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The cooling out function—like democracy—is not very attractive until you consider its alternatives. It is likely to remain an important part of what American community colleges do.

The "Cooling Out" Function Revisited

Burton R. Clark

In the mid 1950s, after finishing a dissertation on the character of adult schools (Clark, 1956), I became interested in doing a similar analysis of community colleges. While teaching at Stanford, I spent a summer visiting a number of colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area to explore the feasibility of such research, particularly to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a case study rather than a comparative analysis of several colleges. I decided to take my chances by concentrating on the college and getting to know it well, looking for connections among the parts of the organization in order to characterize it as a whole. The college I selected was a relatively new one in San Jose that offered entrée and was within easy commuting of Palo Alto. The fieldwork of the study and manuscript preparation during a period of three years or so led to a book and an article published at the end of the decade (Clark, 1960a, 1960b). The book covered the emergence and development of the college. It attended to unique features, but emphasized characteristics that, on the basis of available comparative data, a few side glances, and some reasoning, seemed to be shared with most other public two-year institutions and hence could be generalized—something to lay on the table that could be checked by others elsewhere and might, in explanatory power, be worth their time and effort. I spoke of the character of the community college in such terms as diffuse commitment and depen-

dency on an unselected external social base; pointed to roles it played in the larger educational structure in acting as a screening agent for other colleges at the same time that it opened wider the door to higher education; and suggested that such colleges have particularly sharp problems of identity, status, and autonomy.

Foremost among the generalizations was the "cooling-out" function, a conception that clearly has also been seen by others as the most important conclusion of the study. My purpose in this chapter is to review the concept twenty years later. In retrospect, was it appropriate in 1960? Does it still pertain? How has it been used by others? Since its crucial features are often overlooked, I begin by reviewing the original idea. I then explore the possible alternatives to this particular function as a way of understanding the reasons for its existence. In light of the experiences of our own and other countries during the last two decades, we can better understand the alternatives now than we could twenty years ago. Finally I take up some ways that the idea has been used by others and conclude with a judgment on the value of the concept.

Original Conception

At the outset of the research, cooling out was not on my mind, either as a phenomenon or as a term. As I proceeded in my observations, interviews, and readings of available documents and data, I was struck with the discrepancy between formal statements of purpose and everyday reality. A poignant part of reality was the clear fact that most students who were in the transfer track did not go on to four-year colleges and universities. What happened to them? It turned out that the college was concerned about them, both as individuals and, in the aggregate, as a persistent administrative problem that would not go away. Emerging procedures could be observed that were designed to channel many such students out of transfer programs and into curricula that terminated in the community college. As I observed teachers and students, and especially counselors who seemed central to what was going on, it became clear that such reassignment of students was not easy.

It involved actions that, no matter how helpful, would be felt by many involved to be the dirty work of the organization. This effort to rechannel students could have been called "the counseling process" or "the redirection-of-aspirations process" or "the alternative-career process" or by some other similarly ambiguous term so heavily used in education and sociology. I played with the terms then readily available but all seemed to have the analytical bite of warmed-over potatoes. While I was stewing about how to point a concept, a friend called my attention to an article by Goffman (1952) in which, for various sectors of society, the need to let down the hopes of people was analyzed bril-

liantly. Goffman used terms from the confidence game in which the aspirations of the "mark" to get rich quick are out-of-line with the reality of what is happening to him or her, and someone on the confidence team is assigned the duty of helping the victim face the harsh reality without blowing his mind or calling the police. Now there was a concept with a cutting edge! So I adopted and adapted it, aware that it would not make many friends in community college administrative circles.

How did cooling out appear to happen in educational settings? Moore has summarized well the argument that I originally put forth.

The process as described by Clark entails a student's following a structured sequence of guidance efforts involving mandatory courses in career planning and self-evaluation, which results in "reorientation" of the student rather than dismissal. The process begins with preentrance testing, which identifies low-achieving students and assigns them to remedial classes. The process is completed when the "overaspiring student" is rechanneled out of a transfer program and into a terminal curriculum. Throughout the process the student is kept in contact with guidance personnel, who keep careful track of the student's "progress."

