THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES THROUGH
MISSION STATEMENTS AND PRESIDENTIAL PERCEPTION
IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA

by

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ABSTRACT

Community colleges are in a state of conflict in their models. The purpose of the study was to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact in higher education in the United States. This study employed a qualitative research paradigm with strong emphasis in critical theory. These data were then categorized and analyzed to determine if the neoliberal era has impacted these community colleges. The sustainability of higher education and student success is hinged on the ability to provide supports that mitigate barriers faced by diverse populations.

The study involved interviewing presidents from Achieving the Dream (ATD) Leader Colleges and analyzed mission statements from these presidents' institutions. Presidential interviews and mission statements from 17 ATD Leader Colleges comprised the data collection for this study. Mission statements and interview transcripts were coded to capture themes. The findings of the study revealed the need for alignment between mission statements and presidential ideologies, and for those ideologies to be rooted in human agency. Ability of community colleges to meet the basic needs of students could serve as a catalyst for student success and social equity.

The Papa Equity Nautilus was created from the findings of the study and illustrate the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. The Papa Equity Nautilus can serve to assess an institution's mission, vision, or values to determine where they lean on the spectrum of human agency and neoliberalism. Assessment of mission, vision, and values should be continuous so as

to ensure relevancy to current education, political and economic climate, and other conditions. As some view the community college as the provider of a local workforce, these institutions do so much more as they are charged with serving the neediest students.

Increasingly, community college students are challenged with meeting students' basic needs. Challenges witnessed by community colleges have required redesigning the ways in which students are supported and served. This study confirmed that ATD Leader Colleges are focused on the human agency elements of their students while understanding the neoliberal crux.

Keywords: community college, mission statements, president, neoliberal/ism, human agency

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When I first moved to Illinois, every time I would drive past Harper College, I would say to myself, "One day, when I am finished with my master's degree, I am going to work [teach] there."

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Josephine and Margaret. Being your mom is undoubtedly my greatest accomplishment to this world. Fond memories of us three sitting together and doing homework are etched into my memories and my heart. Remember, there will be challenges and events that may try to derail your plans but remember who you are and where you come from. Remember to take the time to celebrate your victories, and above all else, be committed to yourself and lifelong learning. Hard work combined with passion always wins. Continue to grow your voice, live with passion, and remain rooted in learning. Thank you for the music.

To my parents, Drs. Rosemary Papa and Richard Brown, who have left me big shoes to fill: Your love of higher education and students showed me the possibility of truly loving one's work. I am forever grateful for your unwavering support and advice.

Finally, to my mother, Dr. Rosemary Papa: your love has taught me how to be who I am becoming; first as a child, then as a mother, and now as a woman with a doctoral degree. After I was hired to teach, you said you would give me only one piece of advice, "Always give the students the benefit of the doubt." This advice shaped me and my world within the classroom and beyond.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> The American Dream is at risk. Because a highly educated population is
> fundamental to economic growth and a vibrant democracy, community colleges
> can help reclaim that dream. But stepping up to this challenge will require
> dramatic redesign of these institutions, their mission, and, most critically, their
> students' educational experiences. (American Association of Community
> Colleges, 2012)

Background of the Study

Community colleges are in a state of conflict in their models, according to Raby (2014),

and are torn between into two distinct philosophies: (a) neoliberalism, as being a supplier of

human capital, and (b) humanitarian principles that view education as the catalyst for

transcending inequalities. Carnevale (2016) states that higher education needs "to aspire to a dual

bottom line in college curriculums: a pragmatic balance between the growing economic role of

postsecondary education and its traditional culture and political independence from economic

forces" (p. 11). In essence, higher education in the United States encompasses the mission of

allowing people to democratically obtain higher education as a means of living full lives

(Carnevale, 2016).

Community colleges serve a unique function in higher education. According to Cohen

and Brawer (2003), community colleges serve learners by providing opportunity in various

capacities, such as community education, career education, developmental education, general

education, and liberal arts education for the purpose of transfer to a four-year institution. These

multifaceted functions challenge community colleges to serve all who want and need a

postsecondary education. Carnevale (2016) argues that the difference between attending

postsecondary education for specific training versus a general liberal arts education is becoming increasingly artificial. Yet, he acknowledges that our society is rooted in workforce and economic stability which places pressure on postsecondary institutions to address human capital needs. The question remains: Does an increased focus on the economic relevance of a postsecondary education, which is the basis of neoliberalism, adversely impact the promise of equity community colleges offer to those they serve?

The term neoliberalism became common in the 20th century, but its prevalence as an economic philosophy became common in 1970s (Harvey, 2014). According to Ayers (2005), neoliberalism encompasses the sense of individual freedom and power and promotes consumerism, shifting the focus away from a participatory democracy. Aguirre and Simmers (2011) define neoliberalism as a privatization of markets with little state intervention:

> A set of political principles and economic practices rooted in ideological beliefs that: (a) markets should be privatized and free in order to serve the public good; and (b) state intervention is only acceptable insofar as it is used to defend individual or private monetary interests. (p. 4)

Higher education has recently been faced with this concept and its impact on its core values and mission (Monbiot, 2016). Phelan and Dawes (2018) state that a discussion of neoliberalism must be juxtaposed to the constructs of liberalism, democracy, and capitalism:

> If liberalism names the political ideology aligned to the historical emergence of "free market" capitalism and Western-style representative democracy, neoliberalism signifies a particular regime of liberalism, capitalism, and democracy that has been globalized since the 1970s, in the form of an active state promotion of market and competition principles that critics see as antithetical to democracy. (Phelan & Dawes, 2018, para. 1)

Phelan and Dawes (2018) further note that the philosophy of liberal thought comes from the historical elements of economic impacts and realities; that privilege is defined in economic freedom. In essence, they believe that the neoliberal era is the infecting juggernaut of global

economies, including higher education institutions, as they grapple with constraints that are politically ascribed, resource and accountabilities bound tightly. McChesney (1999) has described the neoliberal agenda:

> Neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time—it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. (p. 7)

Thus, proponents of the neoliberal agenda support the view that limits the power of citizens and restricts social change and progress. The purpose of this study is to determine if the neoliberal era is impacting the present-day role of the community college. Historically, prior to the neoliberal era, public education was the catalyst for social equity and creation of knowledge driven empowerment (World Bank, 2002). The World Bank, in a 2002 report, noted that the generation of knowledge drives greater productivity in a nation's economy, and it is within the universities that the development of technological innovations produces "progress in the agriculture, health, and environment sectors" (p. 76) which leads to higher skill levels, a requirement of such progress. As such, workforce skills are "increasingly seen as a crucial factor in economic development in the context of knowledge economies" (World Bank, 2002, pp. 76-77).

According to Engel (2000), neoliberalism has resulted in the deconstruction of public education and construction of human capital theory. Human capital theory in public education deems education is acceptable if it yields a return on investment (Paulsen & Smart, 2001). This implies that non-commodified areas of study are a poor social investment and thus are not justifiable according to neoliberal ideology (Giroux, 2001; Giroux & Giroux, 2004). Human capital theory espouses that learners have become economic products/materials as it stresses the

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significance of training and education "as the key to participation in the new global economy" (Almendarez, 2011, para. 9).

Yet, Carnevale (2016) states that, "over time, education—especially access to postsecondary education and training—has become a double-edged sword: both a fountain of opportunity and a bastion of privilege" (p. 5). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of occupations has grown from 270 in 1950 to 840 occupations in 2010. This has prompted the number of programs of study offered at the postsecondary level to increase from 460 in 1985 to 2,260 in 2010. Thus, this growth and diversification of occupational programs has led to the increase in the number of programs offered, which presents unique challenges for community colleges due to the diverse needs of the students they serve (Carnevale, 2016).

Community colleges are paramount as postsecondary educational institutions. Twenty-first century community colleges serve nearly half of all undergraduate students in the United States (AACC, 2016). Notably, these institutions serve a diverse student population (AACC, 2016), specifically students from underrepresented backgrounds including first-generation (Chen, 2017). This increases community colleges' social responsibility to students as well as to communities, state, and national constituents. Mission statements are written to define the purpose of an organization. Myran, Baker III, Simone, & Zeiss, (2003) define mission statement as "the most enduring statement of the college's social purpose and a crystallized expression of the college's fundamental strategy" (p. 5). Then, one must wonder, "What are the effects of neoliberalism on the community college mission?" Ayers (2005) argues that language use by all levels in higher education has been infected with neoliberalism terminology in that

> The meaning of community college education has shifted from a community-based social practice focused on the needs of learner systems (Boone, 1992), to a market-based social practice focused on the needs of business and industry. Once defined in this way by the

neoliberal regime, community college education no longer signifies an opportunity for cognitive, intellectual, and leadership development as well as other types of personal growth typically associated with postsecondary education but instead becomes an investment in production. As a consequence of this semiotic change, related social practices such as program planning, teach, learning, and assessment all realign with the demands of business and industry. Along with these shifts, the view of community college education as a means of human capital development becomes the norm. (p. 532)

Ayers (2005) further argues that neoliberalism has "threatened to engulf the mission and purpose of the community college" (p. 527). Shifts in public and educational ideologies have resulted in free market competition not only being embedded into our economic culture but through neoliberal expectations, which have infiltrated our nation's higher education systems, especially the community colleges (Mollenkopf-Pigsley, 2015). Mounting debate around the economic value of higher education in the neoliberal era, as claimed by Carnevale (2016) "may force a choice between narrow economic needs and broader educational goals and that the result will be a commodification of higher education" (p. 8). Thus, community colleges need to examine the ways in which neoliberalism impacts institutional mission and strategy. Examination of how community leaders have worked to balance the surge of neoliberalism with the need for humanistic social action is the purpose of this study. Balance, according to Chouliariki and Fairclough (1999), occurs by way of discourse and creates the frame for economic, social, and cultural processes (p. 4).

Engel (2000) found the neoliberal agenda divides public education into two main categories: human capital development and national defense in globalization. Engel (2000) defined human capital as "the stock of knowledge and skills possessed by the labor force that increases its productivity" (p. 24). According to Mollenkopf-Pigsley (2015), community colleges play an integral part in addressing the labor force demands in relation to human capital issues in the neoliberal era.

Fairclough (1995) presents the theory that social institutions are at an intersection of social structuring, with this theory also applying to the structuring and discourse of community colleges. Discourses determined at higher levels of social structuring, such as text and language, are reflective of ideologies and contextualization of groups (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, current language use reflected in institutional mission and strategy serves to determine social structuring. According to McMillan and Cheney (1996):

> Language is powerful, both descriptively and prescriptively; in particular ways it can shape the way we think and act, especially in terms of the application of compelling labels and categories; it announces what we know and how we know it, often embodying or promoting the taken-for-granted quality of our collective understandings; and when collectively we come to share a linguistic construction, language shapes our institutions as well-in that the very distinctions and classifications we make come to affect our future thinking and behaviors. (p. 2)

Neoliberalism and human capital theory have resulted in not only the commodification of higher education but also the contextualization of students as customers and consumers (Saunders, 2011). In the legal system, the description of students as customers was developed to protect students against injustices (Melear, 2003) and was not meant to override the student's identity as a learner.

Ayers's (2005) perspective is that the neoliberal era has greatly influenced the mission of community colleges. Yet, he acknowledges that community colleges have evolved alternative discourses to achieve what this author considers a social justice perspective through community building. An example of community building is Achieving the Dream (ATD, 2018), an organization that provides opportunities for community building to eligible participatory colleges. This organization is leading a network of community colleges with a focus on student success (ATD, 2018). Interestingly, Ayers further states:

Community-based programming and civic programs such as service learning are gaining momentum within the community college, suggesting that, even though the neoliberal ideological norms of late modernity have permeated the discourse of community college education, this permeation is neither absolute nor universal. Perhaps the manifestations of neoliberalism in community college mission statements represent only one ideological discursive formation (Fairclough, 1995) within the institution. If so, then the evolution of the community college mission is both a semiotic endeavor and an ideological struggle between competing discourse regimes. Given this struggle, if the community college is to realize its egalitarian mission then functionalist advocates must mount alternatives to the discourse of neoliberalism. To the degree that alternative discourses are available, hegemony dissipates into choice, and this invites resistance to domination and oppression. (p. 547)

Levin (2005) agrees that an alternative discourse to neoliberalism for community colleges can be found in community-building initiatives with a clear focus on altering the impacts of commodification on students as the consumer and the commodity from the institutional perspective. Of the nearly 1,200 community colleges in the U.S. (Statista, 2018), over 220 are active participants in the Achieving the Dream network (ATD, 2018). Achieving the Dream (2018; 2019) encompasses 22% of community colleges in the U.S., all focused on sharing successes and challenges of student success. The primary function of ATD is to support community college initiatives that sustain student success and community purpose and growth (Myran et al., 2003).

Community building among community colleges is at the core of ATD's mission. The ATD (2018) mission is as follows: "To lead and support a national network of community colleges to achieve sustainable institutional transformation through sharing knowledge, innovative solutions and effective practices and policies leading to improved outcomes for all students." The core values of ATD include: (a) organizational community; (b) integrity; (c) equity; and (d) reflective practice and improvement. The community building within the ATD network entails collaboration, partnerships, and relationships (ATD, 2018). According to Levin

(2005), community building initiatives can serve as an alternative discourse in the altering of neoliberal impact. Thus, colleges that participate in the ATD network provide a framework for this study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact at their institutions.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) identified for this study are:

- RQ1. How does the language in community college mission statements reflect the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era?

- RQ2. What are the perceptions and understandings of community college presidents in the neoliberal era?

- RQ3. How do community college mission statements guide the work of college presidents?

Definition of Terms

Listed are the definitions that have emerged from the study's purpose statement and research questions:

Community College. A two-year government-supported college that offers an associate degree (Merriam-Webster, 2018a). Cohen and Brawer (2003) define the community college as "any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree" (p. 5). At first recognized as junior college, to the now recognized title of community college, these higher educational institutions serve to meet the changing needs of local and regional educational and workforce needs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Mission Statement. A written declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time. Properly crafted mission statements (1) serve as filters to separate what is important from what is not, (2) clearly state which markets will be served and how, and (3) communicate a sense of intended direction to the entire organization. A mission is different from a vision in that the former is the cause and the latter is the effect; a mission is something to be accomplished whereas a vision is something to be pursued for that accomplishment. It can also be called company mission, corporate mission, or corporate purpose (Business Dictionary, 2018).

President. The chief executive officer of an organization (as a corporation or institution) usually entrusted with the direction and administration of policy (Merriam-Webster, 2018b).

Neoliberalism. Ideology and policy model that emphasizes the value of free market competition. Although there is considerable debate as to the defining features of neoliberal thought and practice, it is most commonly associated with laissez-faire economics. In particular, neoliberalism is often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).

Neoliberal Era. Various researchers define the neoliberal era as a post-WWII policy model beginning in the 1960s (World Bank, 2002), 1970s (Phelan & Dawes, 2018), or 1980s (Hall & Lamont, 2013).

Commodification. Levin (2005) connected the business way of thinking to the strong political incentives promoted at the federal level to both see students as consumers at the community college level and for the community college to see students as commodities.

Achieving the Dream (ATD). Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, Achieving the Dream now leads the most comprehensive nongovernmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. A network of more than 220 institutions of higher education, 75 coaches and advisors, and numerous investors and partners working throughout 41 states and the District of Colombia. It is a national, nonprofit leader in championing evidence-based institutional improvement (ATD, 2018).

ATD Leader College. Recognition of exemplar institutions that have identified and implemented strategies that have proven to be successful over time. Leader College designation is based on the following eligibility criteria: (a) completion of at least three years of active participation in ATD; (b) active ATD participation in the current year, including payment of current year invoice; and (c) in good standing with accrediting agency (not on warning or probation) (ATD, 2018).

Brief Description of Study Design

This study employed a qualitative research paradigm with strong emphasis in critical theory. Presently, there are 980 public community colleges (Statista, 2018) in the United States. Of the 980 public community colleges, more than 220 participate in the ATD network. Of those in the ATD network, 94 colleges currently hold the designation ATD Leader College. For this study, presidents from ATD Leader Colleges were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. Upon confirmation of participation on this study, the researcher constructed a language analysis of the mission statement from the participant's college. The mission statements were drawn from the institutions' websites. These data were then categorized and analyzed to determine if the neoliberal era has impacted these community colleges.

