years ago. The social and psychological contexts of students and instructors change from generation to generation, and though we may carry with us pedagogical principles and cultural ideals from previous eras, the historic context will have some bearing on the meaning that we may make of these and the meaning that is conveyed in their transmission. Meaning evolves in human societies and is tempered by our historic social conditions.

John Dewey's Pragmatism has particular application for the examination of our current 21st-century cultural state of affairs. Charlene Haddock Seigfried (2002) reminds us that Pragmatism's focus on the conditions and processes that provide opportunity for fairness and fulfillment renders Pragmatism a perfect tool for understanding the immediate problems and predicaments of our time. In particular, she argues, John Dewey's Pragmatism serves as a unique "critical methodological approach for securing warranted beliefs" because it allows us to assess and evaluate interpretations of experience and whether or not these are a "means to human well-being" (p. 5). Also, Dewey's Pragmatism requires that our appraisals be informed by the context in which phenomena are rooted and entrenched, and that by doing so, we do not lose sight of "social and political power structures" that interfere with our ability to understand democratic experience (p. 6). For example, Lacey (2008) uses Dewey and an examination of Pragmatism's influence on American politics to shed new light on the politics of the American Left. Benson, Harkavy and Puckett (2007) document their attempts to make empirical Dewey's vision of democracy's "Great Community" by creating "university-assisted community schools." Gregory Fernando Pappas has looked to Dewey extensively to understand our current positions on race and ethnicity (2004), and how these (and other) historic experiences have affected democratic ethics (2008). My own Deweyan examinations have revealed a correlation between K-12 educational policy and class reproduction in the US (Martínez Alemán, 2001), as well as the subverting of Latino self-realization through educational standardization and accountability practices (Martínez Alemán, 2006). Thus, using Dewey's Pragmatism we can examine our university accountability policies and practices to determine how or if they enable us to fulfill democratic aims and imperatives.

For American Pragmatists like John Dewey, democracy and democratic arrangements were synonymous with human improvement and social progress.

Dewey, as a pragmatist of the early-to-mid-20th century, trusted in democracy and its institutions to provide individuals and groups the conditions for growth and betterment. Dewey's faith in liberal democracy as an ethical ideal was anchored to an "evolutionary naturalism" or Darwinism that saw positive value in associated life as well as in the moments of conflict that were an unavoidable fact of human community (Westbrook, 1991, p. 80). The centerpiece of Dewey's confidence in democratic society was his faith in human intelligence and our potential to experiment with a course of action, with forms of practice, and with the organization and administration of social arrangements in order to better the conditions of individuals and, as a consequence, humankind.

The ideological anchors of Dewey's faith in democratic arrangements were the ideals of liberalism. Aware that capitalism had forged a connection with a hijacking of liberal principles in the 20th century, in the 1930s Dewey set his sights on reclaiming liberal values for the sake of democratic social progress. In essays and books like Individualism, Old and New (1930), Liberalism and Social Action (1935), "The Future of Liberalism" (1935), "Liberalism and Equality" (1936), and "Democracy and Educational Administration" (1937), Dewey set out to interpret liberal values in the historical context of the 1930s, but not as fixed abstractions. He reasoned that those liberal values that had historically been deployed as the "means of producing social change" had been seized and misappropriated by late-19th-century economic, social, and political forces that thwarted democratic progress in the 20th century (Dewey, 1935/1989, p. 291). Modern democracy—as manifested in its institutions, policies, legislation, and laws—seemed to Dewey to have grown more and more impersonal, more and more atomistic. In Dewey's view, ironically, individual freedom and autonomy primary liberal values—had developed into politically narrow sentiments used to motivate economic and nation-state power. As he observes in his essay on "The Future of Liberalism" (1935/1989), liberalism requires "continuous reconstruction of the ideas of individuality and of liberty, in their intimate connection with changes in social relations" (p. 292) in order to enact the kinds of change that better the human condition. The liberal values most critical to modern democracy and its institutions, and most misappropriated in Dewey's view, were "liberty, individuality, and the freedom of inquiry, expression and discussion" (Westbrook, 1991, p. 431). These were the principles that could Pragmatically reinvigorate democracy's institutions and policies to serve as means to democratic ends. As Hollinger (1996) argues effectively, Dewey's liberalism: "still has its potential" and "is needed today more than any time in memory" (p. 38).

In Dewey's "Great Community" we could find the desired ends of liberal-democratic arrangements (Dewey, 1927/1946). In the "Great Community" the three principles of liberal-democratic ethics were simultaneously means and ends; individual freedom, self-realization, and communication freely exercised were recognized and achieved in the "Great Community." "Great" communities were liberal-democratic communities because they cultivated self-realized