The generalizable qualities of cooling out as Clark saw them involve *offering substitutes or alternatives* to the desired goal (here a transfer program); *encouraging gradual disengagement* by having the student try out other courses of study; *amassing objective data* against the preference in terms of grades, aptitude tests, and interest tests; *consoling and counseling* the student through personal though "objective" contacts; and *stressing the relative values of many kinds* of persons and many kinds of talents other than the preferred choice (Moore, 1975, pp. 578-579).

Crucial components of the process that were stressed in the original statement and that I would want to emphasize even more now are that (1) alternatives are provided—the person who is to be denied a desired goal is offered a substitute; and (2) aspiration is reduced in a "soft" consoling way, easing the pain and frustration of not being able to achieve one's first goal and the difficulties involved in switching to and learning to value the offered alternative education and career.

Once I had virtually "seen" the process in operation in one community college it was easy to generalize. After all, the community colleges in general embraced the open-door philosophy and hence were unselective on the input side, while necessarily facing the standards of four-year colleges and universities and being somewhat selective on the transfer/output side. Figures were readily available for all community

colleges in California and the nation as a whole that showed how many students entered the transfer track and how many came out of it. And, there was no evidence that community colleges anywhere in the country took the traditional stern approach that students who could not for one reason or another do the transfer work were failures who should be sent away. To the contrary, the attitude expressed everywhere was a generous and open one that the community college should not label students as failures; instead students should be helped as much as possible "to find themselves" and to find courses and career objectives appropriate to their abilities.

Hence a general assertion was warranted: its specific steps might vary, and colleges might or might not be effective in carrying it out, but the cooling out process would be insistently operative in the vast majority of American public two-year colleges. This was necessary given the position of the two-year units in the general educational structure and the institutional roles that had emerged around that position.

Alternatives

One way to enlarge our understanding of this phenomenon is to place it in the context of alternatives. Can it be subordinated or replaced by other ways of proceeding? How could the roles of community colleges be so altered that the process would be unnecessary? Indeed, what has been done at other times and is presently done in other places that reduces greatly the play of this process? Six alternatives come to mind, a set that comes close to exhausting the broad possibilities. As backdrop for these alternatives, let us keep in mind that the cooling out process in community colleges is rooted in (1) open door admissions, a policy of nonselection; (2) the maintenance of transfer standards, an attitude that those who transfer should be able to do course work in four-year colleges and universities; and (3) the probable need to deny some aspirants the transfer possibility and to face the problem of what to do with them.

Preselection. One clear alternative is preselection, either in earlier schooling or at the doors of the colleges. National systems of education continue to select students at the secondary level, indeed to have specialized schools that are terminal. This form of selection remains the model/pattern in Europe and around the world, despite the efforts to "democratize" and universalize secondary education in so *many countries in the last two decades. The secondary school graduates who qualified* for higher education, in the most generous estimates, were still no higher in the early and mid 1970s than 30 percent of the age group in West Germany, 35 percent in Italy, and 45 percent in France (Furth, 1978). Of course, in the United States, automatic or

social promotion of students during the secondary schooling has been the opposite of selection, amounting to mass sponsorship. Some selection still takes place, particularly through assignments to curricular tracks within the comprehensive school, but it is minor compared to the dominant international mode. Current efforts to stiffen standards of secondary school graduation in the United States will, if effective, tend to increase preselection.

Naturally, selection can also take place at the doors of community colleges, no matter what the extent of selection at the secondary level. Some minor amount of selection perhaps takes place in some community colleges in certain regions, particularly in the Northeast where the long dominance of private higher education has left a legacy of selection for quality and low regard for the more open-door public institutions.

The greater the selection in the secondary school or at the doors of the colleges, the less the need to select within the doors. The gap between aspirations and scholastic ability is narrowed, since a higher threshold of ability is established. Every increase in selectivity reduces the conditions that generate the cooling out process.