Assumptions of the Study

In terms of the website analysis, it is assumed that the mission statements of community colleges as found on their respective website were current and accurately reflect the goals and operations of the community college. Since catalogs are the official source of hard-copy published information of the respective colleges, it is assumed that a community college website would display information that is most up to date (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

According to Patton (2002), "it is important to be open and clear about a study's limitations; that is, to anticipate and address criticisms that may be made of a particular sampling strategy, especially from people who think that the only high-quality samples are random ones" (p. 242). Since the community college presidents were not randomly chosen, generalizability may be somewhat limited. A moderate sample size was utilized to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases (Polit & Beck, 2010). Interviews conducted by phone also could serve as a limitation. Finally, a potential weakness or limitation of a study may include researcher bias. These limitations are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

Conclusions drawn from this research provided evidential support for the study's research questions and provided context as to the current state of community colleges in the neoliberal era as defined by the interview subjects and their respective mission statements. The rules for answering the research questions are included at the conclusion of the study (Patton,

2002). An explanation of the significance of the data in the academic conversation and what can be learned from the effects of neoliberalism in higher education define the purpose of this study and serve as a guide to potential future research.

Chapter Summary

Understanding the impact of the neoliberal era on community colleges is an important phenomenon, as these institutions educate almost half of the students pursuing postsecondary education. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants, all of whom lead community colleges, to explain if and how neoliberalism has impacted their institutions. A review of mission statements from the participants' community colleges provided further insights. Resulting data were organized and themed. The goal is to ascertain if and how neoliberalism is impacting community colleges and develop a framework that balances neoliberal philosophies focused on workforce development with higher education's overarching historical mission to develop a more intellectually engaged society.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 introduces and details the significance of this study which focuses on the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. Interviews with community college presidents and a review of their mission statements provide valuable insights into the discourse of their roles within the local communities in which they serve. The purpose of the study is to examine community college mission statements and the perceptions of community college presidents to determine if they reflect a neoliberal perspective.

Literature pertaining to the purpose of this study, as reviewed in Chapter 2, suggests that in the United States, neoliberal ideology has impacted the mission of community colleges, and

that social equity is being challenged. The literature also offers a perspective that the neoliberal era has prompted community colleges to be more accountable and transparent in monitoring the outcomes of their students. These outcomes include completion, transfer, and job attainment.

Chapter 3 details the methodological framework used in this study. The design is described in detail, including a data collection pilot which served to refine the interview questions and protocols. A description of the researcher as research instrument provides insights into this important facet of qualitative research.

Chapter 4 summarizes the data gathered for the study. These data were collected from semi-structured interviews of community college presidents and a review of their mission statements. Tables are used to summarize the data, allowing key themes to emerge.

Finally, Chapter 5 includes the discussion of the findings, recommendations, and implications for future study. Rich, thick data gathered from multiple sources are presented in quotations and tables. This chapter includes a key outcome of the study, which is referred to as the Papa Equity Nautilus, as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact at their institutions. This review of previous literature is divided into the following sections: (1) public community colleges in the neoliberal era, (2) neoliberal era and public higher education, (3) public community college mission, (4) connecting the community college mission to students' needs and motivation, (5) impact of commodification and student learning, and (6) community building: Achieving the Dream initiative.

Public Community Colleges in the Neoliberal Era

As simply stated by Cohen and Brawer (2003), the reason for the growth of community colleges in the United States over the last century has been the result of a greater number of demands placed on schools at each level of education. The demands placed on educational institutions are rooted in "the belief that all individuals should have the opportunity to rise to their greatest potential" and "institutions that enhance human growth should be created and supported" (p. 10). Ability to foster greater access to higher education has required challenging the expectations of higher education to better meet the purpose of supporting communities:

> Community colleges do not even follow their own traditions. They change frequently, seeking new programs and new clients. Community colleges are indeed untraditional, but they are truly American because at their best, they represent the United States at its best. Never satisfied with resting on what has been done before, they try new approaches to old problems. They maintain open channels for individuals, enhancing social mobility that

has characterized America, and they accept the idea that society can be better, just as individuals can better their lot within it. (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 36)

Community colleges are in a state of conflict in their models according to Raby (2014) and are broken into two philosophies: (a) neoliberalism as being a supplier of human capital and (b) humanitarian principles that view education as the catalyst for transcending inequalities. Claims from the neoliberal side argue that, "training, credentialization, and international development secure new workplace skills that correspond to overall social prosperity" (p. 748) versus the humanitarian side claiming, "social mobility is enhanced as institutions offer opportunities for participation to the widest margins of society, and in so doing, challenge traditional higher education elitism" (p. 749).

Caterino (2014) described community colleges has having "a divided, even contradictory mission: on the one hand, community colleges were established as open access institutions" (p. 3) and community colleges also acted as "a gatekeeper, a sorting machine that worked to lower expectations for the majority of its students and thus it served to reproduce social injustice rather promote equality and justice" (p. 4). Historically, community colleges have served as a beacon of hope to the communities they serve with a dual mission: fulfilling workplace needs and matriculating students to four-year institutions. Promises of a brighter future for future generations have come under attack in the last 40 years, as learners of today are at risk of being the first generation that will be unable to out-earn their parents (Roos, 2018).

Shifts in public and educational ideologies have resulted in free-market competition embedded not only in our economic culture but through neoliberal expectations, which some believe have infiltrated our nation's higher education systems. For decades, community colleges have been a pathway to success for various reasons and for various types of adult learners and

other nontraditional students. Sutin, Derrico, Valeau, and Raby (2011) stated that community

colleges offer "options for university overflow, adult learners, displaced workers, [and] bright

students from low-income families" (p. 1), many of whom are underprepared. Underprepared

students represent "approximately two-thirds of incoming community college students," as they

have placed into developmental-level coursework in reading, writing, or mathematics (Bailey,

Jaggers, & Jenkins, 2015, p. 119). So, with the majority of students being funneled to higher

education through standardized tests, is it not the responsibility of these institutions to ensure

development and implementation of effective policies and procedural measurements of student

success? For inaccurate measures of success may then be "perpetuating long term systemic

inequality among students" (Ireland, 2015, p. 150).

Ireland (2015) argued that higher education institutions and those that work directly with

students must consider a "macro-approach" (p. 150). Ireland (2015) encouraged community

college institutions and leaders to examine if their internal practices and mission foster success or

stratification for this at-risk population. Caterino (2014) noted market tensions and community

colleges faced with fiscal restraints; as a result, "many community colleges have little chance of

carrying out the mandates imposed on them from the 70s onward" (p. 12). Thus, examination of

labor market tensions and trends has been determined as essential to better determine the impact

on learners in the neoliberal era.

As of fall 2017, "5.8 million students were enrolled in public, two-year colleges. About

2.1 million were full-time students, and 3.7 million were part-time. About 6.1 million were

enrolled in all types of two-year colleges" (Community College Research Center, 2018, p. 1). In

fall 2014, 42% of all and 25% of full-time undergraduate students were enrolled in community

colleges (Ma & Braun, 2016). Considering that community colleges enroll a sizable number of

post-secondary students, they should be held accountable in meeting local needs and helping their local communities compete in the global economy (Boyd, 2011). Ability to compete in the global economy requires that students exit higher education institutions and enter successfully and seamlessly into the labor market, prepared with the right skills sets and meaningful work. Readiness for the changing labor market (both local and global) in addition to the completion agenda—envisioned by President Obama—have resulted in external and internal community goals that produce a pressurizing effect, causing many community colleges to redesign, streamline, and globalize.

Adaptability and systemic reform have been demanded of community colleges. The purpose and role of community colleges has been under scrutiny since the birth of community colleges over a century ago, and the uncertainty of future financial support for these educational institutions has become legitimate (Sutin et al., 2011). Consequently, there is concern that community colleges have been experiencing an identity crisis in response to the mounted pressures regarding post-secondary outcomes. Bailey et al. (2015) stated, "The disappointing outcomes of community colleges and indeed many four-year institutions have not gone unnoticed by policymakers, who have called for more transparency in and accountability for postsecondary performance" (p. 1).

Completion has become embedded in the mission of community colleges. According to Humphreys (2012), community colleges are struggling more than ever to accommodate a larger student population, with a disproportionate number of students being underprepared and not ready for the demands and rigor that the workforce today expects from a college student or college graduate. Furthermore, this demand is happening in conjunction with the global economy demanding more specialized credentials from the workforce, all of which could potentially lead

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to gatekeeping and stratification. Supply and demand are common economic terms, and while once thought of as existing solely in the corporate or for-profit world, they have now infiltrated academia through behaviors labeled as "internationalization, multiculturalism, commodification, homogenization, [and] marketization" (Levin, 2014, p. 731). Many believe that these behaviors have infiltrated higher education institutions and are being absorbed within their missions.

With completion at the forefront of community college expectations imposed by local and federal authorities, higher education is constantly defending itself against criticisms (Goldstein, 2012). For example, completion demands have resulted in linking state appropriations to institutional outputs, such as the number of degrees awarded, student retention, and transfer rates, rather than the more traditional funding model in which funding is appropriated by the number of students enrolled and served by the institution. According to Mckinney and Hagedorn (2017), a concern of performance-based funding (PBF) is that because community colleges serve many disadvantaged students, they are at risk of disadvantaging themselves. The issues they identify are lack of appropriate metrics, little funding tied to the metrics in use, and not acknowledging the varying missions and demographics of community colleges and the students they serve.

As a result of the economic depression during the Obama administration and the need to upskill and/or reskill workers, higher education and the overall performance of community colleges have been under a microscope. As a result, a rating system on higher education outcomes was developed (Bailey et al., 2015). This was intensified by the Obama administration calling for the U.S. to have the highest number of students graduating in the world by the year 2020 (Goldstein, 2012). External pressures, both economic and political, have influenced the missions of higher educational institutions, and these pressures have resulted in higher education

no longer being viewed as a priority and resulting in the public questioning if academic institutions are being managed effectively (Goldstein, 2012). The next generation of public higher education funding must reflect how higher education institutions respond to changing conditions such as student demographics and their shifting needs, the knowledge growth economy, and its demand for talent in a globally competitive environment.

Without access to equal opportunity and focus on educational attainment and success for all college students, the income disparities will continue to grow. Community colleges enroll nearly half of all undergraduate students, and 27% are first-generation, low-income, students of color, and/or are underprepared (Bers, 2014; Ireland, 2015). Given these enrollment statistics, consideration should also be given to the likelihood that students from underrepresented populations are unable to attend college on a full-time basis, which is the metric used in college scorecards. Rather, these students attend on a part-time basis because they work or are taking care of children (AACC, 2012). Often, completion by these students is not included in the success narrative and metrics currently being used in federal reports where first-time, full-time students are the only ones counted. Negative impacts caused by PBF models are a testament to the equity challenges facing community colleges today. Specifically, funding is insufficient for those community colleges serving predominately minority and/or first generation students. Hillman, Tandberg, and Fryar (2015) contend under the PBF framework, college leaders have no incentive to align the goals of policymakers and a state's future workforce needs. Rather, they must simply focus on completion rather than ensuring the degree or certificate awarded has labor market value. Continuing in this direction demonstrates our higher educational system's inadequate investment in our human capital (AACC, 2016). Carnevale (2016) stated, "the postsecondary system mimics and magnifies the racial and ethnic inequality in educational

preparation it inherits from the K-12 system and then projects this inequality into the labor

market" (p. 10). Carnevale (2016) took this further by stating,

> In a society where people start out unequal, educational opportunity—especially
> postsecondary educational opportunity dictated by test scores and grades—can become a
> dodge, a way of laundering the found money that comes with being both into the right
> bank account or the right race. As social science has proven, the meritocratic bases of
> education is, at least in part, a social construct" (p. 11).

A foundational understanding of neoliberal ideology and ways in which higher education

has had to adopt a fluid approach to student success to maintain relevancy in the neoliberal era is

key. Colleges, and in particular community colleges, are expected to improve outcomes while

maintaining affordability (Bailey et al., 2015). Performance of students and their perceived

ability to compete in the United States and global economy have resulted in "greater public

scrutiny, skepticism, and criticism of college performance" (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 2). Current

trends in the neoliberal era have resulted in community colleges strategically addressing the

needs and concerns of their ability to meet outcomes. Bailey et al. (2015) note:

> Community colleges were designed to expand college enrollments, particularly among
> underrepresented students, and to do this at a low cost. They have been extraordinarily
> successful in achieving these goals. However, colleges designed to maximize course
> enrollment are not well designed to maximize completion of high-quality programs of
> study. In particular, the emphasis on low-cost enrollment has encouraged colleges to offer
> an array of often-disconnected courses, programs, and support services that students are
> expected to navigate mostly on their own. Students are confused by a plethora of poorly
> explained program, transfer, and career options; moreover, on closer scrutiny many
> programs do not clearly lead to the further education and employment outcomes they are
> advertised to help students achieve. (pp. 2-3)

The disorganization mentioned above has been described by Bailey et al. (2015) as the cafeteria-

style, self-service model.

Defining "promising practices" in a way that encompasses both educational and professional accountability is necessary and includes improving outcomes for all students (ATD, 2018). Haberler and Levin (2014) settled on the definition of promising practices as

> a social structure that is context-driven and responsive to its environment, that possesses and capitalizes on its unique historical and cultural conditions, and that allows for the achievement of goals that ensure both the development of the participants and the consolidation of the organization itself. (p. 405)

An example of promising practices as identified by Bailey et al. (2015) is the movement away from the cafeteria-style model to what is referred to as the guided-pathways model. Bailey et al. (2015) contend that the diverse populations served by community colleges experience unique academic, social, and economic challenges. Barriers or challenges such as these, if coupled with unclear goals, have resulted in one-fifth of all entering community college students exiting the school before earning 10 credit hours (Bailey et al., 2015). Community colleges as institutions have unique characteristics including their "student population, comprehensive curriculum, employment status of faculty, and multiple missions" (Haberler & Levin, 2014, p. 403). This requires the identification of promising practices that address the achievement or opportunity gaps that are experienced by underprepared students.

With community colleges educating a significant proportion of underprepared students, there is an unprecedented need for external resources to address student success barriers. Without greater investment from state and local constituencies and alignment of community colleges with curriculum standards with local feeder districts, students will continue to enter college disadvantaged and labeled "underprepared" (Bers, 2014). This underpreparedness is projected to grow significantly over the next decade due to a number of issues that prevent community colleges from being able to successfully deliver the goals related to the completion agenda

(Pusser & Levin, 2009). Appealing to policymakers while creating partnerships with K-12 systems creates a more unified front in the preparation and remediation of underprepared students. Simultaneously, it is important to break down some of the neoliberal ideologies that have resulted in the disconnect between these key educational hierarchical structures (Pusser & Levin, 2009).

Neoliberal Era and Public Higher Education

Phelan and Dawes (2018) contention is that neoliberalism, which is Marxist in construction following World War II, subordinates "public life to market forces…displacing the welfare state commitments of the Keynesian era" (Phelan & Dawes, 2018, para. 4). They described the inherent complexity in understanding neoliberalism, which they contend cannot be understood in a vacuum from liberalism, democracy, and capitalism. Socialist values became the opposite of free market identity, as they further noted:

> Neoliberalism's status is examined as a distinct political project that reshaped Western and global political economy from the 1970s onwards, but which had its intellectual origins in 1920s and 1930s debates about the nature of liberalism and its antagonistic relationship with socialism. (Phelan & Dawes, 2018, para. 6)

Free-market capitalism, as defined by the word *neoliberalism*, is the promotion of market and competition principles which Phelan & Dawes (2018) believe to be antithetical to democracy.

Exactly when the present neoliberal era began is determined by the researchers' perspectives: 1960s (World Bank, 2002), 1970s (Phelan & Dawes, 2018), or 1980s (Hall & Lamont, 2013). The neoliberal era began in earnest in 1963 with efforts by the World Bank (2002) to ensure tertiary education development in countries that were considered "developing." The World Bank's intent was to diversity and grow education for the purposes of policy reforms fostering "efficient, relevant, equitable, transparent, and responsive" education (p. ix). According

to Hall and Lamont (2013), "The past three decades, which we term the 'neo-liberal era', have seen profound economic, political and cultural changes with global reach" (p. 8). Given these perspectives to a historical timeline, the post World War era of the 20th century spurred a competitive series of forces with origins first in economic levers, then political levers through global organizations, then in response to the cultural changes that demanded participatory parity, and then it circled back into the political arena (Fraser, 1996).