This alternative runs against the grain of American populist interpretations of educational justice which equate equity with open doors. The reestablishing of sharp secondary school selection or the closing of the open door is not what most critics and reformers have in mind. But we need to keep preselection in view if we want to understand why most countries in the world currently have considerably less need for a cooling out function than the American system of the last quarter-century and the foreseeable future. The traditional injunction is a simple one: If you want to reduce cooling out, keep out the candidates for cooling out.

Transfer-Track Selection. All right, community college personnel can say, we have an open door but we certainly do not have to let every Tom, Dick, and Harry—and their female counterparts— declare him- or herself to be a four-year college student and set sail in the courses that give credit for later transferring. We will stop the "nonsense" of everyone having a chance and, instead, openly select at the doors to the transfer program. Those who appear likely to be latent terminals, if we do not select, will now be manifest terminals from the outset, and hence the need for the cooling out process will be drastically reduced.

This alternative is logical enough, certainly to the academic mind or the conservative critic, and it surely occurs to a minor degree in many community colleges. A quick and honest no at the outset, proponents would say, is better for the student, the faculty, and the institution than a drawn-out, ambiguous, and manipulative denial in the

style of cooling out. But, logical or not, this alternative is also not likely to carry the day in American reform. The open-door philosophy is too ingrained; community colleges evermore define their boundaries loosely; almost anyone, part- or full-time, can enroll in courses offering transfer credit; and, besides, students are now in short supply and colleges generally for the foreseeable future will be less rather than more particular.

Open Failure. Perhaps the basic alternative to cooling out is unequivocal dismissal or withdrawal. This response is a classic one, found in the United States in the recent past in the state universities that felt it was politically necessary to have virtually open-door admission but then proceeded to allow the faculty to protect standards and slim the flow of students by weeding out in the first year those "who cannot do the work." Processes of admit-and-dismiss are widely operative in other countries, particularly where the forces pressing for more access are able to block sharp selection at the doors of the system but, at the same time, faculties remain free to flunk or discourage to the point of self-dismissal as many students as they wish in the first year or two.

As pointed out in my original formulation, this alternative is a hard response in the sense that failure is clearly defined as such: it is public, with the student required to remove himself from the premises. It is a rather harsh form of delayed denial—"we have to let them in but we do not have to keep them"—and can be viewed from inside or outside the system as heartless, a slaughter of the innocent. One role of the community college, as the most open segment in the American differentiated system, has been to lessen the need for this response in the state universities and public four-year colleges. The academically marginal and less promising students have been protected from the open-failure form of response by removing them from the settings where it was most likely to occur. Cooling out has been the "softer" response of never dismissing a student but instead providing him or her with an alternative.

This open-failure alternative is also one not likely to carry the day in the United States. Those who are most critical of community colleges do not seem to have it in mind and nowhere does it appear on the agenda of reform. Old-fashioned toughness—"You have failed, so get out of here!"—is not about to be reestablished as a general mode, either in two-year or most four-year colleges.

Guaranteed Graduation. In this alternative we take the social or automatic promotion of students that has characterized much of American secondary education in recent decades and apply it to postsecondary education. As an ideal type, the formulation reads: Let everyone who wishes to come and let all who persist graduate. In the transfer part of the two-year college, this means let all complete the two years of work, receive the associate in arts or associate in science degree,

and transfer to whatever four-year colleges will accept them. Standards are then not directly a problem since students will be allowed to graduate and transfer without regard to scholastic achievement or academic merit. The cooling out effort is no longer required.

This alternative is attractive for many participants and observers, especially those for whom equality is the primary value in higher education to the point of moving beyond equality of access and opportunity to equality of results. It surely is operative to some degree in numerous unselective four-year as well as two-year colleges: once the student is in, the college has a strong interest in seeing that he or she receives a degree. However, this alternative does not serve competence very well and debases the value of degrees, threatening the credibility and legitimacy of postsecondary institutions. It contributes to the inflation of educational credentials whereby individuals must have longer schooling to obtain a certificate of some value. It is a risky road, one for which the dangers have already been spelled out by the experience of the American secondary school and the value of the high school diploma.

One may even think of this alternative as a cheating form of equality: Everyone is equally entitled to credentials that have lost their value. Guaranteed college graduation does not solve the paradox—the search for equality by defeating its own purpose when it is carried to the point of equal results and statuses (Dahrendorf, 1980). Much of the thrust of the search for equality is to enable people to be freer to choose, which means that institutions and programs must offer a wide range of choices while reducing the barriers that prevent people from having those choices. But equal results, in such forms as automatic passage and uniform certification for all, restrict the opportunities for choice.

Reduction of the Transfer-Terminal Distinction. Another alternative is to reduce the distinction between transfer and terminal as much as possible. Here there are two possibilities. One is to narrow the status gap by enhancing the status of the terminal programs. Community college personnel have worked long and hard at this solution, helped considerably by the specific short-term programs that have high practical returns in well-paying and interesting job placements, for example, fashion designer in New York City or electronic technician in a Massachusetts or California technological complex. Those "life chances" do not look bad, compared to the perceivable returns from a bachelor's degree in English or sociology. But the bulk of terminal programs—centered more at the level of secretarial and mechanical training—are nowhere near that attractive and it remains hard to give them a parity of esteem with what people think a full college education will bring. Prestige ranking of occupations by the general population continues to give sociologists something to analyze, setting limits on how much one can realistically rank the middle-status ones with those of high status.

The second possibility is to blur the distinction, reducing as much as possible the labeling of courses and curricula as transfer and nontransfer, and hence the parallel official and self-labeling of students as on one track or the other. Community colleges have long had courses that serve the double purpose and students who mix the two. There are natural administrative interests within comprehensive schools and colleges to reduce the internal distinctions that divide staff and students, and often raise havoc with morale. Then, too, community colleges have long had the self-interest of wanting to certify who is an appropriate candidate for further education without having clearly designated transfer programs in which the specific courses and course sequences are dictated by the programs and requirements of the four-year institutions.

The transfer-terminal distinction and the meaning of the transfer track have blurred somewhat during the last two decades. Some community colleges manipulate the labeling of courses in order to increase their attractiveness and especially to bolster financial support based on student headcounts in degree-credit courses (Cohen and Lombardi, 1979). Part-time students who come to a college just to take a single course, with no intention of getting credit for it let alone using it toward transferring, are found in transfer courses. "The transfer courses have become discrete. Many students already have baccalaureate degrees and are taking the 'transfer' course in photography to gain access to the darkroom, the 'transfer' course in art to have their paintings criticized, the 'transfer' course in a language so that they can travel abroad" (p. 25). In general, an increasingly diffuse approach to transfer programs has been encouraged by basic trends of the last decade: more part-time, occasional "non-credit" students; more poorly prepared students—as high as 50 percent of enrollment—with the college staff then having to concentrate on the six Rs of higher education—remedial reading, remedial writing, and remedial arithmetic; more student occupational interest; and a "noncollegiate" drift in community college philosophy toward the organization serving as a community center or even a "community-based" legal entity operating without campuses, full-time faculty, or formal curriculum.

But the blurring of distinctions and meanings has limits beyond which lies a loss of legitimacy of the community college qua college. The definitions of college held by the four-year institutions and by the general public still set boundaries and insist on distinctions (that auto repairing is not on a par with history or calculus as a college course.) Again we face an alternative with self-defeating tendencies, one sure to arouse much hostility and stimulate countertrends. The community college will still have to pick and choose among courses as to what is bona fide transfer work and worry about course sequences and the progression of

students through them. To eliminate the transfer operations would be to give up a hard-won place in the higher education stream" (Cohen and Lombardi, 1979, p. 27).

Move the Problem to Another Type of College.

There remains the most general structural alternative: Eliminate the transfer part of the two-year college, or do away with the community college entirely, or convert two-year into four-year institutions. Then the cooling out function, or one of the above alternatives (slightly modified), would have to occur in a four-year context. After all, most four-year colleges in the U.S. system have relatively open admission, and it need not strain them to open the doors still wider. Some of these institutions have had and still have two-year programs and offer two-year degrees, either terminal or allowing entry to the junior and senior years. Also, two-year programs on the main campus and two years of course work available in extension centers have given even major universities an internal "junior college" operation. And now the increasing competition for students is causing four-year colleges to lower admission barriers and to build the two-year segments.