Noted Sociologist Nancy Fraser (1996) presents a framework for further understanding the neoliberal impacts on issues surrounding social justice. She illustrated the cultural notions of race, sexism, and various other forms of systemic oppression through the cultural, economic, and political frames to dissect neoliberal constraints and the lack of attention to social justice issues. Social justice cannot happen without participatory parity. She wrote, "The feminist case exemplifies a more general tendency in the United States (and elsewhere) to decouple the cultural politics of difference from the social politics of equality (Fraser, 1996, p. 4). She explains further:

> In the status order, meanwhile, the entrenchment of racist and Eurocentric norms privileges traits associated with "whiteness," while stigmatizing everything coded as "black," "brown," and "yellow," paradigmatically -but not only -people of color. Pervasively institutionalized, these racist and Eurocentric norms generate racially specific status injuries. Denied the full rights and protections of citizenship, members of racialized groups endure, for example, police assault; discrimination in housing, employment, and health care; media stereotyping; the devaluation of their cultural production; harassment and disparagement in everyday life; and exclusion or marginalization in public spheres. Quintessential harms of misrecognition, these injustices can be remedied only by a politics of recognition. (pp. 18-19)

It is within these researchers' findings (Fraser, 1996; Hall & Lamont, 2013; Phelan & Dawes, 2018; World Bank, 2002) that the broad parameters of neoliberalism and its contentious elements are found to interplay in higher education institutions. In essence, neoliberalism is

viewed as a vehicle with competing traits: global market driven impacts on labor markets and the supports afforded or lack thereof as perpetrating of systemic marginalization of citizens. These parameters have impacted higher education.

The World Bank's (2002) fundamental drive in economic development is to ensure global resources extracted from local developing countries are meant to serve global economic growth along with meeting needs of the local workforce. The World Bank's efforts include a neoliberal view in that although the societal expectation of higher educational opportunity for all exists, there is no question of the motive regarding the types of education that serve global needs rather than local and individual needs. Their belief in higher education is described as:

> Tertiary [higher] education is more than the capstone of the traditional education pyramid; it is a critical pillar of human development worldwide. In today's lifelong-learning framework, tertiary education provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labor market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, social scientists, and myriad personnel. It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect entire societies. Universities are clearly a key part of all tertiary systems, but the diverse and growing set of public and private tertiary institutions in every country—colleges, technical training institutes, community colleges, nursing schools, research laboratories, centers of excellence, distance learning centers, and many more—forms a network of institutions that support the production of the higher-order capacity necessary for development. (p. ix)

So, what is the evidence that suggests that this "theory… set of political beliefs, or economic philosophy" (Aguirre & Simmers, 2011, p. 3) of neoliberal ideology has spread into higher education? Aguirre and Simmers (2011) stated, "Neoliberal ideology seeks to promote greater efficiency, productivity, and accountability in public education" (p. 3). Further, if it has in fact spread, how has it impacted student success? The literature defines several areas, but for the purposes of the study, a contextual and working definition of neoliberalism needs to be established in order to answer that question. Aguirre's and Simmers' (2011) definition of

neoliberalism is focused on two principles: privatization of markets that are free to serve the public good and state intervention only in defense of private/individual money interests.

Evidence that neoliberal ideology has spread into higher education institutions and can be found by examining accreditation policies and practices. Boyd (2011) argued, "The use of 'outcomes' based education models and 'continuous quality improvement' systems in non-profit community colleges in the United States, are two examples of the common sense utilization of market systems within a non-market entity" (p. 246). Ultimately, this model has become internationalized and corporatized and has resulted in homogenized cross-national accreditations, further contributing to globalization (Raby, 2014).

While many higher education institutions promote equality among underrepresented groups, in many cases they are diminishing the value of cultural capital by limiting or gatekeeping underprepared students (Dennis & LaMay, 1993; Ireland, 2015; Levin, 2014). Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2007) have studied students from underprivileged backgrounds and have discovered what many have already predicted: habitus and the lack of cultural capital reflect the structural challenge of educational attainment by this population. Attewell et al. (2007) argued that the central theme of U.S. culture and the attainment of the American Dream lies in education, and that education is a catalyst in upward social mobility. The expectation and history of social mobility has been that "succeeding generations will sustain the advantage of a previous generation's educational attainment" (Ireland, 2015, p. 155). Thus, some question if the economic forces of the neoliberal era perpetuate the perception that higher education no longer serves as the key to social mobility or the means to level the playing field for all citizens, which is viewed as the core purpose.

Boyd (2011) believes that the question as to how effectively academic institutions are being managed has resulted in corporate America thinking that neoliberal ideologies would come in and fix higher education. Thus, neoliberal ideology has infiltrated higher education and "community colleges have provided a fertile field for growth and confluence" (Boyd, 2011, p. 245) of neoliberalism and the role it plays in tertiary education (Phelan & Dawes, 2018; World Bank, 2002).

Without the ability to appreciate difference, we become homogenized, and during a time when community colleges are experiencing extremely diverse enrollments, a student-centered approach requires us to not be exclusionary of the vulnerable population of underprepared students. Levin (2007) argued that the measurement of institutions cannot be exclusively weighted on completion rates or employment and suggests that measurement should be inclusive by an institution's ability to accommodate disadvantaged students successfully. The term "open-access" has been part of the birth and history of community colleges; however, it has an element of deception. Many colleges "provide access to the institution but do not necessarily 'accommodate' nontraditional students" (Levin, 2007, p. 12). The one-size-fits-all view for efficiency and accountability, supported by neoliberal philosophies, (Aguirre & Simmers, 2011) belies the unequal accommodation. This results in a question of institutional integrity and accountability. Carnevale (2016) contends:

> We need to aspire to a dual bottom line in college curriculums: a pragmatic balance between the growing economic role of postsecondary education and its traditional cultural and political independence from economic forces. Ultimately, however the economic role of postsecondary institutions—especially their role in preparing American youth for work and in helping adults stay abreast of economic change—is central. The inescapable reality is that our is a society based on work. Those who are not equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs are denied full social inclusion and tend to disengage from the mainstream culture, polity, and economy. (p. 11)

Thus, it is suggested that postsecondary institutions and educators have the responsibility to

empower Americans to aspire to be contributing citizens.

Yet, Carnevale (2016) does believe that maintaining relevancy in society requires higher

education to be more efficient and transparent (Carnevale, 2016). Further,

> The choice between general and specific education is not a zero-sum game. The economic value of a college education and work training has added a new emphasis to the broader postsecondary mission. In a modern republic, the higher education mission is still to empower individuals to live fully in their time, but those individuals also need to be able to live free from the worst versions of economic or public dependency.

> The dual role of higher education in serving both human flourishing and economic empowerment has also become one of the keystones in the social contract between democracy and capitalism. But there is not likely to be any 'one size fits all' solution. Higher education must serve many masters at once" (Carnevale, 2016, p. 14).

The mission of higher education and community colleges needs to adapt to the changing society

we serve and address both humanistic and neoliberal beliefs.

Public Community College Mission

According to the AACC (2018) and Statista (2018), as of January 2018, there are 980

U.S. colleges registered as public community colleges out more than 1,200 total community

colleges. AACC (2018), the professional organization serving community colleges in the U.S.,

describes its mission as "building a nation of learners by advancing America's community

colleges" (p. 1). AACC further describes its mission:

> This mission statement [building a nation of learners by advancing America's community colleges] captures AACC's commitment to advance the recognition of the role of community colleges in serving society today. By providing advocacy, leadership, and service for community colleges, the association will play a key role in assisting the nation as it passes from the industrial era of the 20th century to the new knowledge-based society of the 21st century. (p. 1)

AACC (2018) notes its core values as integrity, excellence, leadership, learning, diversity, commitment, and connectedness. The AACC leadership vision promotes community colleges to be increasingly "recognized as the gateway to the American dream—the learning resource needed to sustain America's economic viability and productivity" (p. 3). AACC further describes its intentions in working and serving as the voice of community colleges:

> Engaging with its member institutions in new ways to leverage new opportunities, AACC will deepen relations built on trust and confidence while also challenging community colleges to grow and develop even greater competence in areas such as learning accountability, diversity, and globalization. (p. 3)

Community colleges have the potential to play an integral role in alleviating societal inequalities. According to Ireland (2015), in order to achieve this goal, attention must not be given to "assessing micro-level success of community college students," such as solely paying attention to completion or graduation (p. 158). Rather, Ireland (2015) suggested a "macro-approach" where higher education institutions reevaluate their definition of success, critically consider student outcomes, and look closely at articulation and mission trends all with the focus of facilitating change in community colleges (p. 158). While Ireland (2015) offered a multi-layered macro-approach, a reminder was made to educators that in addition to educational reform, student success, particularly for underprepared students, also lies in social and economic reform (p. 160).

Evaluation of higher educational institutional missions, particularly for community colleges, entails the examination of consequences of neoliberalism and globalization, as well as the inclusion of humanistic elements. The negative repercussions of globalization, according to Raby (2014) included "(a) neocolonial influences, (b) vocational fallacy, (c) socioeconomic inequity, and (d) lowered status" (p. 750) all of which lead to obstacles for the social and

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economic reform that Ireland (2015) touches upon. As a result of these current repercussions of globalization, Raby (2014) warned that encouraging forward thinking on future issues would produce a ripple effect such as "overall access, women enrollment, participation of local authorities in funding, and status" and thus encourages "defining the relevance of education itself" (p. 752). Still, Raby (2014) did offer the positive consequences of globalization such as accessibility, adaptability, and social equity.

Arguably, globalization can be attributed to neoliberalism. Boyd (2011) asks: Is it possible that neoliberalism is the culprit of changing community colleges into consumer colleges? While that is an alarming generalization of community colleges, there has certainly been a shift away from the Keynesian welfare model (Ireland, 2015; Phelan & Dawes, 2018). The Keynesian welfare model entails the involvement of governmental efforts in alleviating inequality; however, in the neoliberal model, the alleviation of inequalities has been replaced with individualization and free markets (Ireland, 2015).

Community colleges have been a gateway to higher education since the early twentieth century and today are driven by the promotion of social equality (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014) for economic prosperity. Providing access to higher education for a population that may not otherwise have access, community colleges are sustaining what Levin (2007) has referred to as the "have-nots" of our society who are seeking access to higher education and greater socioeconomic status (p. 1). Historically, higher education was reserved for the elite and resulted in social stratification (Saunders, 2011). Community colleges thus served as a buffer to the upward extension of secondary schools, and while this level of higher education was welcomed by society, their dual mission of fulfilling workplace needs and matriculating students to four-year institutions was met with some reservation and appeal by community leaders (Cohen &

Brawer, 2003). In addition, credibility of community colleges was also hinged upon students developing "global awareness and competence that respond to the needs of the communities' learners [and] businesses" (Opp & Gosetti, 2014, p. 67). Thus, community college students continue to be measured by global educational standards, which have contributed to the current challenges faced by community colleges today.

Meeting the needs of the 21st century student requires that community college institutions and their leaders demonstrate the ability to be innovative and prepared for unforeseen challenges while wrestling with the demands of the completion agenda. In 2009, President Obama challenged community colleges to increase graduation rates, sharpen focus on student access, and especially to dramatically improve completion rates (Moltz, 2010). This is particularly poignant since the completion agenda, according to Humphreys (2012), has "morphed into a more-completion-at-less-cost agenda" (p. 1). Further, community colleges, however functional and well performing in their traditional role, "cannot effectively meet the needs of their students and communities without responding to the transformation in the larger economic and societal environment" (AACC, 2012, p. 1). With the pressures facing community colleges today, care should be taken not to fall into the regimentation of what worked well in the past, nor lose sight of the need to proactively examine the relevancy of their role and mission.

Connecting the Community College Mission to Students' Needs and Motivation

As mentioned previously, Raby (2014) suggested community college models are in a state of conflict. The two distinct philosophies, appearing on opposite sides of a continuum, are driving institutional initiatives. First, neoliberalism focuses on the community college as a supplier of human capital. Second, at the opposite end of the continuum, the focus is human agency, where education is viewed as the catalyst for transcending inequalities. The neoliberal

philosophy claims that credentials and training lead to employment, economic stability, global competitiveness, and fiscal security and thus overall social prosperity. The human agency faction feels that social mobility improves by being exposed to higher education and the promise of learning to think critically and communicate effectively.

Carnevale (2016) refers to the concept of "individual human flourishing" as a lifelong endeavor and an ambiguous task (p. 13). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and the values of higher education require an understanding of the motivations of community college students. The seminal research on motivation rests firmly with Abraham Maslow, who theorized in the 20th century that human needs drive motivation and that human needs existed as a hierarchy (Maslow, 1954). The theory became known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is represented as a pyramid. The five-tier model depicts human physiological needs as the foundational support, followed by safety or security, as these are recognized as basic human needs. The upper three tiers of the pyramid involve social development and progress toward personal development. The bottom two tiers represent the need for a human's most basic needs to be met in order to progress or transition upward through the model. Figure 1 depicts this hierarchical relationship.
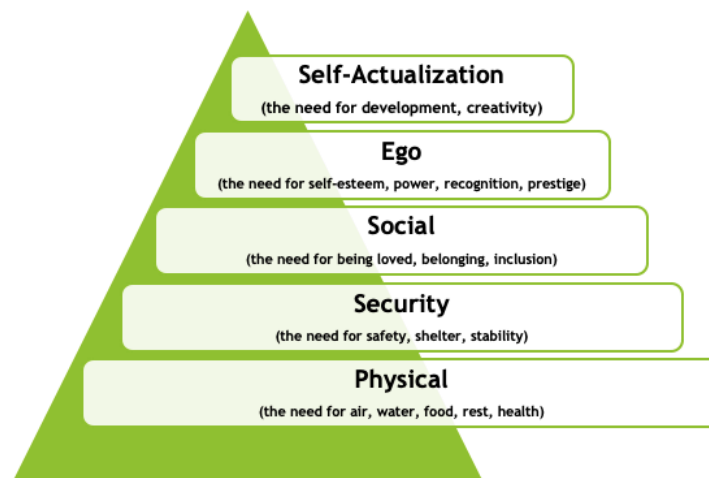
Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Higher-level needs at the top of the pyramid only come into focus once the more basic needs at the lower tiers are met. The bottom levels are often referred to as deficiency needs meaning that they illicit little or no meaning if they are met. Yet, if they are not met, an individual becomes anxious and thus unable to progress to satisfy upper-level needs. These basic or physiological needs include eating, sleeping, and feeling safe and socially connected. The need to be recognized or to develop and be creative are only triggered once basic needs are satisfied (Maslow, 1954).

Increasingly, community college students are challenged with meeting their basic needs. Over the past few years, food insecurity among community college students has been studied and documented: "Students' struggles with food insecurity, and its implications for academic and health outcomes, have been noted by college administrators, who have increased the number of food pantries on college campuses to more than 500 in 2017 (College and University Food Bank Alliance, n.d.). Furthermore, researchers from the New York community college system studied the concept of food insecurity among community college students and published their findings in the *Journal of Public Affairs*. The researchers concluded that, "students' struggles with food insecurity on campus shape their relationship with the college institution" (Ilieva & Ahmed, 2018).

Thus, understanding this phenomenon and its impact on student success may help ascertain if a focus on neoliberalism or the human agency best addresses this challenge. In essence, can students effectively learn if their basic needs are not met? According to Maslow's theory of motivation and related hierarchy, the answer is no. "A child born poor in the United States today is more likely to remain poor than at any time in our history" (AACC, 2012, p. vii).

Food insecurity and basic needs not being met require community colleges to take a more intentional look what access and support truly mean in the context of the student populations and communities served by an institution.

With access as a primary focus of community colleges, AACC (2012) holds to the conviction that "Access without support for student success is an empty promise" (p. 20). Further, if community colleges are not prepared to meet the changing needs of our students, then it should not be surprising that a student's ability to persist would be impacted. Carnevale (2016) points to the conclusion that "measuring intrinsic value is probably a fool's errand. But we must keep trying" (p. 13). Courageous conversations from community college leaders are key to addressing the perceptions or misconceptions of the ability of students to complete a credential that leads to better pay, stability, and their ability to meet basic human needs. This ultimately creates opportunity for better workforce outcomes and appreciation of deeper human meaning (Carnevale, 2016).