It is easy to imagine some move in this direction and, amidst the bewildering variety of U.S. postsecondary education, this alternative is surely operative today. But, again, it is not an alternative likely to dominate: the two-year entity is institutionalized and here to stay for the foreseeable future. Then, too, the problems that follow from this alternative are sufficient to block any major development. High among the problems is the reluctance of four-year college and university faculties to support two-year programs and to give them esteem. The evidence has long been in on this point, in the form of the marginal status accorded university extension in the family of university programs and A.A. degrees in B.A.-centered institutions. At the same time the need for short-cycle programs does not lessen. As other advanced industrial societies have been finding out the hard way, in their expansion into mass higher education since 1960, the need steadily grows, from both consumer demands and labor market demands, for a greater differentiation of degree levels rather than a dedifferentiation. Thus other countries have been moving toward short-cycle education. They too are impelled to devise more stopping points, as well as more educational avenues. The crucial structural decision is then whether to put the short-cycle programs within institutions committed to longer programs of higher esteem or to give them to a separate set of institutions. There is no evidence that the first choice is the superior one. In fact, if successful programs depend upon faculty commitment, there is a strong argument for separate short-cycle colleges.

In short, the problem that causes colleges to respond with the cooling out effort is not going to go away by moving it inside of other

types of colleges. *Somebody* has to make that effort, or pursue its alternatives.

Use and Abuse of the Idea

The idea of cooling out has received considerable attention in the last twenty years. The original journal article, "The 'Cooling-Out' Function in Higher Education" (Clark, 1960a), has been widely reprinted in books of reading in sociology, social psychology, and education. The term used to name the concept undoubtedly has been eye catching.

Beyond this direct absorption of the idea there have been interesting efforts to extend or revise its use, including the construction of counter or opposite concepts. If students can be cooled out, what about faculty? In an important case study of a new community college in a white ethnic part of Boston, London (1978) argued that the faculty suffered a great gap between their expectations and their reality and had to find ways to console themselves and otherwise handle disappointment. The particular college he studied provided a setting likely to magnify this phenomenon, but, even so, what is starkly revealed in an extreme case can be usefully explored in other cases where it may be more muted and shielded from view. As community college experts know well, the gap between expectations and reality is wide wherever the recruited faculty come from traditional sources and have traditional values and then have to face first-generation college-going students who not only have poor scholastic preparation but want to remain attached to their own traditional values of family and neighborhood.

Then, what about cooling out as applied to particular social categories of students? Moore (1975) interviewed over sixty women in three community colleges and focused attention not on their rechanneling from transfer to terminal curricula but rather on a rechanneling of nontraditional career aspirations for women into traditional choices. In most cases, she reported, the two rechannelings coincided. But not in all, since some original choices were for fields such as data processing that were in the terminal track. Hence she skillfully broadened the use of the idea: "The general concept of cooling out, namely the amelioratory process of lowering and rechanneling aspirations, suits women's career choices as well as it does the transfer process" (p. 580). Her focus on women caused her to explore the role of parents and high school counselors, as well as college counselors and the two-year institutions overall, in pressuring women to move away from choices of nontraditional careers.

Then there is the possible development of reverse concepts; is there a "cooling in" or "warming up" function? There surely is, as com-

munity college spokesmen have long maintained. There clearly are students who perform better scholastically than they did in high school and who raise rather than lower their aspirations. They may even begin in a terminal program and are moved by observant personnel or by their own efforts to transfer courses. Baird (1971) explored the aspirations of community college students over time, using survey questionnaire data from twenty-seven colleges, and divided the students into *coolers* (lowered aspirations), *warmers* (increased aspirations), and *stayers* (retained original aspirations). He concluded that "contrary to expectation, cooling out occurred seldom, while warming up was relatively common" (p. 163). He pointed to an interplay between high school and college experiences: that coolers (really "coolees"!) had been encouraged by their high school successes to plan for higher degrees, then ran into academic difficulties in the community college and revised their ambitions downward; that warmers had been led by background and high school experiences to plan lower, then succeeded academically in the community college and revised expectations upward. His research had the advantage of a survey covering a large number of colleges and students (over 2,500). But the differences between the groups were small; the results were confusing and hard to integrate; the data centered on self-reported aspirations; the processes of colleges and the actual experiences of students were not observed; and those who were gone by the end of two years were out of the sample.

(Without doubt,) the most prevalent abuse of the concept of cooling out has been its confusion with casting out. Those who have written on the topic have typically observed most of the essential characteristics of the original conception, but I have personally been exposed to it in dozens of conversations and meetings during the years, in such remarks as "she was cooled out" or "don't cool me out" that are meant to refer to a quiet, even devious, effort to simply get rid of or fail someone. Most social science conceptions are liable to a stretching that becomes distorted as they are popularized. One of the major drawbacks to the cooling out terminology is that its catchiness encourages such distortion, all the more readily allowing the idea to slide toward "pop" usage.

Finally, we have the use and potential abuse of the cooling out process in which it is picked up and used in more general analyses of stratification and inequality in society. Here the community college nearly always comes out as a villain, discriminating against the dispossessed, keeping the poor and the minorities away from four-year colleges and universities by letting them in and cooling them out. If this is so, the argument goes, such colleges are then operating objectively as instrumentalities by which the upper classes dominate and maintain privilege. One then need only add a little suspiciousness and the com-

munity college is linked to capitalism—at least to American capitalism—with a strong suggestion of a conspiracy in which capitalists construct community colleges to serve their own interests.

In the most carefully constructed argument of this genre, Karabel (1972) has emphasized the large proportions of lower-income and minority students in community colleges. Hence there is a social class difference in who is subjected to the cooling out process, with the community colleges seen as generally operating to maintain the social class system as it is. Karabel points out at the beginning of his essay that this effect is not necessarily intentional; that the two-year college *"has been* critical in providing upward mobility for many individuals" (p. 526) and that measured academic ability is more important than class background in the U.S. in predicting where one goes to college. The main thrust of the argument goes in a different direction. College standards are seen as a covert mechanism for excluding the poor and minorities, serving to justify universities and colleges "as a means of distributing privilege and of legitimating inequality" (p. 539). The community college is essentially a tracking system that is "class-based," (*passim*)—with all the ambiguity of "based." The effort to promote one- and two-year terminal programs is yet another instance of "submerged class conflict" (pp. 548–552), since officials want it while the students do not. And the whiff of conspiracy is strong: "This push toward vocational training in the community college has been sponsored by a national educational planning elite whose social composition, outlook, and policy proposals are reflective of the interests of the more privileged strata of our society" (p. 552). The cooling out process is implicated in all of this, particularly in helping to legitimate inequality by using academic standards in hidden ways to block the upward mobility of the poor and the minorities.

Since Karabel was interested in reform, he concluded with the question of what to do. He suggests that investing more money would not make much difference; that transforming community colleges into four-year institutions would still leave them at the bottom of the prestige hierarchy; and that making the colleges into vocational training centers alone would simply accentuate tracking. The solution he proposes is the grand one of a socialist reconstruction of the entire society: "The problems of inequality and inequality of opportunity are, in short, best dealt with not through educational reform but rather by the wider changes in economic and political life that would help build a socialist society" (p. 558). However, the experiences of socialist societies around the world have hardly been encouraging in their capacity to improve national systems of higher education, including the provision of equal opportunity.