Impact of Commodification and Student Learning

While it may be unrealistic to envision higher education institutions operating without neoliberal influence, the findings that come out of the research already noted suggest that higher education institutions, and particularly community colleges, must work towards a mission that keeps student success for all students at the forefront. Boyd (2011) stated, "community colleges should be leading communities by embracing the value of all education as life enhancing and necessary for a strong republic, not just as a means to get a job and become more active in the consumer cycle" (p. 260).

Carnevale (2016) wrote, "Both liberal education and work education need to be improved. Liberal education is too often a set of cafeteria choices with little coherence" (p. 13).

With even greater emphasis, he further contended that the most urgent matter facing higher education is the alignment of college curricula with labor markets (Carnevale, 2016). Thus, collaborative efforts must be intentionally made if education reform is to be successful.

Technology is becoming a key tool in delivering education and training. AACC's (2018) core values and vision support the use of technology for "rapid sharing of information…ways to accelerate access to resources on best practices in creating learning opportunities" (p. 3) justifying this position through the neoliberal lens. In their words,

> Given the transition from an industrial economy to one where knowledge and skill sets are the crucial determinants of career achievement, the association should explore potential partnerships for monitoring and distributing information about the impact of social, technological, and economic trends on college curricula. (p. 3)

How knowledge is packaged for the student becomes key in how community colleges approach the student learning. In AACC's (2012) *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, the charge is for community colleges to "redesign their institutions, their mission, and their students' educational experiences" to meet the needs of a changing society. This involves thinking differently and attempting strategies the improve student outcomes without diminishing rigor and learning.

Levidow (2002) wrote, "Further to neoliberal ideology, universities…must package knowledge, deliver flexible education through [technology], provide adequate education for 'knowledge workers,' and produce more of them at lower unit cost" (p. 231). He further described that performance indicators commodify social activity by "subordinating professional judgments to accountancy" (p. 232). Carnevale (2016) contends, "postsecondary education has become one more gearwheel in the working of the powerful economic and educational mechanisms that determine the odds in a modern economy" (p. 12). Thus, post-secondary

education, and community colleges specifically, must ensure academic integrity while also addressing its role in contributing to the economic viability of the communities they serve.

Levin (2005) connected the business way of thinking to the strong political incentives promoted at the federal level to see students as consumers at the community college levels and for the community college to see students as commodities. The push for accountability in higher education has played a significant role both in the history behind the development of community colleges as well as the scrutiny of community colleges (Hert, 2013). Levin contended that the economic realities of the community college has increasingly altered its traditional focus of student access and the opportunity to develop as an adult by narrowing its former more comprehensive curriculum.

Community colleges seek to embrace all students who cross their doors, to which Lamont (2009) wrote that vulnerable groups need an institution to offer opportunities with an understanding of who they are, not as only consumers, nor as commodities to serve market-driven forces. Hall and Lamont (2013) described the setting backdrop to what community colleges should aspire to through social resilience in the neoliberal era:

> One of our conclusions is that social resilience is the result of active processes of response. Groups do not simply call passively on existing sets of resources. Social resilience is the product of much more creative processes in which people assemble a variety of tools, including collective resources and new images of themselves, to sustain their well-being in the face of social change. In some instances, those tools are features of existing context– in others, they are made available by neo-liberalism itself. (p. 26)

Thus, the literature confirms that the neoliberal era has most likely had an impact on community colleges. The question then remains if the impact has been positive, negative, or both. The research for this study is focused on the perceptions of community college presidents, their mission statements, and how they have accepted their role for student success during the

neoliberal era. A specific program and community college network that offers promising practices, called Achieving the Dream (ATD, 2018, 2019) is a specific program by which presidents express how students are treated at their respective institutions.

Community Building: Achieving the Dream Initiative

According to Levin (2007), the concern that neoliberalism is driving the community college agenda is real. The purpose of community college is the preparation of students to compete in the localized and global economy. This entails ensuring the student develops competencies that respond to the needs of the communities in which they work (Opp & Gosetti, 2014), with technology playing a bigger role in the delivery of education. Thomas Friedman (2016, 2017) wrote of having optimism during these accelerating technological times, and part of his optimism is found in the need for community connections as key to social change in this ubiquitous age of technology. The banding together of community colleges across the country to share their successes and their challenges describes the ATD initiative.

ATD (2018) supports the largest network of community colleges, "working to become strong engines of student and community growth. ATD's proven model helps colleges identify emerging needs and ways to improve practices across the full spectrum of capacities required for whole-college reform" (para. 1). ATD (2018, 2019) is a nongovernmental nonprofit organization that is geared toward the institutional improvement of community colleges. It was conceived in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations: American Association of Community Colleges (AACC); Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas-Austin (CCLP); Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Colombia University (CCRC); Jobs for the Future; MDRC; and Public Agenda. ATD uses student-centered evidence and data to close achievement gaps and promote social equity by (a)

guiding evidence-based institutional change, (b) influencing public policy, (c) generating

knowledge, and (d) engaging the public (ATD, 2018). In 2010, ATD was established as an

independent national nonprofit organization that consists of partners, investors, advisors,

coaches, colleges and state policy teams, and to date is recognized as potentially "the most

comprehensive national reform network dedicated to student success in higher education history"

(ATD, 2017a, para. 1).

More than 220 colleges in 41 states participate in ATD (2019). As noted earlier in this

chapter, there are 980 public community colleges (Statista, 2018). The ATD network represents

approximately 22% of all public community colleges, with the goal of accelerating and

advancing a college's student success agenda (ATD, 2018). ATD supports student success

initiatives by providing community building among community colleges by way of coaching to

provide: (a) holistic student supports, (b) data-enabled leadership, (c) pathways coaching, (d)

teaching and learning, and (e) customized coaching (ATD, 2018). The network includes

intensive coaching that offers seven essential capacities that support students:

> We engage our Network in whole-college transformation using a coaching process that is
> constantly informed and improved by our longstanding partnerships and practice in the
> field. To fuel innovation, we anticipate future needs and issues, leveraging knowledge
> through collective learning. Our Institutional Capacity Framework helps us integrate and
> align seven essential capacities at all colleges to support a student-centered culture that
> promotes student success. They are: Leadership & Vision; Data & Technology; Equity;
> Teaching & Learning; Engagement & Communication; Strategy & Planning; Policies &
> Practices. (ATD, 2018, para. 1)

AACC (2018) adheres to a core value as connectedness: "AACC fosters a sense of

community and responsiveness that supports the ability of its members to network locally,

nationally, and internationally, to learn from each other and to leverage their resources for

action" (p. 2). Utilizing the lenses from AACC and ATD, Ayers (2005), while noting the

negative discourse offered to institutions in the neoliberal era, also found that there is a hopeful path that community colleges have followed. Connectedness through Achieving the Dream network encourages a more socially just approach to the student learner and their success. This is germane to this research as it seeks to understand how the mission statement of community colleges in the ATD network and their presidents view their purpose in a neoliberal era which espouses accountability. The connectedness of these institutions via the ATD network may provide insight into how they balance neoliberal pressures with delivering a more human-focused approach to higher education, which has been its historical calling.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a summary of the literature that is pertinent to this study. The historical evolution of neoliberalism, how it is defined, and its impact was reviewed. The research cited draws connections from the origin of both thought and philosophy of neoliberalism to community colleges that currently face cultural, political, and economic pressures. The public community college mission and how the commodification of higher education has evolved, and its potential impact on student learning has been presented. The initiative Achieving the Dream was explained. This unique network serves as a bridge in the neoliberal era where community colleges must address the demands of accountability while balancing a socially just focus on student success-centered practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact at their institutions. The following specific research questions were addressed:

- How does the language used in community college mission statements reflect the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era?

- What are the perceptions and understandings of community college presidents of the neoliberal era?

- How do community college mission statements guide the work of college presidents?

Chapter 3 provides the methodological framework and details for the study. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (1) qualitative paradigm; (2) methodology; (3) sampling; (4) researcher as research instrument; (5) instrumentation and data collection; (6) quality, validity, trustworthiness, and ethics; (7) reliability and validity; and (8) data analysis.

Qualitative Paradigm

In order to "uncover the underlying meaning of phenomena," analysis of data cannot be formulated solely through statistically based techniques (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, pp. 5-6). Qualitative research is founded on the principle of looking for a deeper meaning and understanding that each person experiences their own reality. Research conducted through the qualitative paradigm explores the "understanding [of] how people interpret their experiences,

how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 6). The concept of understanding experiences and belief that each person's reality is their own allows for qualitative inquiry of various phenomena and data.

According to Quinn Patton (2002), there are three kinds of qualitative data: (a) in-depth, open-ended interviews, (b) direct observation, and (c) written documents (p. 4). Interviews allow people to explain their reality through expression of their personal experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge about a particular subject matter. Observation allows data to be collected by observing and recording behaviors and interactions of an individual or group of people's experiences. Document analysis allows data to be collected through the study of written verbiage such as

> excerpts, quotations, or passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys. (Patton, 2002, p. 4)

The three options of collecting qualitative data should be examined by the researcher and may involve use of more than one qualitative data collection method. Qualitative data typically presents "themes, patterns, understandings, and insights" that depend on the researcher's "skill, sensitivity, and integrity" (Patton, 2002, p. 5).

Purpose

According to Patton (2000), "Qualitative methods are first and foremost *research* methods"; however, qualitative methods are not appropriate for every inquiry situation (p. 145). Qualitative research has a different purpose than quantitative research and typically involves different audiences. The researcher is the one who determines the purpose and audience while

determining the value of the research in an ethically responsible way. According to Patton

(2002),

> It means one can't judge the appropriateness of the methods in any study or the quality of the resulting findings without knowing the study's purpose, agreed-on uses, and intended audiences. Evaluation and research typically have different purposes, expected uses, and intended users. (p. 10)

Thus, the researcher must determine the purpose of the research as a first step toward

understanding and selecting a paradigm that most accurately allows for data collection and use.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways neoliberalism has influenced higher

education, specifically community colleges. This study examined language in community college

mission statements and presidential perspectives. Ultimately, the research aimed to describe

language-use influence on college missions and community college presidents' priorities.

Analyzing Paradigms

In looking at philosophical perspectives as addressed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016),

there are four perspectives to consider: (a) positivist/postpositivist, (b) interpretive /

constructivist, (c) postmodern/poststructural, and (d) critical theory (p. 12). A positivist

perspective "assumes that reality exists 'out there' and that it is observable, stable, and

measurable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). Interpretive research is perhaps the most widely

used and is based on the construction of each person's reality, and the role of the researcher is to

construct an interpretation of the reality. Postmodernism foundation is that there is no single

reality or truth, rather, questions collective understanding of multiple truths and realities. Each of

these perspectives aims to understand "how people make sense of their lives, delineate the

process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience," which is a

primary characteristic of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Finally, critical

research examines power as a social construction:

> It is a contrast between a research that seeks merely to understand and research that challenges …between a research that reads the situation in terms of interaction and community and a research that reads it in terms of conflict and oppression…between a research that accepts the status quo and a research that seeks to bring about change. (Crotty, 1998, p. 113)

Critical Theory

This research study employed a qualitative research paradigm with strong emphasis on

critical theory. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to examine the underlying

relationships between presidential priorities and community college missions and initiatives. The

qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine the relationship from multiple perspectives

and in multiple contexts. Critical theory was selected as a paradigm for this study because,

according to Patton (2002), it recognizes power structures are political in nature and potentially

influence social change.

When looking at social, political, cultural, and or economic structures and their

relationships to one another, critical theory serves as the appropriate research paradigm. With

critical theory, a researcher can construct or deconstruct their worldview, and then critically

reflect on that process:

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system… Inquiry that aspires to the name *critical* must be connection to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society… Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label *political* and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, pp. 281-291)

Patton (2002) contends that critical theory is influenced by Marxism and aims to promote social

consciousness while exposing institutional structures that result in social inequities, which are

rooted in power and oppression. Patton (2002) refers to critical theory as orientational qualitative inquiry as research of this paradigm is rooted in perspective and suggests that orientational serves as "a more neutral term than ideologically based inquiry" (p. 131). When using critical theory, it is suggested by Patton (2002) that "the researcher be very clear about the theoretical framework being used and the implications of that perspective on study focus, data collection, fieldwork, and analysis" (p. 131).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach. The phenomenological elements allowed for the use of research methods such as interviews and document review to understand and describe how this relationship exists today.

The research design included semi-structured interviews conducted with college presidents. Document review of current mission statements complement data collected through interviews to help analyze and understand the current role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. Qualitative analysis of documents and interviews employed the use of coding to identify themes. The analysis enabled the researcher to draw conclusions and identify implications for current and future practice.

A characteristic of qualitative research is the researcher as the primary instrument, meaning that it is the researcher's responsibility to collect data and then analyze the data with the purpose of constructing some form of understanding regarding a particular experience or phenomenon while being able to recognize their influences or bias. Often researchers are driven by a lack of theory available, thus there is a need to gather "data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.17). Gathering data for qualitative research often involves attention to detail and the ability to richly describe a phenomenon while allowing

"important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found…without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be" (Patton, 2002, p. 56). Neutrality is essential from the primary instrument.

Sampling

The purpose of the study was to examine the ways neoliberalism has influenced higher education, specifically community colleges. The examination of relationships between the language selection and use in community college mission statements and the corresponding language captured in presidential interviews served to determine the sampling process and criteria and was essential to the study. It was determined by the researcher that examination of current documents in addition to semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to examine data from multiple perspectives and contexts.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there are two basic types of sampling: (a) probability, and (b) nonprobability, of which the latter is most used in qualitative research. As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). It was determined that analysis of neoliberalism in higher education could best be captured through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002).

Theory-based sampling was used in the document review of mission statements and semi-structured interviews with community college presidents. Theory-based sampling allows the researcher to sample "incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). As deemed by the researcher, theory-based sampling was appropriate for this study.

Confirming and disconfirming case sampling involves the gathering of data and watching for patterns to emerge (Patton, 2002). Use of critical theory in this study, due to the framework of neoliberalism and recognition of power structures that potentially influence social change, involves looking for patterns in the data (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Confirmatory cases include the collection of data that aims to serve as "additional examples that fit already emergent patterns" and provide "richness, depth, and credibility" (Patton, 2002, p. 239). When using confirming or disconfirming case sampling, the sample is closely tied to the research conclusions and requires the researcher to be thoughtful of this potential challenge.

Research findings and conclusions and transferability depend on the manner in which a sample is determined. In qualitative inquiry, there are no roles for sample size (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Rather, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have suggested that the sample size depends on the questions being asked, the types of data being collected during the study, and the resources that serve as support to the study.

As noted, within the 980 public community colleges (Statista, 2018) in the United States, the ATD network represents approximately 22% of all public community colleges, with over 220 community colleges choosing to be ATD members. Of these ATD colleges, 94 are designated Leader Colleges (ATD, 2018). ATD divides the 50 states in the United States into eight regions, of which the 94 ATD Leader Colleges span seven of the eight regions as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. These regions in the United States are segmented as follows: Far West, Great Lakes, Mideast, New England, Plains, Rocky Mountain, Southeast, and Southwest (ATD, 2018).

From the pool of 94 ATD Leader Colleges from the seven regions, 34 institutions were identified by the researcher with regards to potential economic constraints regarding travel of the

researcher. The sample for this study was based on the following criteria: the community college must be recognized by ATD as a current Leader College, and presidents interviewed must be currently serving as a president from these ATD Leader Colleges. An email was sent from the president of the researcher's institution to the 34 community colleges identified, asking for their participation in the study. The president from the researcher's institution was known by the presidents from the 34 targeted institutions, thus their willingness to participate increased greatly from this connection. The email sent defined the scope of this research project and asked the presidents if they would be willing to be interviewed.

The researcher, as the primary instrument in the qualitative study, interviewed at least one president from each of the seven regions: Far West, Great Lakes, Mideast, New England, Plains, Southeast, and Southwest. The Rocky Mountain region did not have an ATD Leader College. For the purpose of anonymity, the exact number cannot be stated by region as three regions had only one participating president. As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). For this study, purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002) was utilized to develop a pool and select community college presidents from each of the seven regions to be interviewed for their thoughts on the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era.

Adherence to qualitative transferability and the theoretical framework of the study was essential to limit bias from the researcher as the primary instrument and maintain the ethical processes and procedures regarding subjectivity visibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured interviews and all other data collection for this study involved research protocols to

maintain transparency. The researcher performed a pilot of this study that involved the same parameters as the main study. The pilot enabled the researcher to test the feasibility of the study and allow for modifications prior to the larger study of neoliberalism in higher education.