The other major effort in the inequality context, one less carefully constructed, is Zwerling's book, *Second Best: The Crisis of the Com-*

munity College (1976). At the time he wrote the book, Zwerling was a teacher at Staten Island Community College in New York City. He was angry at virtually every aspect of the community college, especially the one at which he worked, other than the special programs and approaches in which he and a few colleagues invested their efforts. He portrayed the community college as "just one more barrier put between the poor and the disenfranchised and the decent and respectable stake in the social system which they seek" (p. xvii). He took note of cooling out, devoting a chapter to it as the main role of counseling, and concluded that it helps the college maintain the existing system of social stratification. By means of cooling out, the college "takes students whose parents are characterized primarily by low income and low educational achievement and slots them into the lower ranks of the industrial and commercial hierarchy. The community college is in fact a social defense mechanism that resists basic changes in the social structure" (p. xix). In helping to maintain inequality, cooling out, as he portrays it, works all too well.

Again, what to do? In a mishmash of new directions, Zwerling proposes consciousness raising, in which students are taught more about what is happening to them, thus making them angry and leading them into a process of heating up that will replace cooling out. In addition they should be given more experience in the real world that will help them choose a career. Then, too, they can be helped over "the transfer trauma" by visits to Yale and similar classy institutions. In short, a "student-centered approach . . . offers the possibility that the old cooling out may at last be replaced by a new heating up" (p. 206). But in his last chapter, Zwerling leaves behind such tinkering and moves to the sweeping structural conclusion that if we want a less hierarchical society, we have to restructure the entire system of higher education, beginning with the elimination of the community colleges: "At the very least this would mean *the elimination* of junior or community colleges since they are the most class-serving of educational institutions" (p. 251). All students would enter directly into a B.A.-granting school. In addition, state systems should award a systemwide B.A., instead of allowing individual colleges and universities to award their own degrees of widely different prestige. All this would eliminate "second best," as everyone moved through equated institutions and obtained equal results.

Arguments of this nature have helped fuel an attack on community colleges by those who single-mindedly pursue the value of equality. Those who speak for minority groups are bound to take a dim view of community colleges and demand direct and open access for whole segments of the population to four-year colleges and universities, when they come to believe that "educational equity means nothing if it does not mean equality of educational attainment" (Winkler, 1977, p. 8).

They then argue that the concern with equality in higher education should shift from getting minority students into colleges to getting them out as graduates holding bachelor's, doctor's, and professional degrees. Any elimination along the way by means of cooling out, dropping out, or flunking out is then suspect as discriminatory, unless it happens in equal portions across social categories.

This shift in the inequality line of reasoning in the U.S. has been little informed by the experiences of national systems elsewhere. Some other nations, particularly France and Italy, have long tried to achieve equal results by means of equated institutions, nationally mandated core and common curricula, and the awarding of degrees by a system-at-large rather than the individual institution. Many systems have long held out against short-cycle institutions and programs, as second best to the traditional universities. But the problems thereby created, as systems moved from elite to mass higher education, have been immense, dwarfing our own in magnitude and making us appear fortunate in comparison. Thus the general drift of painful reform in other advanced systems is toward greater differentiation of institutions and degree levels, the introduction of short-cycle programs and degrees, more screening in the first year or two and the breakup of the systemwide degree. The dilemma is still there: Either you keep some aspirants out by selection or you admit everyone and then take your choice between seeing them all through, or flunking out some, or cooling out some. The more other systems get involved in mass entry, the more their problems become similar to ours, including the problem of gap between aspiration and scholastic ability, and the more they must get involved in cooling out or must opt for one or more of the alternatives I have presented.

Conclusion

In the hindsight of two decades, what would I change in the original analysis if I had to do it over again? The most important change would be to have distinguished more clearly between effort and effectiveness in the cooling out process. It is one thing to observe the procedures constructed by colleges and the work they put into cooling out operations, and another to ascertain their effect on students, essentially answering the question whether the effort was effective or not. The distinction was a part of my thinking and writing—appearing in such phrases as "when it is effective"—but should have been clearer. Since I was doing an organizational analysis, I concentrated on the effort side. I had a less clear grasp of the effects, since I was not essentially doing an "impact" analysis, spent much less time with students than with counselors and teachers, and did not systematically interview

or survey the students for their reactions. A clearer distinction at the outset could have saved some later confusion about the state of the process. I could also have emphasized a point that naturally follows: The process, no matter how well constructed and operated, is not likely to work smoothly. It tends to become problematic, as individuals and groups react to it. This heavily problematic nature has been caught in some later research, such as Baird (1971) and London (1978). My own writings undoubtedly contributed to it, since social actors can learn from the results of social science and adjust behavior accordingly.

Then, too, it probably would have helped to have carried the cooling out process one step further: after students move from transfer to terminal programs, or while they are being asked to do so, they often quickly move from college to a job or some other form of withdrawal. This would have hooked cooling out to the enormous attrition of community colleges and suggested a major two- or three-step flow in the denial of hope, lowering of aspirations, and disengagement. But all this would have blurred the sharp focus of the original argument, and I did not have good data on the process of complete withdrawal. You have to stop somewhere, if you want to keep guesses from overwhelming limited information.

One change that I would make if I were doing the research now instead of twenty years ago would be to either do research on, or introduce a major caveat about, regional and state differences. We should not expect 1,000 community colleges to operate closely alike in the U.S. system, since our decentralized structure has given primacy to local and state control for community colleges and hence has subjected them more to local and state variations than to national administered uniformity. Then, too, the American system of higher education overall is the most market oriented of the world's advanced systems, with competition a prime element that causes colleges to be uncommonly sensitive to different clienteles, labor markets, and the actions of other colleges. Thus, research today on community college operations ought to take seriously the possibility of considerable variation. At the least, regional differences should be studied, since among informed observers it is well known that New England is a long way from California. The East remains relatively transfer oriented and standards oriented—a setting where tradition, resources, and vested interests have given primacy to private higher education and a resulting institutional hierarchy in which the community college often appears as fifth best, let alone second best. It is then hard for researchers in Boston, New Haven, or New York to imagine the "California model," which has developed in a context where public higher education has long been dominant, community colleges won legitimacy before World War II, and virtually everybody in the hometown, or on the block—including grandma—has

gone by the college to take a course. In that type of setting, the colleges have had middle-class as well as lower-class clienteles, suburban as well as downtown locations, and students who qualified for selective institutions as well as those who did not. Now, during the 1970s, the California-type college has moved another step down the road of openness, toward becoming such a diffuse enterprise that its legitimacy as a college, as earlier indicated, may soon become problematic. In this evolution, sequential transfer work has become a minor item, as a share of the whole, buried under huge enrollments of "single-course" students. The California model is more widespread and influential in the nation than that exemplified in the Northeast.

The change in approach that I would *not* make if I had to do the study over again, then or now, would be to extrapolate from my internal analysis of the community college to grand theories about the role of education in society. This is too easy as armchair sociology and too lacking in detailed analysis of connecting links. We especially lack the information and the capacity in the state of the art to compare situations in which the cooling out process operates and those in which it does not, the latter then offering one of the alternatives set forth above. The trouble with the leap to grand theory is that, poorly grounded in empirical research, it is particularly vulnerable to ideology of various persuasions. It also tempts Large Solutions, by others if not the researcher, that have a wide gamut of unanticipated and often undesired effects, outcomes that may do major damage to the less knowing and less powerful actors who cannot get out of the way. Witness the way that problematic research by James Coleman and Christopher Jencks has been used by political forces against U.S. public schools. Contemporary social science has grave weaknesses in application to social policy, and nowhere more so than in educational matters. One has to tread gently, even upon the cooling out process and its obviously unattractive features.

This side of utopia, academic systems, whether in a socialist or capitalist country, will be, in Erving Goffman's large phrase, a graveyard of hope. The graveyard may be large or small, busy or infrequently used, but it will be present. Only the naive do not recognize that with hope there is disappointment, with success, failure. The settings that lead toward the cooling out effort remain, all the more so as democracies open doors that were formerly closed. Any system of higher education that has to reconcile such conflicting values as equity, competence, and individual choice—and the advanced democracies are so committed—has to effect compromise procedures that allow for some of each. The cooling out process is one of the possible compromises, perhaps even a necessary one.

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