Quality, Validity, Trustworthiness, and Ethics

The study of the ways that neoliberalism has influenced higher education, specifically community colleges, involves production of quality research that is recognized as valid and ethical. In qualitative research, it is imperative for the researcher serving as the primary instrument that the study demonstrates trustworthiness. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Because qualitative research is based on assumptions about reality different from those of quantitative research, the standards for rigor in qualitative research necessarily differ from those of quantitative research" (p. 237).

Validity and reliability in the study of the impact of neoliberalism in higher education entails careful disclosure of the study's conceptualization, data collection methods, and data analysis and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interpretations of reality or understanding that construction of reality obtained through interviews and data analysis can create meaning and understanding of a particular phenomenon. Rigor in research can strengthen the validity and strengthen the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) triangulation is a strategy used to increase credibility or internal validity of qualitative data. Triangulation of the data was conducted by means of the scoring rubric, respective participant interview responses, and reflective field notes. To increase credibility, a study can use multiple theories and hypotheses to find relationships in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, interviews of community college presidents, as well as community college mission statements and collection of field notes served to triangulate

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the data collected during the interviews. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "Triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collection from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people" (p. 245). Thus, triangulation using these data sources may potentially increase the quality and validity of the study.

Reliability in this study was achieved by coding the language used in community college mission statements. Reliability, as explained by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated" (p. 250). Use of specific words and language in these documents revealed the concept of the phenomenon. The researcher noted that interviews with community college presidents may not produce reliable replication of research findings as the findings are not static. Wolcott (2005) explains the inappropriateness of reliability when studying human behaviors: "To achieve reliability in the technical sense, a researcher has to manipulate conditions so that replicability can be assessed" (p. 250). In the event the interviews produce repetition, it was not expected that the findings be exact (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study aimed to achieve external validity or transferability through the use of methods that could be applied in different institutional contexts to reveal findings that may or may not be similar to those reached in this study. Transferability involves the investigator's ability to provide "sufficient descriptive data" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 298). The transferability of the findings depends on the reader's own institutional context; however, the methods and analysis techniques should be replicable.

The ethics of the primary instrument—the researcher—to a great extent determine the validity and reliability of a study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "in qualitative studies,

ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of the data and in the dissemination of the findings" (p. 261). Thus, the interviewer and interviewee relationship may impact the quality of the data collected. The semi-structured interviews are structured in a way that aimed to improve the interview conditions for the respondents with the purpose of building trust. Additionally, any bias of the researcher was articulated clearly in the dissertation.

Steps were taken to ensure that documents collected came from reliable and authentic sources. This involved vetting of sources with institutional and organizational experts to ensure currency and accuracy. Mission statements were retrieved directly from community college websites, which are considered public domain. Public domain does not require consent for access or use, which alleviates ethical concerns regarding these data sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Researcher as Research Instrument

Qualitative research is rooted in the interpretations of the researcher. Thus, the researcher must "aim for 'balance,' 'fairness,' and 'completeness" and adoption of a neutral stance (Patton, 2002, p. 51). The researcher entered the research understanding the need to allow the data to unfold from a neutral perspective to avoid bias and error. With the researcher as the research instrument, the importance of the reader to understand the researcher's experience is essential.

The researcher began her career in higher education at the community college level in 2014 as an adjunct instructor in the division of student development. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in graphic design with an emphasis in visual literacy and visual methodology. She holds a Master of Arts degree in integrative studies with an emphasis on global studies, cultural studies, and gender.

In 2015, she accepted the position as a program specialist for a partnership between the community college and a nonprofit organization. In 2017, she became the director of the

program and partnership and reported to the associate dean and dean of student development. In the role of director, she was responsible for all aspects of the program operations, curriculum development and implementation, managing staff, overseeing of partnership, event coordination, teaching, student caseload management, outcomes assessment, and financial accountability. In total, she has served five years at the same community college in progressive appointments.

In addition to her professional appointments at the college, the researcher served as a member on a strategic planning committee. During the final year of a strategic plan cycle, the researcher assumed the role as co-chair on the student experience strategic planning committee. Progressive responsibilities are evident throughout the researcher's professional career in higher education.

Outside of researcher's professional appointments and involvement, the researcher is a published author in higher education academic books. Her publications include contributions to the academic conversation on the subjects of leading adult learners and instructional social justice strategies for community college faculty.

Professional livelihood of the researcher brings a bias to the researcher as an instrument. The importance of the fight against bias, as well as Mintzberg's (1994) articulation to fight bias of self-preservation, requires the ability to remain neutral in perspective. Patton (2002) argues the need for the researcher to "be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence" (p. 51). A skilled human instrument maintains ability to be responsive and adaptive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher acknowledges the responsibility undertaken as a human instrument and has developed awareness of limiting potential influences.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Applied research involves examining human problems and understanding how to deal with societal issues, such as neoliberalism in higher education (Patton, 2002). Data collection for this study involved research protocols to maintain transparency while preserving anonymity. The framework of neoliberalism and recognition of power structures that potentially influence social change involves looking for patterns during and after data collection (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The protocols were developed from the literature reflecting both neoliberal perspectives as well as student human agency perspectives.

Research Question 1: Review of Community College Websites for Mission Statement Language in the Neoliberal Era

The first research question required a review of the community colleges' websites to gather information on their mission statement. This question asks how the language used in community college mission statements reflect the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. In order to answer this research question, a rating scale was developed for analysis of the mission statements. The development of the Mission Statement Rating Scale began with identification of main themes from the literature that would differentiate mission statements in terms of a focus on student human agency versus neoliberal perspectives. Five themes emerged from the literature related to student human agency: (1) developing basic, critical thinking skills; (2) lifelong learning; (3) promoting equity, cultural diversity; (4) citizenship, service to community; and, (5) personal development, student centered. Five themes also emerged from the literature for the neoliberal perspective: (1) job competitiveness of the student; (2) promote economic development skills; (3) globalization; (4) workforce development, career training; and, (5) market focused training.

For each of the 10 themes, descriptors were developed from the literature so that clarity in terms of mission statements found for the community colleges of the identified presidents interviewed could be determined. According to Fairclough (1995), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a way to study social relations that occur on various levels, such as dominance and oppression. Language analyzation through CDA reveals "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2).

Each theme was then scored on a researcher-constructed rubric with a four-point rating scale—Very Strongly Reflected (3); Very Reflected (2); Somewhat Reflected (1) and Not Reflected (0)—to indicate the degree to which the theme was mentioned in the college mission statements. The point scale associated with the rubric reflected the number of times the theme was mentioned in the mission statement. Thus, for Very Strongly Reflected, the theme was mentioned three times or more; Very Reflected meant the theme was mentioned twice; Somewhat Reflected, once; and Not Reflected meant the theme did not appear in the mission statement.

Mission statements were then collected from the website of the college of each of the presidents interviewed. The number of words contained in each mission statement were noted by the researcher and coded by a word-count range as shown in Table 1. Development of the word count range by the researcher served to provide anonymity of the word count of mission statements.

Table 1. *Mission Statement Word Count Range*

	MISSION STATEMENT WORD COUNT	NUMBER OF COLLEGES
Range 1	0-19	5
Range 2	20-39	4
Range 3	40-59	4
Range 4	60+	4

The 10-item rubric consisted of statements reflecting either a neoliberal perspective (5 questions) or student human agency perspective (5 questions) on a four-point Likert scale. This is an example of a neoliberal question:

The degree to which the mission statement reflects a focus on:

Very Strongly Reflected	Very Reflected	Somewhat Reflected	Not Reflected

1. Job competitiveness of the student

This is an example of student human agency question:

The degree to which the mission statement reflects a focus on:

Very Strongly Reflected	Very Reflected	Somewhat Reflected	Not Reflected

1. Developing critical thinking skills

Research Question 2: Community College Presidential Interviews: Perceptions and Understanding of Neoliberalism

The second question sought to learn the perceptions and understandings of community college presidents of the neoliberal era. These data were collected via interviews. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the majority of the questions asked during the interview are guided by a list of points to be covered, while not expecting adherence to exact wording or the order in which the questions are asked. The researcher asked follow-up questions (prompts) during the interview to encourage elaboration and clarification. Interviewing participants as part of a study allows for data collection that encompasses data that involves person-to-person conversation that is purposeful (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The semi-structured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) were conducted by telephone or in person and were digitally recorded.

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All interviews were recorded via audiotape on two devices and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. During the interviews conducted in person, the researcher made field notes immediately following the conclusion of the interview so as to remain in the present and minimize distraction. With the interviews conducted by phone, the researcher compiled field notes during the interview.

Field notes allowed the researcher to create a visual image of a situation that may be not captured by an audio recording. Respecting the interviewees and valuing "reflexivity" involves responsibility to the quality of the data (Patton, 2002, p. 417). The presidents were assured that notes would be cumulative in nature and not tied to specific presidents or colleges. The researcher conducted all interviews.

The participants were current community college presidents identified by the researcher and accomplished by outreach by the researcher's president. The study aimed to interview at least one president from each of the seven regions (as recognized by ATD) of the United States. All presidents who responded to the outreach of the researcher's president were contacted to schedule the interview and become official participants in the study. Presidents who did not respond did not receive additional outreach from the researcher.

Once a president became a participant in the study, a mutually agreed upon time and location for the interview was scheduled and the informed consent process was initiated. The researcher provided the participant with a copy of the written informed consent form and the interview questions in advance of the interview. During the informed consent process, the researcher informed participants of potential risks and benefits from participation as well as the measures that would be taken to minimize risk and maximize benefits. The participant had an opportunity to ask any questions prior to signing the form or giving verbal consent. The

participant either signed and emailed back the form back to the researcher or provided signed

consent when interviewed in person. A signed form, indicating agreement to participate in the

study, was gathered, and subsequently all participants received a copy of the signed consent

form.

Following the interviews, the researcher outsourced the transcription of the audio

recordings to professional transcriptionist. Interviews were either conducted in person at the

ATD DREAM 2019 Conference or by phone. Phone interviews have both advantages and

disadvantages regarding the deviation of data collection that may occur due to variation and

deviance of in-person interviews versus phone interviews. It was recognized that interviews

conducted by phone can produce variation in data obtained when compared to data collected in-

person interviews. Though, according to Baumann (1993), "the clear conclusion from…literature

is that telephone interviews are equivalent to in-person interviews in terms of validity, reliability,

precision of estimates, and response rates" (p. 256).

Research Question 3: Alignment between the Mission Statement and Presidential Priorities

The research sought to gain a better understanding of how or if the community colleges'

missions statement informed the priorities established by the president. This was accomplished

by comparing the overarching themes that emerged from the mission statement analysis and the

coding of statements made by the presidents during the semi-structured interviews. These

findings seek to determine if the mission statement guides work of the president or if the

president establishes their priorities without reflecting on the themes articulated in the mission

statement.

Reliability and Validity

Website Mission Statement Protocol

Steps were taken to ensure reliability of data collected via the mission statement review, which was conducted via the rubric described previously. Interrater reliability was established by having two professionals, each with doctoral degrees in education and multiple years of experience with mission statement development, score mission statements using the Mission Statement Rating Scale developed by the researcher. For the first step, the two professionals rated the same website mission statement from an ATD Leader College whose president was contacted for an interview but was either unavailable or nonresponsive to the outreach eliciting participation in the study. This allowed the researcher to test the rubric rating scale on nonparticipator ATD Leader Colleges prior to the rubric scoring of mission statements from participatory ATD Leader Colleges.

The two professionals applied the Mission Statement Rating Scale independently, then compared ratings. They agreed on seven of the 10 themes identified by the rubric. The ratings were discussed, and modest editing occurred to clarify those themes on which disagreement occurred. A second ATD Leader College mission statement from a nonparticipator ATD Leader College was then rated by the two professionals. On the second rating, 100% agreement was achieved. At this point, rater reliability was deemed sufficient to proceed with the use of the instrument in the study.

Interview Question Protocol

The design of the study was intended to produce descriptive information and contribute to the academic conversation surrounding neoliberalism and if mission statements are reflective of these ideals. The semi-structured interview questions emanated from the literature and formed

the basis for the interviews gauging the extent to which community college presidents have responded to agendas suggested at national, state, and local community levels. A pilot was conducted with the researcher's president. Following the interview, a discussion ensued regarding revisions and additions and/or deletions to enhance the interview so that key information related to the research questions was gathered.

Limitations

Weaknesses or limitations of a study should be acknowledged and addressed by the researcher. Limitations of this study include (a) sampling strategy, (b) interviews conducted by phone, and (c) researcher bias.

Sampling Strategy. According to Patton (2002), "it is important to be open and clear about a study's limitations; that is, to anticipate and address criticisms that may be made of a particular sampling strategy, especially from people who think that the only high-quality samples are random ones" (p. 242). Since the community college presidents were not randomly chosen, generalizability may be somewhat limited, as well as the moderate sample size utilized to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Telephone Interviews. Interviews were conducted both in person and by phone. The researcher acknowledges the absence of visual cues for the interviews conducted by phone. Attention was made to capture the details of this limitation in the researcher's field notes. Field notes allowed for the capturing of pauses, changes in tone or speed, and other non-linguistic cues.

Researcher Bias. A characteristic of qualitative research is the researcher as the primary instrument, meaning that it is the researcher's responsibility to collect data and then analyze the

data with the purposes of constructing some form of understanding regarding a particular experience or phenomenon, while being able to recognize their influences or bias. Interpreting data requires reflexivity, as the data is filtered through the primary instrument in the study (Lake, 2017). Adherence to qualitative transferability and the theoretical framework of the study was essential to limit bias and protect the integrity of the data and data collection process. Critical self-reflection and subjectivity were practiced by the researcher to mitigate bias.

Data Analysis

Study of the ways in which neoliberalism has influenced higher education, specifically community colleges, includes analysis and interpretation of the data and through a systematic approach. Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously and involved deconstructing the data as it was gathered, followed by reconstruction the data. Data deconstruction and reconstruction allowed for data organization and interpretation as findings emerged (Lake, 2017). It was imperative that the analysis of mission statements happen concurrently to the semi-structured interviews of community college presidents to optimize the analytical process timeline regarding the study.

Determination of if and how structures outside of the community college have influenced college missions and college presidents' priorities required the study to simultaneously collect and analyze data. The researcher elected to organize and refine the data as it was collected rather than analyzing the data collected at the conclusion of the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As data were collected throughout the study, a discovery-focused approach allowed patterns and connections to emerge within the data. Ideally, the conclusion of data analysis can be considered when a study reaches a point of saturation in the data. According to

Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "Saturation occurs when continued data collection produces no new information or insights into the phenomenon" (p. 199).

Managing data requires planning and organization in addition to the development of a system that creates clarity and transparency of data collection and the data analysis process. The process of analyzing data includes coding, which involves use of "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). Coding was used in analysis of community college mission statements and then compared to community college presidents' perspectives. Neoliberalism and the analysis of power structures provided a framework to the words or phrases and allowed for coding during both document analysis and interviews.

According to Patton (2002), the purpose of a study guides the analysis, and "core meanings found through content analysis are often called patterns and themes" (p. 452). The purpose of a study is to see if the research questions posed can be answered. Looking at neoliberalism and the effects that it may have on higher education involves analysis of segments or units. Units should reveal information that stimulates the study to surpass the original thoughts of the study, while simultaneously being a small piece of information that drives the context and "can stand by itself" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345). The concept of neoliberalism can be interpreted and expressed through varying words and language and thus may result in the subdivision of categories.

Central to this study is neoliberalism, and this is what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) would label as the core category. Coding consisted of open coding. Document analysis of community college mission statements involved tagging units of analysis, or open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Community college presidents served as the primary component for the axial coding.

Axial coding entails data analysis of statements made during the interviews in juxtaposition to the mission statements. Finally, selective coding involves development of a core category (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); as previously stated, neoliberalism serves as the core category and is then compared to the propositions and hypotheses regarding neoliberal ideologies in higher education.

Adherence to qualitative transferability and the theoretical framework of the study was essential to limit bias and protect the integrity of the data and data collection process. Subjectivity from the primary instrument in the study is essential to ensuring ethical processes are followed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethical processes also involved data preparation or data cleansing, which involves making adjustments to the data collection methods with the purpose of allowing the data to successfully answer the research questions put forth in the study.

Because of the framework of neoliberalism and recognition of power structures, data preparation involved looking for triangulations in the data. Triangulation in data analysis allows opportunity of robustness in the findings, which may enhance trustworthiness (Lake, 2017). Combination of the phenomenological approach involving interviews and document review involves opportunity for triangulation. Data collected through multiple participants, multiple data gathering strategies, and multiple types of data allows for triangulation and thus data interpretation and analysis (Lake, 2017). Interpreting data requires reflexivity, as the data is filtered through the primary instrument in the study (Lake, 2017). The interviews involved questions that contain coded language so the study could locate external sources that serve as support for the analysis of the study and communication of the findings.

Chapter Summary

The study of the ways in which neoliberalism has influenced higher education, specifically community colleges, and the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era includes analysis and interpretation of the data and through a systematic approach. The systematic approach used in this study is highlighted in the following appendices: Appendix A, IRB approval; Appendix B, the study's timeline; Appendix C, Website Mission Statement Protocol-Scoring Rubric; Appendix D, the Interview Questions; and Appendix E, the Consent Form.

Data analysis occurs throughout the qualitative research process. In reviewing the mission statements gathered from the colleges' websites, data was analyzed via the rubric to determine if the following themes were present in the mission statement:

Human agency themes:

1) Developing basic, critical thinking skills

2) Lifelong learning

3) Promoting equity, cultural diversity

4) Citizenship, service to community

5) Personal development, student centered

Neoliberal perspective themes

1) Job competitiveness of the student

2) Promote economic development skills

3) Globalization

4) Workforce development, career training

5) Market focus training

Descriptive statistics (item response frequencies, mean, and standard deviation) were calculated and displayed related to these themes. In addition, wording collected along with the scores is examined via content analysis (Saldana, 2013).

The presidential interviews were analyzed via content analysis for theme identification. Organizing the data for analysis involved detecting relationships between the emerging themes, description of the data, followed by description of what the data revealed. Comparisons between the community college presidents and their respective websites are discussed and analyzed utilizing the mission statement found on the colleges' websites. Conclusions provide evidential support for the study's research questions. Explanation of the importance of the data in the academic conversation and lessons learned from the effects of neoliberalism in higher education are also explored in the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA STRATEGIES

Introduction

Qualitative analysis involves the transformation of data. According to Patton (2002), "this involves reducing the volume of the raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (p. 432). This chapter details the data collection process and strategies of data analysis, which requires critical judgment and creativity by the researcher. Chapter 4 addresses (a) participant contact protocol, (b) participant demographics, and (c) framework for analyzing the data.

The purpose of the study was to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact at their institutions. This chapter includes an overview of the demographics of the participants in the study and data pertaining to the three research questions:

- How does the language used in community college mission statements reflect the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era?

- What are the perceptions and understandings of community college presidents of the neoliberal era?

- How do mission statements guide the work of community college presidents?

Participant Contact Protocol

This research involved collection of data from document review of mission statements, interviews from community college presidents, and reflective field notes. This study aimed to

determine the ways in which neoliberalism has influenced higher education, specifically

community colleges. The ATD network represents approximately 22% of all public community

colleges in the United States, with over 220 community colleges choosing to be ATD members.

Of these ATD colleges, 94 have the designation of Leader College (2019). This pool of

community colleges was used to select participants for the study. The specific sampling for this

study was established according to the following criteria:

1. The community college must be recognized as an active participant in ATD and have the current designation of Leader College.

2. The presidents must currently be serving as a president from a community college in the ATD network and have the current designation of Leader College.

The current president at the researcher's institution conducted outreach via email to

community college presidents from 34 ATD Leader Colleges; as he had established relationships

with these presidents, it made it more likely they would participate in the study. The email sent

by the researcher's president defined the scope of the study and inquired about their willingness

to participate in an interview with the researcher. The outreach also inquired as to whether the 34

presidents would be at the 2019 ATD DREAM conference and to work with the researcher on

the details of scheduling the interviews. All presidents who responded to the outreach from the

researcher's president were contacted by the researcher and interview were scheduled, either in-

person during the 2019 ATD DREAM conference or by telephone.

Of the 34 presidents who received outreach, 22 responded with interest in participating.

Of the 22 interested in participating, 17 were interviewed and became participants of the study.

The reason the five presidents who expressed initial interest did not participate in the study were

primarily due to a response of scheduling constraints. Once the interviews were scheduled, the

interview questions and consent forms were emailed to the participants. Supplying the interview

questions in advance provided opportunity for the presidents to familiarize themselves with the study.

Mission Statements

Upon confirmation of president's willingness to participate in the study, the researcher then retrieved the mission statements from colleges where the participants served. The mission statements were gathered from the institutions' websites.

Participant Demographics

As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). For this study, purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002) was used to ascertain community college presidents from each of the seven regions and to interview them for their thoughts on the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era.

The 94 ATD Leader Colleges span seven of the eight regions as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The researcher, as the primary instrument in the qualitative study, interviewed at least one president from each of the seven regions: Far West, Great Lakes, Mideast, New England, Plains, Southeast, and Southwest to gain viewpoints from across the United States. At the time of the study, the Rocky Mountain region did not have a public community college with the designation of ATD Leader College; thus, it was not part of the regional study. Figure 2 illustrates these regions.
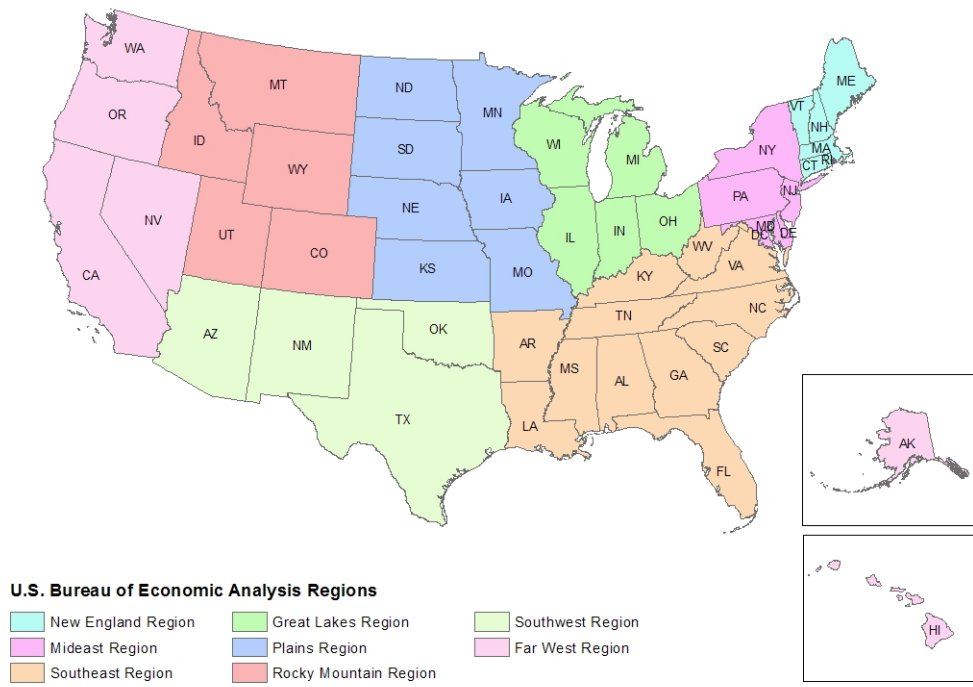
Figure 2. Map Depicting U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regions

Table 2 summarizes the number of participants from each region. For the purpose of anonymity, the participants are not be identified by region as three regions had only one participating president, which would make them easily identifiable.

Table 2. *ATD Regions of Participants*

NEW ENGLAND	MIDEAST	GREAT LAKES	PLAINS	SOUTHEAST	SOUTHWEST	FAR WEST	ROCKY MOUNTAIN
3	3	5	1	1	1	3	0

(n=17)

In terms of demography, 5 participants were female, and 12 were male; 9 participants were from under-represented populations, and 8 were Caucasian. The number of years in their

role as a community college president were broken into ranges for the purpose and in protection

of participant anonymity (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Participant Demographic Data*

		NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Gender	Male	12
	Female	5
Race	Caucasian	8
	African American	7
	Other	2
Years as President	0-4 years	6
	5-8 years	5
	9-12 years	4
	13+ years	2

(n=17)

Framework for Analyzing the Data

This section provides the framework used by the researcher for analyzing the data

compiled for the three research questions, which will be noted as RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

Deconstruction and reconstruction allowed for data organization and interpretation as findings

emerged (Lake, 2017). Managing data requires planning and organization in addition to the

development of a system that creates clarity and transparency of data collection and the data

analysis process.

Research Question 1: How does the language use in community college mission statements reflect the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era?

Table 4 shows the human agency and neoliberal dimensions summed across each of the

community colleges examined (n=17). First, note the Mission Statement Word Count Range

column. Ranges 1-4 represent the word count for the mission statements that were gathered from

the institutions' websites. While capturing the mission statements, the variability in mission

statement length was observed. The Mission Statement Word Count Ranges were developed by

the researcher and served to provide anonymity to the presidents and their respective institutions.

Table 4. *Mission Statement Word Count Ranges*

RANGE	NUMBER OF WORDS IN THE MISSION STATEMENT
1	0-19
2	20-39
3	40-59
4	60+

Four ranges emerged from the word count analysis and are summarized in Table 5.

These ranges were then applied to each community college's mission statement. The number of

times or frequency with which human agency or neoliberal terms/themes appeared in the mission

statements were then counted.

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between the word counts and the number

of mentions of the human agency and neoliberal themes showing .88 and .74 respectively. Thus,

the more words used in a mission statement the more opportunity for themes to be mentioned

and/or covered. For example, for the three of the four community colleges with mission

statements from word count Range 4, both human agency and neoliberal themes mentioned were

the highest, with human agency mentions higher in all three cases. Dually noted, while the

mission statement of the fourth community college in Range 4 mentions fewer neoliberal themes,

Pearson correlation coefficients are maintained as the mission statement mentions more human

agency themes. The human agency themes were mentioned substantively more often that

neoliberal themes—well over 2 to 1.

Table 5. *Frequencies of Mentioned Scores*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	MISSION STATEMENT WORD COUNT RANGE	STUDENT HUMAN AGENCY	NEOLIBERALISM
P1	RANGE 2	5	2
P2	RANGE 3	5	2
P3	RANGE 2	2	1
P4	RANGE 1	3	0
P5	RANGE 3	6	2
P6	RANGE 4	7	2
P7	RANGE 4	8	7
P8	RANGE 2	6	2
P9	RANGE 2	5	0
P10	RANGE 1	3	0
P11	RANGE 3	8	2
P12	RANGE 1	3	0
P13	RANGE 4	12	7
P14	RANGE 3	5	5
P15	RANGE 4	7	6
P16	RANGE 1	3	0
P17	RANGE 1	3	1
TOTALS		91	39

Table 6 shows the raw scores for each theme of the Student Human Agency dimension for each of the 17 community colleges as well as the totals for each theme across all of the colleges. As can be seen, the theme of promoting equity, cultural diversity was the most mentioned followed closely by the personal development theme and the developing basic critical thinking skills theme. The lifelong learning theme and the citizenship service to community theme were also prominently mentioned.

Table 6. *Raw Frequencies Scores for Student Human Agency Themes*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	DEVELOPING BASIC, CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS	LIFELONG LEARNING	PROMOTING EQUITY, CULTURAL DIVERSITY	CITIZENSHIP SERVICE TO COMMUNITY	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDENT CENTERED
P1	1	1	2	1	0
P2	1	1	0	1	2
P3	0	0	1	0	1
P4	1	1	0	0	1
P5	1	1	2	0	2
P6	2	1	1	0	3
P7	2	1	2	1	2
P8	1	0	2	1	2
P9	1	0	2	1	1
P10	0	1	1	0	1
P11	1	2	3	1	1
P12	0	0	1	1	1
P13	3	2	3	2	2
P14	3	1	1	0	0
P15	2	1	2	0	2
P16	1	1	0	1	0
P17	1	0	0	0	2
Totals	21	14	23	10	23

Table 7 shows the raw scores for each theme of the neoliberal dimension for each of the 17 community colleges as well as the total for each theme across all of the colleges. As shown, these themes were markedly less mentioned than most of the Student Human Agency themes with globalization promoting economic development skills and workforce development/career training being most prominent.

Table 7. *Raw Frequencies Scores for Neoliberal Themes*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	JOB COMPETITIVE-NESS OF THE STUDENT	PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SKILLS	GLOBALIZATION	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, CAREER TRAINING	MARKET FOCUS TRAINING
P1	0	1	1	0	0
P2	0	0	2	0	0
P3	0	0	0	0	1
P4	0	0	0	0	0
P5	0	1	0	1	0
P6	1	1	0	0	0
P7	1	3	1	2	0
P8	0	0	1	1	0
P9	0	0	0	0	0
P10	0	0	0	0	0
P11	0	0	2	0	0
P12	0	0	0	0	0
P13	1	1	1	2	2
P14	2	1	1	1	0
P15	1	1	1	1	2
P16	0	0	0	0	0
P17	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	6	9	11	8	5

While scoring the mission statements of the 17 websites, words and/or phrases not appearing in the mission statement protocol, but reflective of the issues, were noted. For Student Human Agency, accessibility and open-door policies were noted multiple times as was students meeting their goals. Other words noted included arts, innovative, excellence, inspire, engagement, flexibility, personal enrichment, co-curricular, and meeting learning styles.

For the neoliberal words/phrases, "world" was mentioned several times which correlates to globalization, and "partnership" was used to define the concepts of market focus training, certification, career success, and economic vitality.

Content analysis (noted in Chapter 3, Saldana, 2013) is defined by the identification of specific words and/or phrases. The Mission Statement Protocol drew the primary phases from the review of literature. With RQ2 and RQ3 the coding of primary words and phrases from the participant interviews resulted in emergent themes which follow. Interpretation of these findings are found in Chapter 5.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and understandings of community college presidents of the neoliberal era?

Initial identification of primary words and phrases was done utilizing word clouds. Word clouds are "a special visualization of text in which the more frequently used words are effectively highlighted by occupying more prominence in the representation" (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 1). Word clouds where used for preliminary analysis and for validation of the content analysis (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Word Cloud of Emergent Themes

After the interviews were transcribed, all transcripts were read carefully by the

researcher. Subsequently, general themes and quotes from the interview transcriptions were

captured and recorded. The themes as emerged through words and/or phrases flowed freely from

the transcripts and connected to the themes found in the literature and utilized in the mission

statement protocol from RQ1. As a first attempt at summarizing the themes, a Wordle, also

commonly referred to as Content Cloud, which is a computer program application, was applied

to the themes recorded from the interviews. A word cloud "demonstrates a fast and visually rich

way to enable researchers to have some basic understanding of the data at hand. Word clouds can

be a useful tool for preliminary analysis and validation of previous findings" (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 1). From the word cloud, six major words and/or phrases drew the most emphasis for the analysis with numerous addended word and/or phrases. These six most prominently displayed words are presented below: (1) equity, (2) learn/learner/learning, (3) access, (4) community, (5) completion, and (6) workforce.

Theme 1: Equity was clearly the number one theme from the interviews. According to the participants:

> We have multiple roles as to how to bring those who are not on the starting line to the starting line, so that they will be able to get the higher education that they need in order to compete in the global order we have today. There are many people who are behind, and the way to bring them to the starting line is to have equity programs. (P10)
>
> I think we continue to have those stalwarts of goals that we're all focused on, higher education period. Completion, equity, access, student success. (P12)
>
> I think what's going to happen over the next five years is there will be an explosion of everybody running workshops, knowing, thinking that they know how to do equity. Frankly, I don't think there are a lot of people out there who know how to do equity. (P15)
>
> There is bubbling resentment on the more traditional front. To be honest, there is racial bias. There is implicit bias and explicit bias and microaggressions and outright aggressions all around. It's happening. We see it. We have diversity officers, but that's just scratching the surface.... We have these biases buried in our curriculum, buried in our co-curricular activities. We have social, racial, and economic inequities inside our colleges, as good as they are. (P15)
>
> Equity was expressed in terms of open access, diversity, cultural connections and

accessibility:

> Not all programs have open access.... But the open door has always been a fundamental pillar of a mission. (P1)
>
> If you were born into poverty, you're not likely to get out of poverty.... So, what can we do that we could help to get those folks through social service agencies and working together to find a way to help them, beyond just courses, but all the support services and the wrap-around services. (P5)

This is a place that asks the question…. "What does this mean for students?" There's no question, students are the center of how we think about what we do. And we do that in both, and at the end it says that both a dynamic and very inclusive and diverse way of thinking about it, which is what I love about community colleges. (P9)

I think that discourse of rejoining the technical and the liberal, and liberal thinking is going to help the conversation on race, ethnicity, and diversity. (P15)

Theme 2: Learn/learner/learning was focused on a major theme further linked with

services, support success, participative training, and mobility:

Also, too, education is lifelong learning. Just because you get a degree in accounting today, you still have to in your field always think "Maybe I need to take another course and to refresh myself because the world is changing." (P3)

Part of the strength of this place is the capability of our faculty to make sure they're engaged in that nuance of understanding students, where they're at, what they need, and pushing and engaging them in ways that fit their learning styles. (P9)

While I do think that some of what we teach can be captured and utilized in multiple settings in a way that some people might call commodification, I think we teach and the art of teaching is something incredibly important, especially at places like ours, because our learners are dramatically different, one from another. (P9)

They're coming for an education, and if that means they make that contract with us, our contract with them is to educate them, to push, to challenge, to encourage their growth.… If there's not some healthy disruption going on there's not a whole lot of growth going on there. While I can, in some ways, think of them as customers, I want to be clear about what they're customers in. They are customers in this educational process, which, by its very nature, is challenging and pushing them to grow. (P9)

I think faculty see the room of students as a laboratory of instruction and education and teaching. (P11)

Tenure (of faculty) basically confirms customer service for me – customer service training – "we hold those folks (faculty) to different standards when they're providing instruction in the classroom with almost an assumption that the customer service is very good to begin with off the bat. (P11)

The other thing that I think will help is the returning conversations on the value of liberal arts education. And how liberal arts discourse is not running through the community colleges in a very powerful and I think very healing and beneficial way. (P15)

But inside the classroom is something different. That's where you have a rigor, and you have your teaching, and learning happening. And the faculty need to do a good job there.

But somewhat flexible too. If somebody gets sick, and it's a community college people have different things in their life going on. They need to be somewhat flexible, but don't compromise the rigor inside the classroom. (P16)

Education is a fluid, living organism, that we must adapt to, rather than having our student always adapt to us. And if we can't…and the institutions that do that well, will sustain themselves. And those who believe that they are above it will be in demise. (P17)

Theme 3: Access in general was a third major theme. This was accompanied by clarifiers such as affordable, ability, inclusivity, and mobility:

There's a great example where there's this public policy being pushed, and it really has the potential to have a dramatic impact on our access mission. That's something that we take very dearly that we're that place where if you're willing to put forth the effort there's an opportunity for you to pursue higher education. If all of a sudden all of our funding's tied to how successful you are, we may be forced to rethink that. That would be a sad day, I think, because yeah there is not a perfect way to assess who's going to be successful and who's not, when they start. (P7)

They're not a funding source. If you say capitalism and privatization, you're looking at it as a benefit or as a hierarchical measure, versus a servient support of students to be able to maximize services and opportunities that we offer at institutions. (P8)

Also, the role is to provide…still, the first two years, solid ground in the first two years of the university education for the people in your district, in your community, being accessible to all who could benefit from higher ed. (P10)

It's worrisome to no end in that whenever you have people who are not educators or closely associated with education, making decisions for education, and significant decisions. (P12)

Be able to identify what the gaps are with being one or the other and run at those gaps as hard as you can, and try to do all you can to live in that framework to the best possible for the betterment of your students. (P12)

Theme 4: A fourth major theme was that of community in the forms of service, economy, customer, and development of students:

If you were born into poverty, you're not likely to get out of poverty… So, what can we do that we could help to get those folks through social service agencies and working together to find a way to help them, beyond just courses, but all the support services and the wrap-around services. (P5)

We want students to be engaged in campus life. We want them to leave with a degree and understand that they need to be engaged in volunteer activities and serve to their community, to understand the value that coming together as a community is absolutely essential for the health and well-being of our communities, state and our nation. (P14)

Yes, they do contribute to the economy, and they contribute to all aspects of society. They contribute to the citizenry, to be good citizens to our democracy. They contribute to the health and well-being of the community. (P14)

The value in engaging with a community is as important as getting a job, earning a living and contributing back to the community. (P14)

Theme 5: A fifth major theme involved completion. This included meeting goals, pathways, success, and dreams:

On the national, and state basis, they all push for completion.… They want people to get degrees.… We also believe that once they complete certificates, and get jobs, or transfer, and complete their associate's degree, and transfer to a four-year institution, then we would have achieved our mission. (P10)

I see students as individuals with dreams. That's how I see them. Students come in, they come to us believing that we can help them achieve their dreams, get from point A to point B. I don't see them as commodities, or anything, I see them as dreams, and we have the opportunity to help them, to achieve their dreams, and that's what I focus on. (P10)

We believe that when students come in…they complete…especially the career programs, and get jobs, and really improve their learning, and their lives, then we've achieved their goals. If it's a transfer, if the student has transferred as the objective, we have been able to get them to stay, complete the associate's degree, and leave. Then, we have achieved our goal. (P10)

Redefining "completion"…well, from a standpoint of the federal government, we will get dinged…because they are not going to "complete"….So to our federal government, and to our creditor, those are losses for us.… So the question becomes, are they completers? And for what they came to us for, the answer is yes. In the eyes of the federal government, the answer is no. (P12)

When a president and when administrators and faculty start getting laser focused on getting students to complete a degree in 60 credits, we have…we owe that to our students and to the economy to get them through the shortest path, but we don't compromise the learning. (P14)

Theme 6: Finally, workforce was a major theme. This involved training, agility, economic needs, and development:

The public is investing in students, but I think students will do better if we care about them, love them, support them as individuals with families and with goals and dreams. (P2)

There is a balance between cultural and economic life. Not about plugging round pegs into round holes. (P6)

Community colleges have always been about workforce development and helping people find jobs. Maybe not every mission statement exclusively says that and yes there's something virtuous, noble and important about helping people connect to a life of the mind and be lifelong learners…but every student needs to be employed at some point. (P6)

We're at a juncture right now given the, maybe not collapsed, but certainly deflation of the middle class where we're maybe more focused than ever at one end of fitting people into jobs and making the economy work, and at the other on building them up to have rich lives, not just as cogs in a machine. (P6)

Also, the role is to provide…still, the first two years, solid ground in the first two years of the university education for the people in your district, in your community, being accessible to all who could benefit from higher ed. The role is still to provide workforce individuals with a foundation, so that they can join the workforce, and be able to pivot as needed when technological changes, so you don't educate then for just one career, and only one career, but you give them the foundation, and then the career to be able to function out there, and if they have to leave that career, they have the foundation to be able to switch to other areas. (P10)

On one hand, there are certainly forces at work that are focusing on a more career, vocational oriented, technical skills-based training. On the other hand, there is a lot of discussion of course about the need for graduates to have what traditionally has been liberal arts education so they can adapt to what will be a number of career changes and also given the nature of work, the importance of cognitive processing, being able to articulate orally and to have good writing skills. (P13)

Research Question 3: How do community college mission statements guide the work of college presidents?

Content analysis (Saldana, 2013) is defined by the identification of specific words and/or phrases. The Mission Statement Protocol drew the primary phases from the review of literature. RQ3 involved dissemination of information directly from quotes from the participating presidents to determine perceptions of how presidents are guided by community college mission

statements. Participants chose to speak directly to their respective institution's mission statement or to the mission of community colleges in respect to higher education. Interpretation of the findings are found in Chapter 5.

> If community colleges expenses are, maybe the subsidies from state or local subsidies are reduced, community colleges have to cut some of the external things and continue with the core mission, which is teaching and learning. (P1)

> I'm about pursuing a mission and making sure that we can do that. (P2)

> It's all about affordability, access, and excellence. I think we're all about that. (P3)

> The president is absolutely the custodian of mission, vision, and strategy. And how that is reflecting in the publishing statements… It's consistency of message. (P4)

> I tend to be a person that likes to involve others. I rarely make a decision on my own; I like to involve the people who are going to be impacted by the decision. (P5)

> Our mission is to provide the highest quality education we can to the communities we serve. (P6)

> Recognizing that being agile is important to lead the ship, but I just think there is, given the emphasis on, growing emphasis on completion and equity and what not, I think we need to have some longer term goals out there. (P7)

> I think the challenges will be different than today's challenges. There will be different leadership qualities that future presidents will be expected to have such as change agents because you have long existing institutions that perhaps are set in tradition versus in the more progressive, entrepreneurial, willing to embrace and try new things, new technologies. (P8)

> I think as we see the world changing around us… . Our mission statement is written in a pretty broad manner, certainly as we're encouraged to think more broadly about what is the definition of *equity* and *inclusion*. (P9)

> Our roles will continue to be multiple. The challenge is for us not to digress too much away, because we can't do everything for everyone. We have limited resources, but at the same time, we have to be able to remain relevant, and provide multiple goals, and resources for people who need them. (P10)

> I always go back to our mission, our vision, and our values. Our cultural diversity framework. What are we doing to serve our communities and given the circumstances surrounding this, that won't ever go away. (P11)

> I'll be starting this real hard push about disruption. And how do we look at the disruptors in our space, and what's our response there? Do we think, no big deal, we'll always be

here? Or do we look at those disruptors, those who are moving into our space and who are expanding into our space, and do we say, wait a minute, what are they doing? What do we need to do in response to that? And how do we, in turn create our own disruption? (P12)

Although there is an understanding of social inequality and social justice and clearly that motivates a lot of people like myself going into the world of community colleges, I get concerned about also the…I mean, I'll be quite honest, the corporatization of a lot of things and when you look at it so far, higher ed educational institutions, it's kind of like a vendor based world"… "Are the educators running the show or has it become just the behest of companies and wealthy donors, and that's to me, very unnerving (P13)

It is the discussions that happen that bring that mission statement that life and the understanding of what that specific student population is… Because it's the conversation that really customizes and localizes the understanding, that then galvanizes the faculty and staff to operationalize what that mission statement is and how it's reflected in their strategic goals and their operational planning. (P14)

I see a college as made up of geographically and culturally little pockets of climate. When you have a lot of micro-climates, ultimately it forms the culture of the college. Mission statements don't do that. It's when people who form the climate, and it's leadership development, and leadership, what I call leadership interactions and reciprocity amongst the dean, between the provost and the college president. Its' those kinds of behavior settings that leads to leadership development and leadership change. (P15)

Our purpose is to add value to our stakeholders. And stakeholders are mostly outside the company entity, not inside. And when the outside world is changing so rapidly, becoming so diverse, and more complex, what we need to do, is align ourselves with the outside world so we can keep adding value. That's the opportunity and that's the challenge. If we don't align ourselves well, then we are going to become less and less relevant… So, we have to make sure we keep aligning ourselves, and we keep meeting the un-met needs of our stakeholders. That's where the opportunities are. (P16)

Your job is to set the environment for learning. Your job is to show up authentic. Your job is to understand what our students need regardless of your ideology, or my ideology, or my adopted ideology from somebody else. Students show up different. They show up the same. They show up co-mingled. They show up in many different ways, and if we aren't ready for that, it doesn't matter what our belief systems are. Or whose idea of how we should as is prevalent at that moment. (P17)

Chapter Summary

      Because of the nature of qualitative research and the analysis of large volumes of data collected, transparency of the data is recognized as a challenge by the researcher. The focus and purpose of this chapter was to review the data collection process and display the data as it corresponded to the three research questions. In addition, the strategies used for data analysis were articulated in a transparent manner. Display of the data in a manner that supports transparency and credibility aimed to provide understanding of the data that is further analyzed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter organizes and presents the analysis of the data by the key findings from the document reviews and presidential interviews. The purpose of the study was to examine community college mission statements and community college presidents' perceptions of neoliberalism and its impact in higher education. Each question evolved from the purpose of this study and sought to gain insight and understanding as to the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. Thus, data analysis is compiled based on the findings of the study. All data collection methods were designed to glean data related to the discovery of the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era and presidents' perceptions of role of community colleges in today's higher education landscape. Key themes are discussed and examples from the data are presented.

The first section analyzes data gathered from mission statements and presidential interviews. The second section summarizes the emergent themes from these findings as they pertain to the unique role of community colleges in higher education. The third and final section focuses on the implications and recommendations from the study.

Discussion of Findings

Qualitative research seeks to uncover the underlying meaning of phenomena (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The primary focus of the study was to interview presidents from ATD Leader Colleges and analyze mission statements from each of the institutions from which the presidents

were interviewed. Judicious scoring of mission statements and judicious coding of interview transcripts was done to capture themes. Presidential interviews and mission statements from 17 ATD Leader Colleges comprise the data collection for this study.

Finding 1: Human Agency is Prominently Represented in Mission Statements

Data garnered from RQ1, which addresses the language use in mission statements, involved the determination of whether the mission statements were inclusive of language that was more heavily weighted on human agency themes or neoliberal themes. As Table 8 shows, human agency and neoliberal dimensions were summed across each of the community colleges examined, with human agency themes presented 91 times and neoliberal themes 39 times. Length of the mission statements should be noted as having impact on the number of themes captured in the data; however, the data reveals human agency themes were mentioned substantively more often than neoliberal themes.

Table 8. *Frequencies Totals of Mentioned Scores*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	MISSION STATEMENT WORD COUNT RANGE	STUDENT HUMAN AGENCY	NEOLIBERALISM
n=17	Ranges 1-4	91	39

The presentation of human agency themes reveals that while effects of neoliberalism in higher education are present, they are not dominant within the findings of this study. Ayers (2005) argued that language use by all levels of higher education have become infected with neoliberal terminology. While the findings of this study reveal that neoliberal language is actively used, it has not taken over or eradicated the human agency language use in mission statements. In contrast to Ayers (2005), ATD (2017, 2018, 2019) utilizes student-centered evidence in promotion of influencing public policy. The mission statements stand as the public

policy declaration to all stakeholders, and this research noted the neoliberal themes, while in evidence, were second to the human agency themes which emerged.

Tables 9 and 10 show the frequencies scores broken down by human agency themes and neoliberal themes. A comparison of the Tables 9 and 10 reveals while neoliberal themes are present in the mission statements for these ATD Leader Colleges, community college education has not shifted exclusively to "a market-based social practice focused on the needs of business and industry" (Ayers, 2005, p. 532). Rather, community college mission statement language for the 17 colleges in this study reveal human agency themes are still the primary focus.

Table 9. *Frequencies Scores Totals for Human Agency Themes*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	DEVELOPING BASIC, CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS	LIFELONG LEARNING	PROMOTING EQUITY, CULTURAL DIVERSITY	CITIZENSHIP SERVICE TO COMMUNITY	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT CENTERED
N=17	21	14	23	10	23

Table 10. *Frequencies Scores Totals for Neoliberal Themes*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANT	JOB COMPETITIVE-NESS OF THE STUDENT	PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SKILLS	GLOBALIZATION	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, CAREER TRAINING	MARKET FOCUS TRAINING
n=17	6	9	11	8	5

Despite the current tenor regarding the trends of higher education today and the state and federal economic realities facing community colleges, this study reveals evidence of neoliberalism infiltration in community college mission statements; however, not to the degree as stated by Ayers (2005). Mission statement language presents on human agency specifically noted the score of 23 for "Personal Development, Student-Centered" demonstrates current language in mission statements remains inclusive of the needs of learner systems in higher

education (Boone, 1992). Another score worth noting is that of "Promoting Equity, Cultural Diversity," which also scored at 23. The matching scores in "Personal Development/Student-Centered" and "Promoting Equity/Cultural Diversity" reveal students and equity as the most prominent themes.

The research done for this study are supported by Boyd (2011) who stated that community colleges are life enhancing and do not exist just to support workforce needs. With community colleges serving an ever-increasing diverse population (AACC, 2016), such as first generation (Chen, 2017), the need to increase social responsibility to all constituents is critical. This study confirmed that ATD Leader Colleges are focused on the human agency elements of their students while understanding the neoliberal crux.

Finding 2: Presidential Ideologies are Focused on Human Agency

Data for RQ2 and RQ3 was garnered from the interviews with the 17 community college presidents who participated in the study. Identification of primary words and themes flowed freely from the transcripts and connected to the literature and were in alignment with the data captured in RQ1. The following themes that emerged from the interviews: (a) equity, (b) learn/learner/learning, (c) access, (d) community, (e) completion, and (f) workforce. Notably, equity was clearly the number one theme from the interviews. See Table 11.

Table 11. *Themes: Equity, Learn/Learner/Learning, Access*

THEME	PARTICIPANT	COMMENT
Equity (expressed)	P17	"You have to be compassionate. You have to be real. You have to respect diversity no matter what it is. No matter what level. Whether it's in thought. Whether it's in how students look, how they feel, their gender, their sexual orientation, their color, their ethnicity. None of that matters, because when it does matter, you miss the person in front of you. This is the real meaning of this work."
Equity	P15	"The idea of equity is in our DNA."
Equity	P15	"I'm really hoping the trend is that, we will go, we will really be caught up in fire storms of equity, the fire storm of free speech and the fire storm of historicity vs. reparation of forgiveness. I hope that is a good fire storm,

THEME	PARTICIPANT	COMMENT
		because we went through it in the '60s with the Vietnam War. And I think this is not different."
Equity (expressed)	P 11	"The beauty of our higher education is that we provide opportunity to anybody that walks through our door and we are the second, third, fourth, or fifth chance for folks. We're one of the last doors that are open to folks. For me, it's making sure that those doors aren't closed for our community"
Learn	P14	"We are educators, and educators and teachers, when you go back historically, they're considered sacred professions because you have young lives that are placed in our hand to develop, and they're different. Each of them is not the same, so it is a complex task."
Learn and Community	P10	"That's why I said 'dreams,' because if we have 10,000 students, we have 10,000 dreams, and our role is to help them achieve their dreams…. So that their lives will be improved through the learning that they receive from us."
Access	P6	"Well really an extension of our original purpose right, to be open door institutions. To be accessible, affordable onramps to higher education… That's what community colleges can accomplish for people who otherwise might not have that opportunity. And at the same time that they're doing that for individual students, we're creating a more effective and vibrant economy for the cities, towns, counties, regions that we serve."
Access	P5	"You have to realize that our students should be number one. They should be our number one focus; we should treat them as well as we can and not give them the run-around and all these kinds of things."

Of the items identified in the mission statements' data, all themes were replicated in the data produced and captured during the interviews. The themes thus could be considered on a spectrum of human agency and neoliberalism (see Figure 4). Ten presidents presented heavily on the human agency end of the spectrum. Three presidents presented on heavily on the neoliberal end of the spectrum. Four presidents presented in the middle of the spectrum, with data presenting on both the human agency end of the spectrum, and on the neoliberal end of the spectrum.
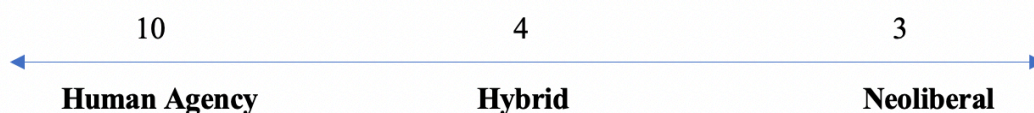

Figure 4. Spectrum of Presidential Perceptions

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The researcher also notes that although presidents who participated in the study presented on the neoliberal end of the spectrum, they demonstrated through the interviews and transcriptions a support of human agency themes. Thus, a president may have presented with more emphasis on the workforce, however the theme of human agency consistently demonstrates students serving as the core to the mission of community colleges (see Table 12). Literature supports (Aguirre & Simmons, 2011; Ayers, 2005; Boyd, 2011; Raby, 2014; World Bank, 2002) that it is the human approaches that a community college embraces within the neoliberal umbrella that determines accessibility, adaptability, and social equity. AACC (2016) and ATD (2017, 2018, 2019) foster the intent for community colleges, holding especially ATD Leader Colleges to a higher human agency stance.

Table 12. *Community, Completion, Workforce*

THEME	PARTICIPANT	COMMENT
Community	P10	"The role still remains being the community resource, because the college belongs to the community, be responsive to the needs, whether they're in workforce, or social needs, or just a general resource for people, that that they can improve their lives through the activities offered by the community college."
Completion	P2	"I want people, I want our students to have the opportunity to live their lives, to pursue greatness, to have options, to be able to appreciate this world we have" … "I believe in hard work and putting in your time, and all of that. It's mixed for me but I want our students to be able to make those decisions and have the right to be free and pursue what they want to pursue with all their might and with all their vigor and energy, their minds, their souls and everything else."
Completion	P11	"Getting students to the finish line and being much more intrusive in creating at pathways for them to be successful."
Workforce	P4	"So, partnering with employers as deeply as we can" … "Let's make sure the jobs our students have are job[s] that help them earn their degree or credentials, give them health care benefits or tuition assistance."
Workforce	P8	"We speak about our commitment to serving the community and providing high quality education and workforce training, but the public policy doesn't always support our efforts in doing that."

Finding 3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Aligns with the Importance of Human Agency

The findings of this study align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Understanding the motivations of community college students and how students' learning is impacted by their need must be a key agent in determining if community colleges are meeting the needs of their students. Due to the diverse populations that community colleges serve, care and consideration must be made to understand our students as learners. Ability for students to succeed must mean that first and foremost their basic needs both physical and safety are met first. Only then can they progress toward self-esteem and self-actualization.

Increasingly, community college students are challenged with meeting their basic needs. Challenges witnessed by community colleges have required redesigning the ways in which students are supported and served. If the goal of community colleges is for students to complete and then emerge prepared to enter the ever-changing workforce, then consideration and accommodation of their needs is essential. Mission intention is visible in how community colleges describe themselves: ATD Leader community colleges were found to have language that leads to care for students as human beings (ATD, 2017, 2018, 2019). This is the first step to ensuring community colleges understand who they are serving and why their basic human needs to be addressed. Thus, community colleges must be accountable to and recognize the importance of human agency rather than focus exclusively on alignment with workforce needs (Hillman et al., 2015), which falls on the neoliberal end of the spectrum (refer to Figure 1).

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal the need for alignment between mission statements and presidential ideologies and for these ideologies to be rooted in human agency. The dominance of the neoliberal era has encouraged public education to pursue human capital development and

national defense through globalization (Ayers, 2005; Boyd, 2011; Engel, 2000; Mollenkopf-Pigsley, 2015). Although the proliferation of neoliberalism within higher education is documented in the literature (Aguirre & Simmers, 2011; Ayers, 2005; Engel, 2000; Phelan & Dawes, 2018; World Bank, 2002), ATD Leader Colleges demonstrate the understanding of human agency, as articulated in their mission statements and presidential ideologies. Alignment of higher education outcomes with an embedded foundation in human agency and the ability of community colleges to meet the basic needs of students can serve as a catalyst for student success, and social equity.

Recommendations

Figure 5 illustrates a key finding in this study: that human agency needs rest at the top and thus must be addressed first, with neoliberal factors being secondary. This diagram, referred to as the Papa Equity Nautilus, provides a visual construct to help presidents understand that a focus on human agency within community colleges is vital, particularly in the neoliberal era. These institutions provide open admissions and accept all students. Thus, it is important community colleges do not lose sight of human agency needs and their importance and impact to students and their ability to succeed.

Figure 5. Papa Equity Nautilus

Analysis of the data revealed ATD Leader College community college presidents believe

and practice the review of language use in their institution's mission statements on an ongoing

basis. Continuous review of the mission statement serves to maintain relevancy in meeting the

needs of students and the communities in which the institution serves. It is recommended that

presidents who are new to this important role or are experienced presidents but newly appointed

in a different institution, place high priority on reviewing and fully understanding the mission of

their community college and make modifications accordingly. Changes should be recommended

if the relevancy of the institution's mission statement is outdated as a result of the neoliberal era

and the current and ever-changing needs of the students served by community colleges. This

study affirmed that human agency factors are important to include in the revised mission

statements. The rubric designed to analyze mission statement for human agency versus

neoliberal themes can be used to conduct a holistic analysis. This rubric reflects verbiage in the literature associated with human agency and neoliberal themes.

The study solely looked at ATD Leader Colleges, and therefore the findings of the study may not serve as a surprise. Of the 1100 community colleges in the United States, 94 community colleges comprise the ATD Leader Colleges, which is representative of 22% of all public community colleges. ATD is recognized as working with community colleges by way of fostering and supporting institutional improvement by using student-centered evidence and data to close achievement gaps and promote social equity, while also building community among community colleges across the nation.

Implications for Future Study

While the findings from the study bring light to the positive outcomes associated with the ATD Leader College designation, community colleges that are part of the ATD network yet do not hold the designation of Leader College and community colleges not part of the ATD network can also benefit. Thus, future research could involve the use of the rubrics to score and analyze mission statement language from non-ATD community colleges and then contrasted these findings to the findings in this study. Comparison of data from non-ATD community colleges to community colleges that participate in and subscribe to the ATD network could be done to determine relevancy of the findings on a broader scale. Analysis on a broader scale could extend the academic conversation surrounding neoliberalism and human agency and their purposes in higher education.

The Papa Equity Nautilus was created from the findings in this study to illustrate the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era. Although the development of the model was for the purpose of understanding the data presented in this study, the model is applicable to analysis of

institutional priorities regarding mission, vision, values, strategic planning, etc., even beyond the community college and into other realms of education. The Papa Equity Nautilus can serve to assess an institution's mission, vision, or values, to determine where they lean on the spectrum of human agency and neoliberalism. Assessment of mission, vision, and values should be continuous, and perhaps tied to strategic planning cycles, so as to ensure relevancy to current education, political and economic climate, and other conditions. Continuous assessment of language use and relevancy by community colleges and their presidents is essential to meet the underlying and most basic needs of our students and foster success as defined by students. Community colleges must remain balanced. Even though some view the community college as the provider of a local workforce, these institutions do so much more as they are charged with serving the neediest students. It is important to note that students often present needs that may not have been anticipated. Thus, it is imperative for community colleges to lead higher education with an awareness and sense of compassion, centered on human agency.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

Date: August 29, 2018

To: Sandra Balkema

From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application *IRB-FY17-18-104 THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES THROUGH MISSION STATEMENTS AND PRESIDENTIAL PERCEPTION IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, " THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES THROUGH MISSION STATEMENTS AND PRESIDENTIAL PERCEPTION IN THE NEOLIBERAL ERA" (IRB- FY17-18-104) and Approved this project under Federal Regulations Expedited Review 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

Approval has an expiration date of one year from the date of this letter . As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until August 28, 2019 . Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number IRB-FY17-18-104. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years.

As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE

Timeline

November/December 2018

       Form dissertation committee

       Advance to Candidacy

       Begin to identify sample of community colleges to examine mission statements

       Begin to identify community college presidents to interview

December 2018/January 2019

       Dissertation proposal hearing

February/March 2019

       Collect data from CC websites

       Interview CC leaders

March/April 2019

       Analyze data

       Complete chapters 4 and 5

April 2019

       Defend

APPENDIX C: WEBSITE MISSION STATEMENT PROTOCOL

Scoring Rubric

Name of the College_____

Scoring Rubric
3 = Very Strongly Reflected
Mentioned several times (n=3+)

Very evident focus
2 = Very Reflected
Mentioned twice (n=2)

Moderate focus
1 = Somewhat Reflected
Mentioned once or implied (n=1)

Slim focus
0 = Not Reflected
No mention (n=0)

Degree to which the mission statement reflects:	Very Strongly Reflected	Very Reflected	Somewhat Reflected	Not Reflected
Times Mentioned	**3+**	**2**	**1**	**0**

Student Human Agency

1. Developing Basic/Critical Thinking Skills_____
[oral, written, speaking, communication, listening]

2. Lifelong learning_____
[learning opportunities, continuous development, improvement of knowledge/skills for personal & employment, creative learning experiences]

3. Promoting Equity/Cultural Diversity_____
[diversity, individual differences]

4. Citizenship/Service_____
[group responsibility, student engagement, Community of learners, service learning]

5. Personal Development/Student Centered_____
[worth of the individual, transform lives]

Neoliberalism

6. Job Competitiveness of the Student_____
[market competitiveness, skills]

7. Promote Economic
Development/Skills_____
[raises people's productivity and creativity, promotes entrepreneurship, promotes technology efficiency/ effectiveness]

8. Globalization_____
[*globalization* of knowledge, technologies, integration of economies and societies through cross country flows of information, ideas, cross border integration can have several dimensions – cultural, social, political and economic]

9. Workforce Development/CareerTraining_____
[*training* for the right technical, behavioral, and mind-set *skills, workforce development* programs]

10. Market focus training_____
[career training programs that match the demands of the job market, job education and vocational training and rehabilitation]

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

The purpose of the study is to examine the ways neoliberalism has influenced community colleges in the United States. Community college presidential perspectives in conjunction with community college mission statements will serve to provide a present-day context regarding the role of community colleges in higher education today.

1. Current Community College President:

    - To begin, please tell me how long you have been at your current institution.

    - Has your institution's mission statement been in place since taking on your role?

    - If so, are you in the process of changing your mission statement in the near future?

    - Describe how it is changing?

    - Describe your involvement in the mission change process.

    - From your perspective, does being an individual vs. system community college impact the development or change of mission statements?

    - In your time spent as a community college president, what impact have public policy decisions and higher education initiatives at both the state and national levels had on the existing mission statement or mission changes either at your college, or what you see happening at other community colleges?

    - Do you notice any trends occurring?

    - What does the phrase "commodification of students" mean to you?

    - What does the word "neoliberalism" mean to you?

    - Do you see any effects of neoliberal ideology in higher education today? If yes, how so? If not, please explain?

Scripted Conclusion:

Thank you for participating in this semi-structured interview regarding your perceptions of the role of community colleges in the neoliberal era.

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

Social/Behavioral Informed Consent

Basic Information

Project Title: The Study of the Role of Community Colleges Though Mission Statements and Presidential Perception in the Neoliberal Era

Principal Investigator: Jessica Papa
Email: jpapa@harpercollege.edu Phone: 847.521.6208
Faculty Advisor: Sandra Balkema
Email: SandraBalkema@ferris.edu Phone: 231.591.5631

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of community college presidents, in relationship to their respective community college mission statements.

Participation

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

You are eligible to participate in this study because you currently serve as a community college president. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview via face-to-face, telephone, FaceTime, and/or Skype that will last no longer than one-half hour.

Potential Risks

The research does not constitute risk to subjects beyond the minimal level. The researcher has taken steps to minimize the risks of this study. The data collected by the researcher is the participants' personal account and recollection of what has or is currently occurring. A pseudonym will be used to identify subjects and data will not be linked to the participant in any way in the written documents.

However, you may still experience some risks related to your participation, even when the researchers are careful to avoid them.

The known or expected risks include:

- Psychological, Social, or Emotional risks (rare)

- Unforeseeable risks (unlikely)

Anticipated Benefits

Others may benefit from your participation because the study may add to or impact the academic conversation regarding neoliberalism in higher education.

Confidentiality

Records of your participation in this research study will be maintained and kept confidential as required by federal regulations. Your identity will not be revealed on any report, publication, or at scientific meetings.

In order to keep your information safe, the researchers will protect your confidentiality and maintain confidentiality. During the semi-structured interview, the researcher will record the information, to ensure accuracy and allow the researcher to review the information following the interview. Your personal information (name and institution) will not be included during the interview, instead the researcher will assign a pseudonym for you and your institution.

The digital recordings of the interview will be deleted or destroyed by the researcher following transcription, so as to protect your confidentiality.

The researcher notes that there may be reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. Thus, the digital recording may be transferred via cloud storage to a professional transcriptionist. This includes organizations responsible for ensuring the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University.

Contact Information

The main researcher conducting this study is Jessica Papa, a graduate student at Ferris State University. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Jessica Papa at 847.521.6208 or jpapa@harpercollege.edu. Or you may contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Sandra Balkema (sandrabalkema@ferris.edu; 231.591.5631).
If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact:

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants
1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307
(231) 591-2553 or IRB@ferris.edu

Signatures

Research Subject: I understand the information printed on this form. I have discussed this study, its risks, potential benefits and my other alternatives. My questions so far have been answered. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact one of the people listed above in the "Contact Information" section. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form at the time I sign it. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either my legal representative or I may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

_____Please initial if you are willing to have the interview audio recorded.

Signature of Subject: _____
Printed Name: _____
Date of Signature: _____

Principal Investigator (or Designee): I have given this research subject information about this study that I believe is accurate and complete. The subject has indicated that he or she understands the nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating.

Printed Name: _____
Title: _____
Signature:_____
Date of Signature:_____